



# Wellingtonia

Issue 7 : Second Quarter 2010

FREE ISSUE!

Newsletter of the Wellington History Group,  
rediscovering the past of Wellington in Shropshire

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of *Wellingtonia*, which (as usual) is packed with items of interest to everyone wanting to know more about the history of the Wellington area.

So much has been happening recently that, at times, it's difficult to keep up with events. Whenever possible, we try to give information to the local Press without falling into the trap of creating 'wishful thinking' history: it's very easy to pass odd comments which can be misinterpreted or misconstrued, so the best we can do is use these pages to set the record straight or give a more reasoned assessment for a variety of features which have been uncovered.

Two areas worth a special mention are the further excavations of the garden behind Edgbaston House which continues to yield remarkable finds, and recent refurbishment work at 14 Market Square, where stonework and timber carvings present us with challenges in interpretation.

As ever, we welcome articles to be considered for inclusion in future issues of *Wellingtonia*: everyone is an historian with a story to tell or research to be passed on, so please help us.

The next issue will be published on our web site before the end of September, all being well. In the meantime, remember to visit the site to see what else has been posted for your enjoyment.



*Is this Wellington's Cultural Icon of the Twentieth Century?*  
See page 6.

*Below: Archaeologists Tim Malim (left) and Laurence Hayes resume excavations at the rear of Edgbaston House in Walker Street. Many more finds have been recovered, including these animal bones (bottom right).*



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*Soon after the beginning of the Last World War, the government announced the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers. This is how Admaston rose to the challenge.*

A meeting was called in the Village Hall at Wrockwardine. Major Herbert of Orleton Hall, who owned most of the village, took the chair and proposed that a platoon be formed to defend Wrockwardine and Admaston from the Nazis. This was agreed and names of volunteers were taken. Eric Evans was voted the Platoon Leader. This is how my Dad's Army began.

At first the platoon had no arms at all, except for the odd personally owned shotgun, made for shooting rabbits and rats, not Nazis. Dad's gun is shown below.

Their uniforms consisted of an armband with the letters LDV. I wasn't allowed to join because the lowest age was 17 and I was 16. I could hardly expect Platoon Commander Dad not to know that. However, I was allowed along as a sort of unofficial platoon runner.

Eventually bits and pieces of uniform and weapons were sent, including Canadian Ross rifles and Great War Lee Enfields, with different sized ammunition, which was confusing. There was a lot of drill of the kind that made the men used to obeying commands without thinking.

The Volunteers were a mixture of young lads waiting to be called up, men not fit enough for service and old soldiers with Great War experience. Dad had been wounded on the Somme, as



*Eric Evans*

had Sgt. Hubert (Lobby) Fisher, deputy Head of Coalbrookdale High School, so neither the Platoon Commander nor his Sergeant was able to march with their men.

Along with the uniforms came the name, Home Guard and proper sounding military ranks. The Platoon Commander became Lieutenant; I found myself saluting my Dad. This is a very strange thing – a British soldier finding himself elected to be a military officer, especially as his previous rank was corporal. Mum bought him a swagger stick to go with his new status.

As soon as I was 17, I joined them. By that time I was working in the offices at Sankeys. We met in a disused stable at Admaston Spa, a small room we could just about cram into. For some years there was a hole in the ceiling made by a rifle bullet someone let off by mistake. One man who lived at the Spa house insisted on parking his little Austin 7 car on

the drive. Despite repeated requests he refused to move it so Dad told the lads to shift it. They picked it up and put it on the lawn. He came out and remonstrated but was told if he didn't keep it out of our way, next time it would be in the lake.

There were frequent weekend 'exercises', often against Ken Hunt's platoon, who were mostly fitter than our lot but we usually managed to outwit them.

One day they attacked Wellington passenger station and we had to defend it. Which way would they come? Would they attack through the cutting from the goods depot in Bridge Road, or from the east under the Victoria Road Bridge?

We had a tip-off that Ken was buying ropes from Walter Davies' ironmongers. 'Ah!' said Dad. 'He's coming over the wall from the Bull's Head Yard.' So he did, and their whole platoon was wiped out by our (pretend) machine guns mounted in the churchyard. Younger readers will need an old map to understand.

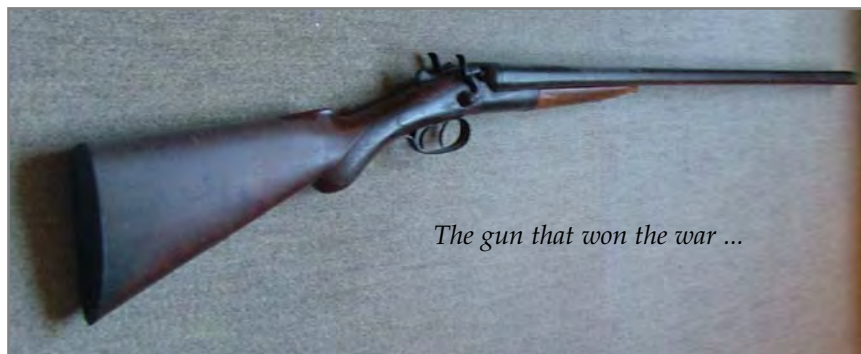
On another exercise the 'Hunt Mob' attacked our headquarters at The Spa. Our men were deployed all over the fields, behind trees but with instructions to make their presence obvious.

Ken's 'boys' did as expected – they advanced down the stream valley that led almost directly to their destination and had plenty of cover. Great! We knew exactly where they were. This was a sewer outflow, so we could smell them coming. Our machine guns – actually a couple of football rattles – kept them out of the fields and in the stinking water. They were unpopular with their women-folk when they returned home.

Admaston Home Guard fought

the most successful campaign in the history of warfare. They defended their territory throughout the war and neither suffered nor inflicted any casualties.

Beat that, Hitler!



*The gun that won the war ...*



Enter Wellington Public Baths (above, seen during the 1920s with its changing rooms along one side of the pool). Erected in 1910, the pool was demolished just a few years before his death when the present facility was built.

But the Baths' main use was for swimming. Not only was it a clean (literally!) sport but it was one which helped reduce the death toll of folk drowning in, for example, the River Severn or in one of a countless number of pools dotted around the area, a dangerous legacy of mining and other economic activity.

Over the decades, Les was a regular at Wellington Baths. He taught many children to swim and, although not a competitive swimmer (he could maintain a steady breast stroke for ages), he did manage to win several badges and a medal.

*Researching family history needn't be just a list of names, dates, addresses and occupations. Why not try to put aspects of your ancestors' pasts in a historical context?*

The little chap above was William Leslie Frost, 1913-1984, a draughtsman living from 1938 until his demise at 74 King Street. That's about all the details some folk enter on their family trees. Interesting, but not very inspiring, is it? He was my dad, known as Les rather than Bill.

The photo shows him wearing the latest in infant fashion: a maroon knitted top, shorts and cap. How do we know the 'suit' is maroon when the original photo is black and white? Because he fell into water which had flooded the cellar at his parent's bakery in New Street, that's how. The dye in the wool ran, leaving Les's skin an interesting shade of maroon for several days!

The photo is an important aspect of a thread which ran throughout my father's life. Yes, it taught him not to wear woollen clothing if the dye was likely to run if it got wet, but the most important lesson was that deep water, even if it's within the safe confines of your home, can kill.

**PUBLIC NOTICES.**  
**WELLINGTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.**  
**PUBLIC BATHS.**

**THE SWIMMING BATH** will be OPEN from APRIL 13th to SEPTEMBER 30th, 1913, as under (subject to alteration by the Council if necessary):—

**SUNDAYS**—Gentlemen, 6-30 to 9-30 a.m., 4d. each

**MONDAYS**—Gentlemen, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., 6 to 8 p.m., 6d. each.  
 Ladies, 2 to 5-30 p.m., 6d. each.

