MEMORIES of OLD WELLINGTON

Volume 2
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INTRODUCTION

When this project began it was thought that people with long memories of Wellington would be willing to talk about how the town was when they were young. We hoped that two or three people would take part but it soon became clear that this was an open-ended task and a vast amount of tape was accumulating; the book would never start.

The authors decided to take out a part, turn it into volume one and see if it would sell. Printing costs were more than expected and the society worried about how to pay the bills, especially if no-one bought the book.

Local firms and individuals were approached for sponsorship and we would like to record our thanks to the following:

Maxell Ltd.,
Lloyds Bank plc.,
Telford Travel,
John Cotton, Printer,
Bernard Bagnall, Wrekin Service Station,
Councillor E.A.E. Griffiths.

We are also grateful to Hobson's and Austins for selling the books.

In the event 250 copies were printed and sold in ten days. With two reprints, seven hundred have been sold to date.

Delighted and encouraged by the success of the first volume Mesdames Audrey Smith and Kath Pearce set to work on the second volume.

The series gives a fascinating insight into Wellington at the turn of the century. It is not an academic study but rather a collection of anecdotes remembered over half a century and written as they were told. If the years have played a trick or two with memories, no matter. It is the flavour of the times that matters most and here is the true essence of Old Wellington.

I thoroughly recommend this book to all friends around the Wrekin.

GEORGE EVANS

INTRODUCTION

This book is not intended as a true history of Wellington, but the memories of people who lived and worked in Wellington in the early part of this century.

We make no apology for the inevitable repetition or slight mistakes of the whereabouts of some of the buildings, but this is a book of people's memories and who are we to interfere with that?

We would like to thank all those people who welcomed us into their homes and allowed us, and you, to share their happy memories of bygone days.

A special thank you to Hobsons and Austins for their help in selling these booklets.

This is the second of our booklets and we hope you get as much pleasure out of it as we had compiling it.

KATHLEEN and DON PEARCE
AUDREY SMITH
I was born in Birmingham of a Wellingtonian who had moved there. My Grandfather was a tailor and he had a shop which is at present on the corner of Market Street and the Square, not the ladies underwear shop, the other side. As many Wellington shopkeepers did in those days they owned the premises and lived there. My Grandfather's living quarters were over the shop. In those living quarters my father was born. They lived there for quite some time. I can't say exactly when my Grandfather moved out of Wellington, in fact I don't know that, I wasn't even born and I don't think my father was married.

I was born in Birmingham but I came back to the home of my forebears after I had qualified and spent a little time in France with the Services. I came back to join my great uncle's practice, the late Dr. George Hollies who as the senior partner in Hollies and Wedd the other partner being Dr. Gilbert Wedd. I came as the assistant to my great uncle. He lived at The Lawns and Dr. Wedd lived in New Street in a house called Stone House which is where Currys is now. They were our principal surgeries and that is where I began in practice. Dr. Wedd, like the elder inhabitants of that quarter, lived at his place of business.

Our practice was largely private or club. The poorer people belonged to Friendly Societies and we provided both medical attention of all sorts including mid-wifery and medicines. My first job as a young assistant was to learn how to wrap up a bottle of medicine for private patients in shiny white paper and seal it both top and bottom with red sealing wax. I then had to write the name and address of the patient on the outside of the paper. Before I came Dr. Hollies employed a boy to take the medicine around in a basket. One of those boys was Mr. Ward who later had his own shop at the bottom end of High Street, a stationers and book sellers.

Also medicines were the only thing that the Postmen were allowed to take out into the country and another of my duties was to take down the bottles of medicine destined for country people to Wellington Sorting Office for the postmen to deliver that day.

This was before the days of immunisation practices and there was a good deal of T.B., the bovine type which attacked bones and glands and also some pulmonary, consumption of the lungs, but long ago before I came here the children's infectious diseases were rampant, particularly Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria. If diphtheria got into a family it was a fatal disease and it often decimated the children.