**TUESDAYS**—Ladies, 7 to 11-30 a.m., 6 to 9 p.m., 4d. each.  
 Gentlemen, 12 to 1 p.m., 2 to 5-30 p.m., 4d. each.

**WEDNESDAYS**—Gentlemen, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., 6 to 9 p.m., 2d. each.  
 Ladies, 2 to 5-30 p.m., 2d. each.

**THURSDAYS**—Ladies, 7 to 11-30 a.m., 6 to 9 p.m., 6d. each.  
 Gentlemen, 12 to 1 p.m., 2 to 5-30 p.m., 6d. each.

**FRIDAYS**—Gentlemen, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., 6 to 8 p.m., 4d. each.  
 Ladies, 2 to 5-30 p.m., 4d. each.

**SATURDAYS**—Ladies, 7 a.m. to 12 noon, 2d. each.  
 Gentlemen, 1 to 5-30 p.m., 6 to 9 p.m., 2d. each.  
 Wellington Men's Swimming Club only on Mondays and Fridays, 8 to 9 p.m.

Extra Towels 1d. each. Costumes 1d. each.

Season Tickets (admitting once each day): April 13th to July 6th, 6s.; July 7th to September 30th, 6s.; or from April 13th to September 30th, 10s. 6d. Juniors (under 17), 6s. for whole season.

Spectators 2d. each (to admit ladies at ladies' bathing hours and gentlemen at gentlemen's bathing hours)

Particulars of reduced charges for Season Tickets to members of local Swimming Clubs can be obtained from the Attendant. All Ordinary and Season Tickets (except Club) to be purchased at the Bath; Club Season Tickets from the Captains of the Clubs, and not at the Bath.

**THE SLIPPER BATHS** for Ladies and Gentlemen will be open on week-days from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sundays 7 to 9-30 a.m. Charges: First-class 6d., Second-class 3d. These are not included in Season Tickets.

No Person will be admitted to any Bath within 30 minutes of time of closing.

J. W. LITTLEWOOD, Clerk to the Council.  
 Bank Chambers, Wellington, Salop.



The silver medal (above, left) was a major achievement. That there were only two swimmers in the race doesn't diminish this noteworthy achievement, although the fact that the winner only had one leg might. However, the Diamond Badge (right) awarded as part of the early 1980s *Sport For All* scheme was something special as recipients had to swim a million yards within a specific period to receive it ... and not many folk did.

Les set a record no one else can now beat ... he was, apparently, the only person ever to swim two complete lengths of the pool under water without coming up for air. And all because of a flooded cellar (and a maroon suit).

*An expat living in Australia looks back on his time as a member of Wellington YMCA, which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.*

By about the middle of the 1950s, the British Government had become so alarmed at increasingly aggressive behaviour being displayed in public by young people, it resolved to set in motion a national youth rescue package.

This was, after all, the age of the Teddy Boy, razor gangs, drainpipe trousers, beetle crushers and rock'n'roll rioting; and of a Government in fear of moral standards slipping so low as to threaten the entire fabric of civilised society.

The result of Whitehall's knee trembling fear of contemporary youth was a series of commissioned reports intended to steady the ship, most notable among them the Albemarle Report (1960), which emphasised the need for local government agencies to take on more of the responsibility for providing youth training and fellowship facilities.

Hence the rise of the youth welfare movement at that time, which continues today.

Galvanised by the Government's call for decisive action, local youth clubs flourished, focusing on intergender interaction, community service, pop music and sport. The Church as well as local and central government involved itself in this tidal swell, seeing an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to guide the young towards a combination of good clean fun and religious observance.

A graphic illustration of this Christian/youth endeavour was Wellington's New Street Methodist Youth Club. It attracted shoals of mixed gender members, and

involved them in a miscellany of well-organised activities, from football to the highly popular annual summer camp, usually at a choice spot along the Devon coast.

There were other well supported clubs in the town, notably the secular Wellington Youth Club, which met once or twice a week in the school at the top of Constitution Hill. This club also could boast a long list of mixed members, and an impressive football team, fleshed out as they were in handsome livery of black and gold vertical striped shirts, and black shorts.

I well remember the shock they received when a group of us from Wellington Parish Church Covenanters hurriedly formed a scratch team to play them one spring or summer evening at Bennett's Bank cow fields. We had roped in a few Grammar School footballer mates – and, against all expectations, won the match.

It was soon after this red letter day that I joined the Wellington YMCA. At first I thought it a bit 'advanced' for me (I would have been just 15), but reassured and encouraged by a responsible older boy, Jimmy Beeston, a great pal, neighbour and fellow Grammar School pupil, I gingerly entered the Taj Mahal of local youth activity.

The YMCA building was such an impressive place. Quite apart from its status as a branch of the venerated national and international organisation formed in 1844, Wellington YM offered enviable facilities in a substantial brick and stone edifice right in the centre of town.

Its impressive wide staircase led upwards from Walker Street to a spacious foyer, off which were the full-time Secretary/Manager's office, two large meeting rooms, a huge smoke-filled billiards room with all the trimmings including three immaculate full-size slatebed tables, a table tennis room, and, up two or three steps, the big strip-lit canteen, seemingly for ever open



and always busy with the clatter of steel tables and chairs.

It was here that I took a straw to my first ice cold Coca Cola and was intrigued by its unique flavour. You could also get hot drinks, snacks, and a limited range of cooked meals served by a team of personable ladies in bright lime green uniforms.

The ornate staircase led further upward from the foyer to one more level, and its magnificent sprung-floor ballroom (with full stage). It was here that we lads would occasionally watch the mysterious slow motion meanderings of the Olde Tyme Dance Club. But we watched with quiet respect, and a good thing too, because it was this group of senior business people and their wives who subsequently raised the money from raffles and whist drives that enabled the football team to purchase their first genuine club colours of red and white stripes/white shorts in readiness for its debut as an official club team in the under-18 Wrekin Minor League. We never forgot their support and kindness.

I suppose it would have been best mate Ted Grattidge and myself who had together founded the YM team. Initially playing friendlies and wearing borrowed or improvised kit, our first ever game was against Hadley Youth Club, also at Cow Pat Stadium.

They were a very good side, and gave us a hammering, but from then on we gradually solicited better players, always with the enthusiastic hands-on backing of the YM Secretary/Manager, Mr Houghton, a stocky,

energetic man with blue eyes and a wild yet honest look about him.

In a year or two, the YM became just about the best team in the Minor League, with consistent league and cup victories, plus two touring trips to Dublin to play other youth teams. The Dublin excursions were organised by our team manager Johnnie "Spud" Turner, another man of great energy, and brilliant humour.

A distinct plus about Wellington YMCA was the fact it was always open. Other youth clubs unbarred their doors only once or twice a week, whereas you could wander into the YM any day. This carte-blanche policy obviously demanded strict control of behaviour, and although I cannot recall any 'incidents', the Secretary/Manager or his deputy kept close vigil, and any slackness (such as being on the premises whilst not an enrolled member) was soon remedied either by an orderly descent of the staircase and out into the street, or by coughing up the subscription fee to join on the spot...your choice.

There was minimal pressure placed upon members to pay much attention to the C word in YMCA. Sporadic attempts by the Secretary/Manager to rustle up a Bible study class on Sunday afternoons received polite, and occasionally compliant responses from some of us, but generally, most members, rightly or wrongly, regarded the YM as their social hub, not an annexe of the Church.

Men, young and not so young, formed the mainstay of Wellington YMCA membership, some drawn to its sporting activities such as football, snooker and table tennis, others to the martial art of karate, others to the non-martial art of chess – we had it all.

The quietest corner in the entire building was the billiards room with its three perfect tables. As a member, you could use the tables whenever you wished, and we did, but Friday nights belonged to the snooker team, a special squadron of high flyers led by the stolidly enigmatic Ted Haden (incidentally one of the driving forces in raising funds for the

football team's new red and white strip). Ted must have been a man of fifty in those days (you didn't have to exactly match the Y word), and most of his fellow players would never see 40 again.

But when the team performed in their snooker league matches on Fridays, the darkened room fell silent but for the clack of the white on the coloured balls. We would watch, soundlessly enthralled as these unflappable maestros tapped and clicked away at their craft; the biggest break any of us had ever managed was about 11.

Eventually, the M word in YMCA also lost its significance when girls were finally allowed in.

This was a bonus for the football team, because we instantly gained a corps of 'groupies' during and following matches, a novelty not to be spurned.

Mr Houghton, our worthy human dynamo of a Secretary/Manager, was subsequently succeeded in the late 1950s by another worthy human dynamo, Mr Henry Lightbown. The new man was just as supportive of member activities as his predecessor, but under his guidance, the YM marketed itself with a little more enterprise.

Possibly encouraged by his lively young daughter, Jean, and his wife Winifred (who also had charge of the canteen), Henry

introduced Saturday night rock and roll 'hops' to the otherwise rarely used ballroom. These were an instant hit, and gave a few local bands their first chance to perform in public. Henry Lightbown however, was a stickler for 'doing the right thing and everything right'. He ruled Wellington YMCA with, if not an iron fist, an unbending steely determination, and no situation was allowed to get out of hand – the consummate business manager and youth leader.

But he rarely totally rejected a suggestion, good or otherwise. One example: I once had the somewhat crazy idea of a midnight summer ramble around the base of the Wrekin. He thought it over for a second or two, and then not only organised the jaunt, including refreshments, but walked with us all the way!

For many years the YMCA was a significant part of Wellington life, for young and older. It offered us a structured way of wasting our time that might have been spent doing extra homework or helping our mothers with the dusting. On the whole, I think we made the better choice, because simply being a member of that Association taught us social discipline, respect for different points of view and the value of constructively associating with others – the A word.



*Executive Committee of the Y.M.C.A., 1959, clockwise around the table: H. Chaplin, J. Tipping, W. Jenkins, T. Haden, T. Anslow, E. Mosdell, H. N. Lightbown (Secretary), T. C. Buttrey, M.B.E. (Chairman), W. J. Laud (Vice-Chairman), W. G. Newman, T. W. Pollard, R. Pritchard.*

*Wellington has its William Withering and Hesba Stretton ... but we mustn't forget the town's most famous twentieth century cultural personality ... Sooty!*

In 1948, Bradford-born engineer Harry Corbett bought a Teddy Bear glove puppet to amuse his three-year old son David. Harry was also a part-time magician and pianist who gave performances to entertain children, and the puppet, with its water pistol and xylophone, became a crucial part of the show. Contrary to popular opinion, Harry was not a ventriloquist, so the puppet 'communicated' by speaking into Harry's ear.

In May 1952, Harry and lovably naughty Sooty made their television debut by appearing on BBC's *Talent Night*. As a result, they were given their own show. To make Sooty distinctive (and give him a name), Harry put chimney soot on the puppet's paws, ears and nose. The rest, as they say, is history.

But how does Wellington come into the picture? Recognising Sooty's enduring appeal to children, and the fact that a xylophone featured in the show, Britain's most notable toy



manufacturer was asked to produce them (above) and Sooty glove puppets for the mass market. As the company's Wrekin Toy Works in Wellington specialised in the manufacture of soft toys, it was the obvious place to make them. Sooty's companions Sweep (introduced to the show in 1957) and girlfriend Soo (1965) were also produced here.

Harry's brother Leslie hand a hand in making Sweep the dim dog squeak and perform, whereas Harry's wife Marjorie operated prim and perfect panda Soo, and made all the costumes for the three main characters.

Over the years, other props appeared with (some might say) sickening regularity ... with Harry invariably the butt of disasters caused by Sooty: eggs, water, flour (lots of flour), ink squirting from a trick camera whichever way it was pointed ... and even a hammer! Sweep liked bones and sausages which fed out of a mincer. I also recall a miniature caravan. But it was the wand which was special. Sooty could perform magic,



with spells conjured up with the immortal incantation, 'Izzy Whizzy, Let's Get Busy!'

In addition to puppets and props, commercial wheels ensured every Sooty fan (usually, but not exclusively, children) could follow his adventures in comics, story books, and the ubiquitous Annual, the first of which was published by the Daily Mirror in 1957. Egg cups, packs of Sooty playing cards and games like 'Tidleywinks' helped satisfy an ever-increasing demand.

In 1968, the BBC decided to drop the Sooty Show, whereupon Thams TV broadcast the show.

New characters and stage props appeared in the show after Harry's younger son Peter (he had to change his name to Matthew as another Equity member with his name was already registered) took over as Sooty's 'handler'. This first happened on Christmas Day, 1975, when Harry suffered a heart attack and Peter had to take over the Sooty Show.

Harry Corbett was awarded the OBE in the 1976 New Year's Honours List; Sooty also went to Buckingham Palace to receive his own miniature medal.

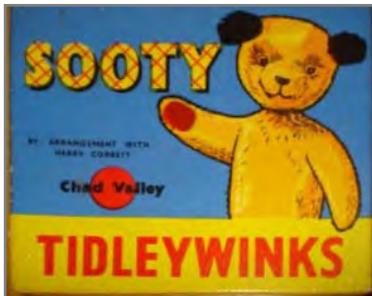
Harry died, aged 71, in August 1989. Sooty and his friends continue to perform on television, and Soo even won a Christmas edition of *The Weakest Link* in 2007. Sooty must be regarded as Wellington's Cultural Icon of the Twentieth Century. I can't think of anyone more deserving, can you?

That's all. As Harry said at the end of every show ... "Goodbye, everybody. Goodbye."



*Sweep, Sooty, Harry Corbett and Soo*

*Some Sooty Memorabilia*



*The former Chad Valley Wrekin Toy Works, where countless Sootys were made for children between 1952 and 1975. He and his friends have since been undertaken by other manufacturers.*



*Matthew Corbett (above) succeeded Harry as Sooty's handler. He sold the rights to Guinness Mahon in 1998. In 2008, presenter Richard Cadell had a hand in acquiring Sooty and friends for himself.*



Sooty wasn't just a bundle of fur; he was part of the Corbett family and even went on holiday with them. Shortly before he died in 1989, Harry Corbett said: "I often found myself wondering what he was thinking. It was as bad as that. Before every show, I washed his face and brushed his fur. If I accidentally dropped him, I immediately apologised. I know it sounds ridiculous regarding Sooty as a person because he was really only two fingers on my right hand, but I can't help it. The worst thing was having to break in a new Sooty puppet. I used to think of it as a new partner who didn't know me yet. I got so anxious, I used to come out in beads of sweat. And I felt terrible about the one I had just discarded - I used to apologise to them and say, 'I'm sorry but I'm not using you again.'

It's estimated that around 1,000 Sooty puppets were used by Harry in his act.

**BRIEF ENCOUNTERS**

*George Evans*

A good way of learning is to teach. This applies especially when giving talks or writing about local history. Obviously, you have to research your subject before you start.

Many Wellington people are interested in our rich and varied history and some will have information you don't know about the subject of your talk. If you're lucky, they'll tell you.