In the old Parish Church burial ground, just inside where the lych gate is now, on the right hand side of that path was a stone to a family of Edwards. Now this is going back long before my time because the dates on the stone were in the first decade of the 19th century. In the space of about 10 days, 4 or five children died and I suspect that was diphtheria, because as I said if it got into a family it spread through the whole of it. In those days scarlet fever was different too. It was treated at home with antiseptic precautions. A child would be confined into one room and attended by the doctor and perhaps the District Nurse, we had to try and isolate the room by hanging a sheet over the outside of the door pinning it up and splashing it with a solution of disinfectant. Everybody had to go under the sheet to go into the room and under the sheet to go back out. That happened to my own children.

T.B. was carried in the milk, the cattle had T.B. I remember the late Dr. Elliott who was the T.B. officer for this part of the world said to me 'You know we could stamp out bovine T.B. if they would allow us to'. If we had been allowed it would have meant that the farmers herds would have been decimated of course. Now the cattle are inoculated since then, some drugs have been discovered that counteract T.B. of the lungs. I remember myself when steroids and antibiotics were discovered and began to be used. The first were anti-biotics against septic things like boils and bacterial diseases. These had been difficult to cure with poultices and things like that. Now a few doses of an anti-biotic and the infection is stopped. Almost the last anti-biotic that was discovered was the one that was against T.B. I remember saying "I think we are on the way to finding a cure for T.B." Of course now we not only have the cure but it can be prevented from starting by the E.C.G. inoculations that the children get in their early teens.
When diphtheria was so rife they hadn't got any cure for it really, this is going back long before my time as a doctor. If the diphtheria got into the child's throat or in particular into the wind pipe it was invariably fatal and very infectious. Then it was discovered that an anti-toxin could be developed against the toxin of the diphtheria germ; it began to be used but I think at first very gingerly because the dose was very big and Doctors, I think, were very wary of using it. I remember my Great Uncle, Dr Hollies told me he remembered seeing a child with diphtheria of the windpipe and he knew that he was going to die within 24 hours unless he had anti-toxin so he decided to get some of this new fangled anti-toxin and inject it. The syringe I may say was 10 cubic centimetres. He gave a proper dose of it and he had expected had he not done that the child would have been dead when he went next morning; instead, to his surprise, it was sitting up in bed and beginning to eat. That was, I believe, the first dose of anti-toxin ever given in the county of Shropshire.

During the Second World War two of the Wellington doctors, (there were a total of 8 of us in practice in Wellington), were called up. Dr Bambridge - he was a territorial in the army 4th K.S.L.I., and Dr Pollock was a territorial with the RAF. The Air Force were called up on the outset of war and their partners had to buckle to try and cover both practices and the rest of us joined in and helped and about half way through the war we all met together in the late G.W. Thompson's waiting room where the Lanyons are now and put our cards on the table and found that we all had approximately the same size practices and so we said we will join up and run this on a business footing. That was the start of Wellington Medical Practice that now practices from the Health Centre down Chapel Lane.

Some doctors weren't qualified but that was going back to the middle of the last century. Dr Hollies himself began as an apprentice to a Doctor down in Cambridgeshire somewhere. He didn't have to be qualified but you had to do an apprenticeship and pass examinations. No Doctor was allowed to practice unless he had passed examinations and had certificates to show it. That is the difference that the lay person doesn't understand between the General Medical Council and the British Medical Association, they are two separate bodies altogether, the G.M.C. is the licensing body who licences Doctors who have proved their ability by passing examinations. Now the British Medical Association is an entirely voluntary association of Doctors founded first for the advancement of knowledge but has become a sort of mutual benefits, in fact it has by law now had to become a trades union in order to represent the Doctors in negotiations with the state. It is still a voluntary body and in fact there is a pretty stiff subscription to it. I fortunately have been more than fifty years in the Association, and on the fiftieth year they gave me a membership card embossed in golden letters and I don't have to pay any more subscriptions.

We had a private practice; you either bought a practice from somebody who was retiring or a practice that was frowned on, you just settled in the town and put up a plate and hoped that patients would come to you. But that was very much frowned upon by other doctors whose living was being interfered with and they were not very friendly towards the Doctors who just put up a plate. But a man who bought himself in, and there was a sort of going - rate for it, would call on the other doctors and tell them that he was buying Dr. so and so's practice and that he would be practicing from the retiring doctor's premises. They would not exactly welcome the new competitor but they would consider that he had done the right thing by buying himself in and introducing himself.