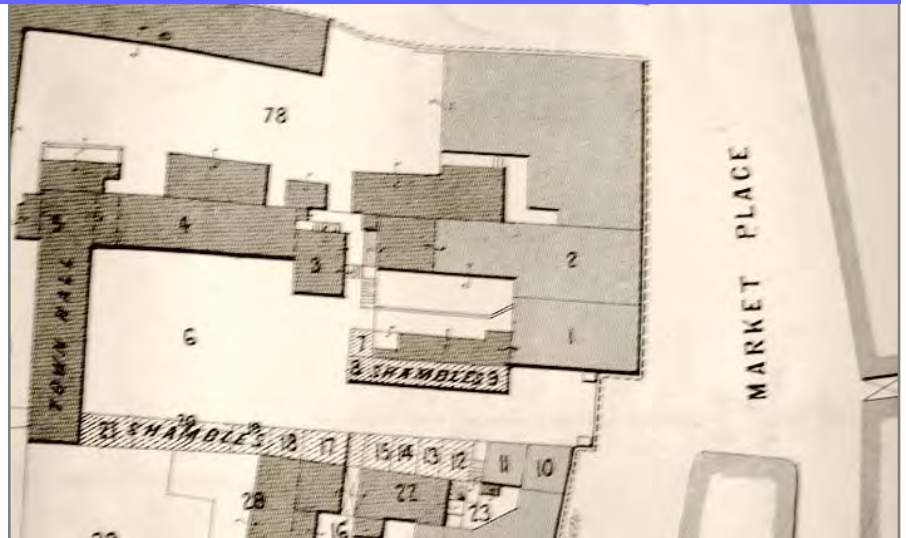
After talking about William Withering the other day, I learned that his daughter married a Botfield of Old Park and his son probably helped start Kew Gardens; also that his teacher, Rev. Wood of Ercall, invented a timepiece, later manufactured by Matthew Boulton.

My friend Geoff Harrison helped with the pictures and supplied much of the research used in my talk.

Often when walking in Wellington town centre, especially the market area, I'm accosted by someone who has something to ask or tell me. I've just heard about a bread oven, found in Shifnal, made in Wellington. And Allan Frost is justifiably excited about recent archaeological finds at Edgbaston House in Walker Street.

If you know something about local history the rest of us don't know, please tell us, take it to the library or publish it yourself. Even Allan Frost and I don't know everything and never will. Like you, we're always learning.

*A previous article (in Wellingtonia issue 5) described the rail excursion to London, organised by David Lewis of Shrewsbury, on the occasion of the Duke of Wellington's funeral in November 1852. There were other excursions, including those promoted by Wellington's own John Houlston.*



*John Houlston's Printing Works are shown at building 4 in this 1864 plan of Wellington. The Corn Exchange at that time was on the ground floor of the adjacent Town Hall which had been erected c.1842.*

The running of such special trains had begun some 11 years earlier when Thomas Cook took a party from Leicester to Loughborough for a temperance fete in collaboration with the Midland Counties Railway, he himself selling the tickets and travelling on the train.

Considered to be the very first travel agent, Cook was soon followed by others in different parts of the country.

In Shropshire, one man who organised a number of these excursion trains in the 1850s and 1860s was John Houlston.

Advertisements in local and provincial newspapers announced that details of such trips could be obtained from 'John Houlston, Manager and Conductor, Wellington and Oakengates, Salop'.

Born in 1810, a member of the family that had been printers, publishers and booksellers in Wellington since the late eighteenth century, John Houlston became an auctioneer in 1842. He appears to have continued the family business in the Market Square and was also appointed by the committee of the new market hall to collect the rents from its stallholders.

By 1851 he was described as 'auctioneer, office over the County Court Office, Market Square, residence Oakengates,' to which he had moved a year or so earlier.

John Houlston's earliest

ventures into the field of rail excursions appear to have been outside the county. In August 1851 he was advertising:

*'the cheapest and pleasantest trip to London and back ever projected'* from Bangor (North Wales); and in August 1855 he announced the ambitious *'Houlston's well-arranged Irish and English pleasure train from Dublin to Paris and back'*. This was by steamship to Liverpool, by train via Shrewsbury, Oxford and Reading to Winchester, Southampton and Portsmouth, and by steampacket to Le Havre for the French capital *'... enabling tourists to visit the Paris Exhibition'*.

The middle section of this particular excursion route was over the metals of the Great Western Railway, but in May 1857 Houlston included in one of his advertisements the following announcement:

*'J. Houlston respectfully announces to his numerous friends and the public that he has now no interest in the Great Western trains and has become favoured with permission from the Shropshire Union and London & North Western Companies to convey his passengers over their lines...'*

So for the next few years most excursions organised by Houlston would have travelled on the Shropshire Union Railway's line

from Shrewsbury via Wellington to Stafford and from there north or south on the London & North Western Railway. At Whitsuntide 1857, he advertised a trip to London:

*'affording an opportunity for parties to visit the fairy-formed Crystal Palace at Sydenham, likewise the Leviathan ship at Millwall, which is constructed to convey 4,000 first and second class passengers to Australia, or 10,000 soldiers, and is the largest ship in the world'*.

He was keen to emphasise that there would be no change of carriage between Shrewsbury and London.

During 1857, Houlston organised several rail trips to the Grand National Exhibition of Art Treasures in Manchester, the return fare on that of May 25th costing 9s. 6d. first class and 5s. 6d. in covered carriages, which included admission to the Exhibition. The advertisement in the *Wellington Journal* for the trip on September 21st is reproduced aside.

In the following years, Houlston continued to organise trips to London and also to Manchester, Liverpool, stations along the North Wales coast and the Isle of Man (presumably travelling via the line between Shrewsbury and Crewe, opened in



# Railways.



ART TREASURES EXHIBITION,  
MANCHESTER.

VIA SHROPSHIRE UNION AND LONDON  
AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAYS.

THE ONLY ROUTE  
To the Grand National Exhibition of Art Treasures.

HOULSTON'S  
CHEAP AND PLEASANT TRAINS

FROM SHREWSBURY, WELLINGTON,  
DONNINGTON, NEWPORT,  
AND GNOSAL,

(Calling at the intermediate Stations, if required,) to  
MANCHESTER DIRECT VIA STAFFORD  
Over the LONDON & NORTH-WESTERN Line,  
*Without change of Carriage.*

**H**OUHLSTON'S 21st TRAIN to the EXHIBITION  
will leave Shrewsbury at 7-40 a.m., Wellington 8-1  
Donnington, 8-12 Newport 8-21, Gnosal 8-33, arriving at Man-  
chester about 11 a.m.

On MONDAY, the 21st of SEPTEMBER, 1857,  
Returning from the Exhibition at 6-30, and the London Road  
Station, Manchester, at 6-40 p.m. on the same day, arriving in  
Shrewsbury about 10-0 p.m.

**J. HOULSTON** respectfully announces to his numerous friends  
and the public, that *he has now no interest in the Great  
Western Trains*; and has been favoured with permission from  
the Shropshire Union and London and North-Western Com-  
panies to convey his passengers over their lines, (this being  
the *only route* to the Exhibition,) and they will therefore con-  
fer a favour on **J. Houlston**, if they will kindly ask for *Houls-  
ton's Tickets to Manchester and back*, which can be had at the  
several Stations on the Shropshire Union Railway, or of

**JOHN HOULSTON,**  
Manager and Conductor,  
Wellington and Oaken-Gates, Salop.

newspaper commended to its readers the trip's 'extraordinary low fares [8sh. first class, 4sh. covered carriages], with the option of returning the same day or any day up to Friday' [at an extra cost], and went on to extol the organiser's conscientiousness:

'Mr Houlston enters into these holiday trips with much genuine sympathy, makes such careful arrangements for the comfort of his passengers, and pays such personal attention to their wants and safety, that a journey with him is made exceedingly pleasant'.

The following week's issue of the *Newport Advertiser* (September 26th) gave a report of the train's outward journey, noting the prompt departure from Newport at 5.20 am, the delay at Wellington because of the late arrival of the Coalport Dodger, using the avoiding line at Shrewsbury, making a refreshment stop at Welshpool, awaiting the passing of an up train at Cemmes Road and arriving at Aberystwyth at 10.30 am.

It again praised the organiser: 'The excursionists (about 300) expressed their entire satisfaction with the arrangements made both for their safety and for their enjoyment, as all was admirably conducted under Mr Houlston's personal superintendence'.

From the time they moved to Oakengates, John Houlston and his wife Elizabeth ran a bookshop and stationers: in the 1861 census John is described as 'bookseller and auctioneer', in 1871 Elizabeth as 'bookseller and stationer' and John as 'auctioneer and general agent'.

The latter appears to be the first reference to the work he had been doing for some 20 years in the travel business. In addition to the rail excursions, John appears also to have made arrangements for those contemplating emigration; and it was this side of the business that his son Henry took up. In trade directories of the 1880s and 1890s Henry Houlston is listed as 'emigration agent, Stafford Road, Oakengates'. His father, John, had died in 1875.

1858), which allowed return within the week. Day excursions to special events in 1861 included that to the Cup Day at Chester Races on May 8th and to Birmingham Union and Pleasure Fair on September 26th.

One rail trip organised by Houlston is well documented in the *Newport Advertiser* in September 1868. The issue of

September 19th announced: 'Houlston's second special express train from Stafford, Newport, Donnington, Coalport Branch and Wellington to Aberystwith (sic) and back'

to run the following Monday, arriving at Aberystwyth about 9.30 am, returning at 6.15 pm and arriving at Wellington at 10.15 pm.

Another item in the same

*The tenth anniversary of Wellington's 'twinning' with Châtenay-Malabry was marked by a re-signing of a charter in Market Square on Thursday 29th April.*

The concept of 'twinning' one town with another was virtually unknown until after the Second World War ended, and the notion gradually spread that forging links with communities of similar size and 'feel' could help inhabitants understand and appreciate cultural differences, and take part in joint projects intended to foster good relations between the two.

Châtenay-Malabry is a south-western district of Paris, within easy reach of the city's airports and train stations (Châtenay-Malabry is served by the station at Robinson on Paris RER line B).

Those who have visited the settlement have been more than impressed with its cultural life, and sites well worth visiting.

When Wellington first signed the twinning charter on 13th April 2001 (a copy is held in the Council Chamber at Wellington Civic Centre), Châtenay-Malabry was already twinned with Bergeustadt in Germany (in 1967) and Landsmeer, Netherlands (1986).

Former councillor Gary Davies was a key figure in promoting the twinning from 1998 onwards; Châtenay-Malabry was chosen as a result of discussions with a French teacher at Charlton school. Since then, Wellington & District Twinning Association, which has a link on the Wellington Town Council web site, is the channel through which all matters regarding the twinning pass; the link provides various details about the twinning as well as important contact details.

*(If you'd like to know more and become involved in the Association's activities, please get in touch with the Association.)*

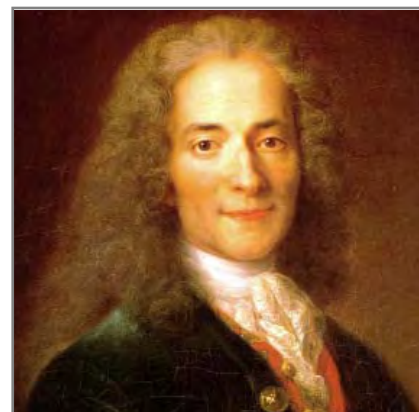


*Re-signing the Charter, from left to right: Councillor Janie Noele Helies (Châtenay-Malabry town councillor), Tom Heaton (Twinning chairman), Jean-Paul Martinerie (First Deputy Mayor, Châtenay-Malabry), Barry Tillotson (Mayor of Wellington), Claudie Bouchard (Châtenay-Malabry town councillor).*

Several important people have been born or lived in Châtenay-Malabry, including writers Voltaire (1694-1778, right) and François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848); poet and essayist Sully Prudhomme (1839-1907, Nobel Prize winner in 1901); painter and sculptor Jean Fautrier (1898-1964) and Christian philosophers Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) and Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005).

Perhaps the most notable of these, in the context of Châtenay-Malabry is Chateaubriand (below), who settled at a modest estate called La Vallée des Loups (*Wolf Valley*) in August 1807.

Adjacent to the house is the Arboretum de la Vallée-aux-Loups: this park was created c.1777 by Chevalier Francois-Louis Durant du Bignon and confiscated during the French Revolution. In 1804 it



was acquired by Louis Cadet de Gassicourt, pharmacist to Napoleon, who collected and grew rare flora in the park. The grounds (below) now form one of several beautiful parks in the area.

Continuing the pharmaceutical theme, another important aspect of the town's economy is the Faculty of Pharmacy at the Ecole Centrale Paris, whose French National Laboratory is responsible for drugs testing among athletes.

Châtenay-Malabry's web site address is;

[www.chatenay-malabry.fr](http://www.chatenay-malabry.fr)





**R**oger Jones (below) of Truewood Joinery Ltd, Shrewsbury, is in charge of renovating the former *Shoes in the Square* shop at 14 Market Square, Wellington.

The owner of the premises wants Truewood Joinery to reinstate, as far as possible, the outward design of the shop as it appeared in 1960 (above) at which time it was used by long-established chemists Bates & Hunt.

Removal of a panel on the left inside of the front window has revealed a stone plinth with surmounted carved column, which in turn supports a curved wooden feature which has several circular dowel holes drilled into it (below, centre right).



As is often the case with such discoveries, they raise more questions than answers. Nevertheless, we can draw certain conclusions.

It's most unlikely the stone column is an original feature of the property; the implication is that it was 'recycled' from some other, presumably demolished, property. The fact that it is a column may tempt some to suggest that it came from the former Market House, also in Market Square, which was demolished c.1805. However, the column seems too narrow to support the heavy timbered structure which comprised the Market House itself. Furthermore, the overall column isn't particularly high, unless the column itself has been shortened at some stage to make it fit into the space available. So, where did it come from? And why put it here?

I would suggest that both the column and the wooden feature above it were intended to make the premises appear more grandiose than they had done previously. The dowel holes suggest other lengths of wood were attached to it, perhaps to add other impressive features to the shop frontage. However, it seems odd that only one column exists ...



or is there at least one more, perhaps hidden behind a panel in an adjoining shop?

A trip to the cellar raises a few more questions. The oldest walls are blocks of dressed sandstone (above). Interestingly, there is a bricked-up doorway which seems to have led into the cellar of the nextdoor premises on the southern side. The doorway frame (below) is made of carved stone and still sports heavy iron fittings.

What conclusions can we draw from these tantalising discoveries?

That the properties joined by the two cellars once formed a single shop.

That the frontage to the shop was previously set back a few feet from the Square itself and that it, together with other properties, encroached into the open space of the Square over the years.

That several adjustments to the shop front have been made, either to modernise or repair fire damage.

Sadly, none of the photographs in my extensive collection of 1890s+ Market Square photographs yields any clues regarding the stone column, nor a shop front which features the curved wooden feature above it.



Maps are very useful tools for historians. Not only do they reveal places and features which may have disappeared long ago, or increased or reduced their relative importance over the decades, they can also indicate information that was considered especially relevant at any given time. Maps are usually made for a reason, and serve a specific purpose.