Before my time, in the time of Dr. Hollies who was Chairman of the Wellington Improvement Committee, he told me some terrible tales about the water supply and the sanitary arrangements. Particularly the bottom end of New Street which is on the slope. The sanitary arrangements used to pollute the water - the wells. In fact he told me that one of his patients down there, one of the shop-keepers, said "Doctor I have been suffering a bit with the colley-wobbles lately and I don't like the smell of my water". "Come and have a look at it for me will you". Dr. Hollies went out into the garden and saw the well and smelt sewage. He looked over the garden wall and there within 10 yards of the well was a cesspool for next door.

A lot of the shops had their own private wells. One or two people say they went down their cellars and they had wells down there.
I have a story about a whale. My father was a Doctor and he was pretty prominent in medical politics, in fact he was the vice-president of the British Medical Association, and also President of the Derbyshire branch of the Association. They had a Presidents Ball in Buxton, Derbyshire and my first wife and I decided to go to the ball, and we did, but we also had a baby who was under a year old. We did have a maid so we decided to leave the baby with her. We set off in a little Austin 7 to drive to Buxton to the ball. We had a very good time there and we left about midnight in a snow storm to come over the Derbyshire hills through Leek. Well the road was passable but dangerous. Eventually we got to Leek and left for Wellington. I missed the way and found myself going towards Woore which is the north east corner of the county. There was a great pantechnicon parked in the middle of the road, my wife had gone to sleep, I had to pull up, and there was no way around it as far as I could see. A rough looking individual came from it and wanted to speak to me, so I motioned him to go around the other side and I put the window down; a bearded man put his head in not very far away from the face of my sleeping wife and said, "You will have to go carefully because of the whale". "If you had a big car I don't think you would get through but I think there is just room between the whale and the ditch". I said "A whale"? and he said "Yes we have got a preserved whale in a tank which we are taking around the country showing people". So I very gingerly drove the little Austin 7 up the side of the pantechnicon with the whale in a tank.

In 1926 we were motorised. It was part of my contract as an assistant to Dr. Hollies that he would provide me with locomotion. He himself used to go around in a gig and he kept a good brand of horses and hunted with them. That was before I came but by the time I came he was already motorised. He had two cars - a little Ford Sedan that he allowed me to use and an open Overland that he used. Afterwards I remember a bullet-nosed Morris Cowley. They were a very popular make of car in those days. I drove around in a little Ford Sedan which was very reliable. One employed either a garage or a chauffeur to keep them in order.

There are slightly fewer garages now than there was 20 years ago. In 1926 there were probably about the same number as there are today.

When I married after I had been here about a year, I lived on Mill Bank which was very convenient because if the car wouldn't start I could push it out onto the road and run down to what is now the cross-roads of the Cock and Swan and around the corner there was Reades Garage. I have been with Reades Garage ever since.
Our practice was in the town of Wellington and some of the close villages like Hadley, Ketley, Trench, Donnington. Oakengates had their own doctors and so did Dawley. The Wellington doctors went out into the country to the North and West. Our practice went out as far as Peplow which is not very far off Hodnet. Dr. Pollock had a branch surgery at Tibberton and we had branch surgeries and so did Pollock at Waters Upton. I had a branch surgery at Hadley where I went at 12.00 o'clock every day including Saturdays. North to Peplow and then of course to Wrockwardine and beyond Wrockwardine out as far as Atcham. After Atcham Shrewsbury was taking over. Upton Magna was shared between us and Shrewsbury. I reckoned that we covered over 100 square miles of country.

The cottage hospital when I came was just a cottage hospital and it had a room that was set aside for surgery, but we didn't do much surgery at the hospital. Dr. Hollies was really the only surgeon amongst the three of us and he didn't use the cottage hospital but he has done quite serious operations on the kitchen table in the farm houses. He took a poor child's tonsils out in a little dressing room off his mother's bedroom. The cottage hospital was of course run entirely on voluntary contributions. The local employers and middle class people supported it. Two of the principal supporters were Mr and Mrs Sinclair of Sinclair Iron Works which is now Allied Iron. The big employers of labour were very strong supporters of the cottage hospital because they knew that their work people could get good nursing there. One of the other doctors did a lot of extracting of tonsils for young children. There was a ward for them and they had to go from the ward to the little room that was used as a theatre and back to the ward. So the children waiting had to see the children coming back from the theatre bleeding from the mouth and it was very un-nerving. So the Van-Homrighs were very concerned about this so they endowed a whole ward for tonsil children and a proper operating theatre and anaesthetic room and sterilizing room.