Maps are very useful tools for historians. Not only do they reveal places and features which may have disappeared long ago, or gained or reduced their relative importance over the decades, they can also indicate information that was considered especially relevant at any given time.

The 1741 map of Britain (below) reflects the journeys considered most common and/or essential to people predominantly from the London area, who needed to know which were the most direct routes from the capital city to county and other important towns, and the distances between them.

Travel between a town on one major route and a nearby town on another could, more often than not, be arranged locally and didn't need to be included. Note the interesting name for the North Sea.

The 1835 map of Shropshire was devised to meet entirely different needs. Here the information details stage coach routes, administrative divisions, major and not-so-major roads serving all corners of the county and beyond. An incredible amount of information is contained on this map, and an essential key, or 'explanation' is provided.

Comparing maps from different periods can also be fascinating, and often indicate changing priorities and tastes in design.



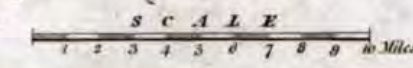
# SHREWSBURY ELECTORAL DISTRICT



- HUNDREDS.**
- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Shrewsbury Liberty | 8 Wenlock Franchise |
| 2 Oswestry           | 9 Cradock           |
| 3 Preshill           | 10 Minnow           |
| 4 North Bradford     | 11 Purdlow          |
| 5 South Bradford     | 12 Garbury          |
| 6 Brimley            | 13 Ford             |
| 7 Stoddiesden        | 14 Over             |

**EXPLANATION.**

Twenty feet or more  
 Marsh and boggy lands  
 Village and Parishes  
 Seats and Parks  
 Castles  
 Bridges and Ferries  
 Townships  
 Places where Roman coins have been found  
 Townships and Principal Roads  
 Canals  
 Mail Coach Roads  
 Railway Stations  
 Roman Stations and Roads the names of which are known are distinguished by Old Print Characters  
 Roman Roads the names of which are uncertain  
 Townships and number of members are distinguished by stars, according to the number of members returned  
 The small figures denote the distance of each place from London the Roman figures the distance between any two towns or places.



Place of Election Shrewsbury, & Church Stretton. Proposed Railways

Nobody was more surprised than Clement Attlee when his Labour Party was swept to power with a huge majority in the summer of 1945. The country was full of hope and optimism that the election pledges of homes for all, full employment, free health care and education, social security protection against poverty would now be fulfilled. It was a massive programme of radical social reform combined with plans to nationalise most of the major industries.

Clement's wife, Violet, who always drove him around in their old Hillman Minx saloon, waited outside Buckingham Palace as her husband was asked to form a new government. She wondered, over her knitting, whether he would be able to deliver these ambitious promises.

Amongst the raft of Acts passed in those first years of Attlee's attempt to build a New Jerusalem, was the 1946 New Towns Act. Housing was a huge issue. Nearly 750,000 homes had been destroyed through bombing and no new houses had been built during the war years. Many older properties were falling into disrepair. The papers of the time are full of housing articles charting the progress (or lack of it) in the attempt to build 5 million new homes in ten years. The main problem was money. In 1946 the government was effectively bankrupt. All our resources had been spent on the war. Only an American loan on very strict conditions kept us afloat. Maynard Keynes, our leading economist,

went to New York to ask the more right wing American government in the USA for \$5 billion dollars to build a socialist state in the UK. He failed. What we got was \$3.5 billion at 2% over 50 years. However the conditions under which it was granted were so harsh, parliament came within a whisker of rejecting it. By 1949 the pound had collapsed from \$4.03 to \$2.80 and Britain's position as the leading world economic power had been replaced by the USA.

In Shropshire housing conditions were as bad as anywhere. People, often ex servicemen were living in tents, railway carriages and converted buses. The conditions according to one official report were 'worse than the slums of east London.' Anger became so strong that groups of illegal squatters took over old army huts (Donnington, Ketley Brook and Arleston) and even occupied old prisoner of war camps (Cluddley, Orleton and St Georges).

The desperate attempt to build more houses led to many new building designs. On the Hollies Estate, steel single storey prefabricated houses were erected. Joan and Wolfgang, who had been a prisoner of war at Cluddley, were early residents. She and her new husband lived with her parents for three years (1952 to 1955) before a house became available. 'They were fine,' she said, 'apart from the noise of the rain on the tin roof and a condensation problem. We had heated towel rails, a fridge, immersion heater, gas cooker and

gas boiler and a fitted kitchen. I brought up my two children in this house. It was restyled and improved in the 1970s and I still live there.'

On Arleston estate, the new houses were erected using German prisoner of war labour. They were 'Airey'



Temporary homes (above) and the first style of steel prefabricated houses.



houses; double decker prefabs made from concrete panels fixed to uprights with looped copper wire. The upper story was bolted onto the top of these uprights and a conventional sloping roof added. They were large spacious semis, well suited for family life. George and Olive had been squatters in the old German prison camp at Cluddley for nearly two years. (1949 to 1951). They and their two children were delighted to be rehoused in their new house.

These expanded housing estates were the precursor to the building of the new town of Telford. Under the 1946 New Town Act the first 14 new towns were started between 1947 and 1950. The second wave began in 1961 and by early 1968 eight more



Renovated prefab homes at Woodlands Avenue, Wellington (above) and a 'double-decker' prefab of the type built at Arleston and Donnington.



towns were under construction including Telford. From the beginning there was controversy. When the Minister of Housing, Lewis Silkin, went to a public meeting to launch Stevenage New Town, he was shouted down with cries of 'Gestapo' and 'Dictator'. His ministerial car had its tyres slashed and the petrol tank filled with sand. Some wit changed the sign on the railway station to read 'Silkingrad.' E M Foster said, 'The new town fell out of a blue sky like a meteorite upon the ancient and delicate scenery of Hertfordshire.'

Similar reactions were not uncommon as the New Towns Project unfolded. Although Shropshire County Council and Dawley Urban District Council approved the establishment of a new town here, there was popular opposition. Initially, three new towns were proposed in our region: one at Dawley, one at Woofferton on the border with Hereford and one in Staffordshire at Swynnerton. Only the Dawley project went ahead (1963). It was to cover the old settlements of Dawley, Madeley, Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale, with an anticipated population of 90,000 covering 9000 acres under the Dawley Development Corporation (DDC). By 1968, all the plans had changed. Wellington and Oakengates were to be included, the population forecasts were doubled to 200,000 people and the size went up to 19,000 acres. Telford Development Corporation (TDC) was born.

Part of the problem of local acceptance lay in the initial legislation of the 1946 Act. Development Corporations were established to buy the land, sometimes by compulsory purchase, and push the infrastructural building work forward as fast as possible so private contractors could develop housing, shops and factories. The membership and chairs of the corporations were nominated by the government at Westminster, who funded the projects, but they were in no way democratically responsive to local people and



*Arleston: three types of home. From the left: red brick 1930s Council houses; white painted 1948 'Airey' prefabs; flat-topped 1930s Air Ministry houses.*

frequently bypassed the wishes of the locally elected town and parish councils. Profits from land sales and rent income went back to London. Hence the cries of 'dictator' that greeted Silkin at Stevenage.