That was the start of surgery at the cottage hospital. We didn't go in for it but the Oakengates firm was taken over by two people who were properly qualified as surgeons and they did quite a lot of real surgery there. A committee of local people got enough money to equip a larger room at the cottage hospital as an X-ray room. They got an X-ray machine there and the matron who had a bit of experience used to take X-ray photographs. It was very useful because then we could treat our broken arms and things. As a matter of fact one of the first things that the new hospital Management Committee did, which was run from Shrewsbury, when the National Health Service came in, was to remove the X-ray machine from the cottage hospital and put it up at the Wrekin hospital which was nothing to do with us. We were very cross about it; we said if that was what the Shrewsbury Hospital Committee did we didn't want anything to do with it. Later I may say I was elected to it as a General Practitioner Representative. There is to be a new re-organisation of the National Health Service and my son is the local G.P. appointed to that body.

When I came, I think Wellington was pretty healthy. Many people were engaged in agriculture which is, on the whole, a very healthy occupation. We are close to the fens you know, Preston-on-the Weald Moors and Kynnersley they were, before they were drained, there was malaria there. Dr. Hollies told me that we had to attend to cases of malaria from the fen country just to the North of Wellington. By the time I came the fens had been drained. The Strine is a stream but there is also a great ditch, called the Piped Strine which runs off the old fen water. It runs into the Tern at Crudgington.

Hugh Burnell in the reign of Edward the first, obtained a grant of a market to be held on Thursdays and have two fairs in the year, the first to be held the day after the feast of St. Barnabas and the second on the eve of the day and the day after the Dedication of St John the Baptist. The market is still held on a Thursday and the fairs are held on March 29th, June 22nd, September 29th, November 17th, Monday week before Christmas day and the last Monday in each of the other months.

My Grandfather was a tailor and was in a different strata of society from his son who was a doctor. Great Grandfather was a bit of a lad in those days, he used to go cock-fighting up to Ketley and gambling a lot. One time somebody hit him on the head with an iron bar and laid him out. When he finally came round he became very religious, so Grandfather was very strictly brought up and would have preferred to be in the Church.
Grandfather inherited the shop on the corner of Market Street; he was a tailor and made clothes for gentlemen, but the main business was Linen and Woollen Draper.

My father was his son and was born in Wellington in the family home, top two floors in Market Street.

My father trained as a Doctor at Mason’s College and Birmingham University.

Grandfather wanted my father to enter the Church; he was only allowed to become a Doctor if he agreed to go abroad as a Medical Missionary, he studied medicine also the Koran ready for the Middle East but circumstances altered and he became a G.P. in Birmingham.

There was a class distinction in those times, Landowners and Country Gentry.

Grandmother’s brother was Dr Hollies. He married a landowner’s daughter from Cambridgeshire, he joined the Wellington Practice with Dr. Stedman and bought the Lawns.

Wellington had a class system, a very strict one. There was the professional classes, which included people who owned factories, and the principal Auctioneer, Estate Agents Barbers. That was Barber of Barber and Son. The ‘Son’ was Arthur Pierce who married Arthur Barber’s daughter, Alice. We used to visit each other’s houses, we played Bridge together, the thing was to have Bridge parties with three or four tables. We used to have Dances too. All the dances took place in the Baths Hall which was behind where the Library is now. The dances were generally in aid of something. In the summer there were Tennis Parties in private tennis courts, the best in Wellington itself was where Miss Lander lives at Sunncroft on Holyhead Road. Another very popular one we went to was at Mr Austen’s of Austen’s Chemical Works at Harlescott. There was no television then of course, some of us used to go to the cinema occasionally but generally we made our own entertainment. There were some Societies, Dramatic, Choral etc.

Another person who would belong to the professional class then was the Station Master, and I think he would still be classed as a professional.

There were many characters then but I remember Nora Leake and Nora Whitby, they were very great friends. They would do their shopping in Wellington wearing very outrageous clothes.