Not everyone was antagonistic. Sallieann (below) was living in a caravan at Coven near Wolverhampton. It was a bitterly cold winter; she was expecting a baby. The offer of a terraced house on the recently built estate at Woodside seemed like a gift from the gods. She moved there in 1972, after seeing an advert in the *Express and Star*. It was aimed to attract young married couples with families. Local Wolverhampton people felt Telford was stealing the brightest and the best for the new town. However, when she arrived things did not work out well to start with. 'Never have I felt so lonely and isolated,' she said. 'I was so homesick for Wolverhampton and all that had been so familiar there, I felt bereaved. The house was fine but I could not settle. When Brookside, the next estate to be



developed, was finished. I asked for a transfer. There was no problem. I got a nice three-bedroomed terrace with a garage. One of the best things was that all my neighbours were also new to the estate and we soon got together and built a friendly and supportive group. Those first years were really happy. We went together to the town centre to the new Carrefour supermarket, enjoying the shopping and each other's company. The very best thing that happened was meeting one of my new neighbours: Andy. Needless to say we soon married and are still together. However, the atmosphere on the estate changed quite quickly. Two new families moved in and the crime level increased. I was burgled, as were several other neighbours. It was quite amazing what such a small group could do to spoil all our lives. My friend and I decided to move and came to Shawburch where we both still live.'

The talk amongst planners was all about powers for central redevelopment, curvilinear planning forms, satellites, dispersal and overspill, green belts, new towns and district centre finance. The real story was about Joan and Wolfgang, George and Olive, and Sallieann and Andy whose lives were transformed for the better by the policies and energy of Violet's husband Clement when he accepted the post of Prime Minister from the King on 27th July 1945 and returned home in the old Hillman Minx to begin the task of renewing his country.

*Teaching local history should be an essential part of school curricula. With the help of Shropshire Archives, some Wellington youngsters gain a unique insight into Life in The Workhouse.*

Shropshire Archives has been leading a project funded by Find Your Talent with three local Wellington schools.

They have been looking into the past and future of Wellington Library.

Children from Apley Wood and Wrekin View Primary schools visited Shropshire archives to see all sorts of documents about Wellington, and found that part of the Library in Walker Street used to be a Workhouse.

They walked from their schools to the library and were shown clues in the building, like old fireplaces and staircases, and heard ghost stories from Jim Hatfield about its days as a workhouse and how some Victorian children were scared of it.



*Examining original documents held in Shropshire Archives.*

With Appletree Theatre company, they created stories based on the real experiences of the library's former inhabitants, taken from Archive documents, and developed these into dramas which were performed in the original building.

Film of the whole project has been made including 'Talking Heads', short pieces straight to camera, from Charlton School drama class. Members of the public will be able to see a short version of this film on the Find Your Talent and archivezone websites at Shropshire Archives and in Telford Libraries, and later in the summer there will

be a display of work some Wrekin View children are doing about the future Library now being built as part of the town's Civic Quarter.

Partners in the project were: Shropshire Archives, Telford Library Service, Appletree Theatre Company, Engaging Places (Campaign for Architecture & the Built Environment) and Telford & Wrekin Architects, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and, most importantly, students from Charlton School and Apley Wood and Wrekin View Primary Schools.

For further details contact Liz Young at Shropshire Archives on 01743 255353, or email [archives@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:archives@shropshire.gov.uk).



*Pupils from Wrekin View primary school outside a former entrance to the Union Workhouse. The original 1797 building was replaced by the premises seen here c.1840. A completely new workhouse was constructed on Holyhead Road in the 1870s, whereupon the former workhouse in Walker Street became the Union Brewery (with an archway into a rear courtyard), which continued to trade until the 1920s. The photo above was taken in the 1960s, shortly before the furthest right section was demolished to make way for the Tax Office.*



NEW AND SECOND-HAND FURNITURE WAREHOUSE,  
 (Opposite Mr. Southam's Porter Stores.)  
 NEW-STREET, WELLINGTON.

**WILLIAM BARNETT,**  
 JOINER, CABINET MAKER, AND UPHOLSTERER,

HAVING taken commodious premises and commenced business in the above department, begs to state that he has on hand a variety of first-class articles in PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL FURNITURE, which he will dispose of at the lowest remunerative prices.

AN ASSORTMENT OF HOME-MADE BEDSTEADS, MATTRESSES, BEDS, &c.  
 COFFINS MADE ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.

GOODS MADE TO ORDER WITH THE UTMOST POSSIBLE DISPATCH.

W. B. trusts that by excellence of workmanship, combined with moderate charges, to merit a share of public patronage and support.

Wellington, July 5th, 1859.

**A. R. HARRIS,**  
**Upholsterer.**

Upholstering in all branches.  
 Chesterfield Suites, Sofas,  
 Couches, Bar Seating,  
 Cabinet Repairs.

Bedding, Hair and Wool Mattresses re-made.  
 Blinds, Carpets and Linos fitted.  
 A trial solicited.

Winton Lodge, King St.,  
 WELLINGTON.

**A. MILLAR,**  
 CABINET MAKER, CARPENTER, AND JOINER,  
 ADMASTON,  
 WELLINGTON, SALOP,  
 FURNITURE and VENETIAN BLINDS, ANTIQUE CARVINGS  
 made to order.

**H. TEECE,**  
 DEALER IN  
**ANTIQUÉ FURNITURE.**

Old Furniture Restored and Re-decorated in the most approved Designs of the 15th, 16th, and 17th Centuries.

BEST PRICES GIVEN FOR ANTIQUE FURNITURE.

NOTE THE ADDRESS:  
 97, Wrekin Road, WELLINGTON.

**M. CHAPMAN & SON,**  
**Basket Manufacturers,**  
 NEW STREET, WELLINGTON.

A great variety of Fancy Baskets and Wicker Chairs always in stock.

Hampers of all descriptions made on the Premises.

DEALERS IN BROOMS AND BRUSHES OF ALL KINDS

**Henry Addison & Co., Ltd.,**  
 Waterloo Works,  
 Patentees & Manufacturers  
 OF EVERY DESCRIPTION OF  
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 AND  
 Mission Room Furniture.

SPECIALITIES

Wood Mantels.  
 Patent Folding Partitions.  
 Bank and Office Fittings.

CATALOGUES FREE ON APPLICATION.

Wellington, Salop.

**H. HARRIS,**  
**The Cash House Furnisher,**

41, CHURCH STREET,  
 WELLINGTON, SALOP,  
 MAKES GOOD, SOUND,  
**RELIABLE FURNITURE,**  
 AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE PRICE FOR CASH.

Own make Sitting Room Suites, in Leather, from	...	£6 10 0
Own make do. do. in Velvet "	...	8 10 0
Own make Good Dining Room Suites	...	12 12 0
Own make Telescope Dining Tables	...	2 5 0
Sideboards, in Mahogany or Walnut	...	6 10 0
Overmantels from ...	...	1 10 0
Own make Bedroom Suites, from	...	8 10 0

Iron and Brass Bedsteads, Spring Mattresses and Bedding, &c.,  
 at Wholesale Prices.

CARPETS, RUGS, LINOLEUMS, OIL CLOTHS, MATTING, MATS, &c. GOOD  
 SOUND KITCHEN FURNITURE OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

**UNDERTAKER, &c.**  
 EXPERIENCED WORKMEN IN EVERY BRANCH OF THE TRADE.

Dates of adverts appearing in trade directories and newspapers.

Left column, from the top: 1859; 1878, 1881, 1889.

Right hand column: 1920, 1913, 1903, 1906.

**J. CHETWOOD,**  
 DEALER IN  
**ANTIQUÉ FURNITURE,**  
 OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

Eyton Farm, Wellington,  
 Mile-and-half from Wellington Station.

Goods bought or sold on Commission.

Wanted:—Old Mahogany Chairs, Oak Dressers, Shelves, 8-Day Clocks, Chests, Etc.

*The following reports appeared in the Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News at various times during 1910.*

January

WELLINGTON WELCOMES  
IN THE NEW YEAR

*'With the exception of a little hilarity in the streets caused principally by the exuberance of sportive youths and frolicsome maidens, the Old Year passed from Wellington in a very peaceful way, and the last hour was attended with fitting solemnity. The night itself was serene, the atmosphere quite balmy and the New Year stepped into its predecessor's shoes under the best of atmospherical conditions. Strongly contrasting with the buoyant behavior in the streets were the watch-night services in the various places of worship.'*

There were positive signs of the year commencing with a fair amount of prosperity and activity. The town was looking forward to the completion of the Public Baths 'bringing with them not only a boon to the inhabitants who regard cleanliness as next to godliness, but providing facilities for the youngsters of the town to learn to swim.'

Apparently in Shrewsbury there was scarcely a child over ten who could not swim, whereas in Wellington only 1 in a 100 possessed the 'natatory art'.

There were plans for buildings and extension of the reservoir, water mains, and sanitary projects. Signs of increased employment and general prosperity were augmented by a large Colonial contract secured at Donnington, advantageous for Wellington markets.

*'A fire of a destructive character occurred at the premises of Messrs Aston furnishers, at the corner of Walker Street and Tan Bank, and largely filled with valuable stock. The outbreak was discovered in the small hours of Saturday morning, just when workmen were hastening to their employment but the alarm was really given by a maiden of the next door neighbour.'*

*'The work of the Fire Brigade came in for special praise which seems to have been well-deserved and the wisdom of providing a steam fire engine seems to have been thoroughly appreciated. It was within an ace too that the fire escape might have been equally valuable.'*



*Mr Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, visited Wellington and addressed a large audience in the College Gymnasium and later in the Lecture Hall. He was there to support the Parliamentary (Liberal) candidate Mr C S Henry. The Chancellor was vociferously cheered, causing laughter when he said he was surprised to see such a large number of 'cheery Liberals' as the Daily Mail seemed to suggest they had all disappeared. He remarked he was also pleased to see that the influence of the Daily Mail had not had a demoralizing effect on Wellington. Although 'found the heart of England absolutely sound', he did remark that he was glad 'that all the ladies had not joined the Suffragettes'.*



Left: An advertisement for Astons in 1909 when it was located on the corner of Walker Street and Tan Bank.

Above: The main Astons furniture showroom in New Street (to which the firm moved after the devastating 1910 fire), as seen in May 1960.

March

#### HEALTH IN WELLINGTON

Dr White, the Medical Officer of Health announced that the population of Wellington mid-1909 was 7,500. The death rate was 10.9 of the population which was possibly a record for the town and was probably due to improvement in sanitation and the sewage works. The chief causes of death were pneumonia, cancer, phthisis, TB- and heart-related diseases, and influenza. There were 16 deaths of children under 1 year, which compared favourably with rural England and Wales.

It was also reported that a letter had been received from the Wellington Ladies' Ambulance Committee offering the Council the use of the new horse ambulance.

New sewage works were completed; consumption of water reckoned to be 14 gallons per head per diem.

#### COOKERY LECTURES AT WELLINGTON

*'Man ... is largely a creature of the grosser instincts and good cooking does much to lubricate the wheels of life.'* Lectures given at the Town Hall, Wellington were intended to popularise Brown and Polson's 'Paisley Flour'.

April

#### EASTER CELEBRATIONS

*'Almost before the breaking of Good Friday's brilliant morning, the treble voices of bakers' boys were heard proclaiming the presence of hot cross buns as filling repasts in the solemn hours about to be spent by people of pious inclination, indicating that this old custom of affected gastronomic denial linger long as a Lenten rule.'*

Easter Sunday church services were well attended, but the quiet start and religious calm soon gave way to motor cars which *'began to scatter the dust and diffuse the petrol'*. Football crowds descended on the towns and *'Lenten seriousness and serenity appeared to be obliterated with carnival gaiety'*.

Easter Monday was the occasion for outdoor sports,

amusements and climbing The Wrekin.

*'One gratifying feature of the Easter festivities was the extreme orderliness of the crowd, with only a few cases of excessive indulgence' and people behaved with 'agreeable propriety and splendid good temper even in the face of rivalry of the keenest description'.*

May

#### DEATH OF KING EDWARD VII



The *Wellington Journal* devoted many pages to the death (on 6th May) and funeral of the King. A Memorial service was held at the Parish Church on 20 May at 3 p.m. (the hour of the burial), with flags at half mast and muffled peals. Messages of condolence were reported from the Colonies, around the world, and locally, with columns edged in black. Other pages described his achievements, activities, with a potted life history.



WHIT MONDAY

The Whit Monday sports festival at the Bucks' Head ground attracted a large number of holiday makers. Sporting events included a marathon, 2 miles walking handicap, kicking the football, sack race, tug of war and Catch the Train race (*whatever that was!*). Music was provided by the Wellington Old Volunteers Brass Band at a country fair and dancing on The Green in the evening concluded the festivities.

#### DEATH OF MRS BOWRING

Mrs Bowring, wife of Mr. John Crump Bowring, died aged 72. She was described as being of a *'generous disposition, considerate for the poor and unrestricted philanthropy'*. Her husband was reportedly one of the oldest and most successful tradesmen that Wellington had ever had. Her generosity extended to gifts to the Parish Church, including a marble pulpit and gates (below).

She also played a part in the social side of the Church *'particularly as it had regard to the elevation of the character of women and girls'*.

Her funeral was well attended - the flag at the Parish Church flew at half mast and the bells were muffled. Her bequests were wide-ranging - to hospitals, distribution of coal to the poor and provision for what became the Bowring Recreation ground and the Cottage Hospital, off Haygate Road (where she had lived).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### TELFORD HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

If you're interested in listening to a variety of other speakers and enjoying history-based entertainment, pay a visit to

<http://thas.co.uk>

They, like us, need your support to spread the historical word throughout The Wrekin area. The site gives details of planned visits, events and monthly meetings.

## PLEASE SUPPORT THIS SPECIAL EVENT

### JOHN RANDALL 1810-1910:



#### SHROPSHIRE'S GRAND OLD MAN

A day school to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth and the centenary of his death, on Saturday, 4th September, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm at The John Randall School, Queen Street, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire.

The day school will cover all aspects of John Randall's long and fruitful life from his birth and early years in Broseley, through his wide-ranging interests in geology and history and his skills as a china painter, to his death as a respected writer, publisher, local politician and Freeman of the Borough of Wenlock.

Speakers will include George Baugh, Neil Clarke, Roger Edmundson, Shelagh Lewis, Hugh Torrens and Barrie Trinder.

A small exhibition of Randall memorabilia will be on display. Lunch and morning and afternoon refreshments included in the ticket price of £5.00. Tickets and further information from Shelagh Lewis, Madeley Living History Project, Jubilee House, 74 High Street, Madeley, TF7 5AH. Tel: 01952 567288  
[email: shelagh@madeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:shelagh@madeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk)

For details of the **Midsummer Fayre** in Wellington on Saturday, 19th June, and this year's summer season of public entertainment, visit [www.wellingtonunderthewrekin.co.uk](http://www.wellingtonunderthewrekin.co.uk)

### WELLINGTON HISTORY GROUP: PUBLIC TALK 2010

*The last talk for this season will start at 7:30 p.m. in the Civic Offices at Wellington. Admission is free but donations are invited after the lecture. The talk will be:*

*Tuesday 15th June:*

*Allan Frost*

### WELLINGTON'S MARKETS AND FAIRS

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*Throughout October:*

### WELLINGTON LITERARY FESTIVAL

*See Press for details of talks, or visit  
[www.wellington-shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.wellington-shropshire.gov.uk)*

### WELLINGTON AND DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION

If you'd like to know more about Châtenay-Malabry and how you can help to Association, or just simply take part in their activities, visit

[welltwin.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://welltwin.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)  
or telephone their Secretary Phyllis Harpham (01952) 740315, or email her at [bharphamems@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bharphamems@yahoo.co.uk)

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