Nora Leake married a Doctor Roberts.

The inside of Dr Wedd’s stable; now a store-room at Meehan’s Craft Shop
Mr Podmore to I. Evans being the Doctor, dated 1802.

First entry 7th January. Emetic Powder for a child; emetic makes the child sick. February 16th. Opening Powder and there was also on the same date Opening draught. Bottles of medicine were made up with various ingredients; then on the 27th a Sodarific mixture, that was a sweating mixture. On the 27th a Blister 2s 0d. On the 28th, dressing his blister 6d. Also three opening powders and a Sodarific Anodine mixture, a sweating and pain killing mixture 2s 0d.

March 7th a tonic mixture; Mr Podmore and the Opening powders for the child 1s 6d. A sodarific mixture repeated 2s 0d. An anodine draught; Mr Podmore 1s 2d. On March 2nd the same, that is the same draught and four opening powders for the child, poor child, 2s 0d and a Sodarific mixture also 2s 0d.

Mr Podmore 3s 0d and a box of alterific pills, I am not sure what an alterific pill was, I think it was to change the direction of the disease, and an emetic powder for the child, an anodine draft, an emetic, that poor child. A tonic mixture for Mr Podmore, and four more opening powders for the child, an alterific pill for Mr Podmore, a tonic mixture, I think it needed it too.

The pills for Mr Podmore, Pectoral Linctus to stop his hiccough, a tonic mixture and an astringent gargle. A hundred years later they were using an astringent gargle, that was 2s 0d in those days, and it would have been 3s 7d at the turn of the century. The pills, the gargle, the same.

A sore throat lasted a week. Purified salts on the 25th and the same on the 26th. The gargle again. On the 28th he had two blisters, and on the 29th some soothing ointment. Some more cough mixture, then on the 6th June, bleeding, an astringent mixture.

Attendance in the night was 2s 6d. Extra 6d for calls in the night. Astringent mixture and powders that would cost him quite a bit. Attendance in the night 2s 6d. Astringent mixture 3s 0d and the powders 2s 0d. Unless the Doctor carried them all with him in his saddle bag, he would have to go back to the house to get them.

They are mostly the same sort of things. The price on average went up about 6d. Six months later, those that were 2s 0d and 18d were now 3s 0d. They had only gone up 6d a hundred years later. The whole bill came to £6 17s 7d and it was paid in cash.

You would notice that there was one charge for a visit and that was the night visit, no other visits were charged, and that was the custom, you made the visit and sold the medicine, and a hundred years later we were still making medicine, on the the whole; pills didn't come in till, I suppose we had some tablets when I came into practice, that was in 1926, but most were bottles of medicine. I was taught first to wrap a bottle of medicine in white shiny paper sealed both ends with sealing wax.

This is my Great Grandfather's bill from Dr Steadman that I mentioned. He ran up a bill for £21 7s 6d. This was sent to his Executors, that was his final effort.

Mr Podmore again to Dr. Evans, 1803.

July 1st attendance in the night, 2s 5d an anodine drug. soothing pain killing easy draft 1s 2d. Balsamonic mixture 2s 6d; I am not quite sure what a Balsamonic mixture was. An anti-spasmodic mixture 2s 0d.

1804 - January 10th deliver of Mrs Podmore £1. So this was the childs brother or sister. She had a soothing mixture repeated after the birth and also repeated the next day, and it also had some mixture in it to get her bowels moving. On the 13th she had a cough mixture and a bottle of embrocation; the whole bill for six months came to £1 19s 8d.

Mr W. Woolley, 2 Ford Row.

Ford Row wasn't a very good address. A dozen items came to £1 1s 1d. A number of visits averaging about 18p each
Mr Woolley of Priorslee to Messrs F. & M. Webb, Surgeons, 1843.
These visits were 18p a time, and if there was medicine with it, it was 3s 6d or 2s 6d.
The total bill August till end September was £2 10s 0d which was received on January 17th.

1831 - Mr Woolley again and this time to another Welshman - Mr T. Llewellyn Jones, who presumably succeeded Mr E. Evans.
A journey 3s 0d, various mixtures. Prices had gone up a bit 3s 0d and 2s 6d and so on, and they paid their bills promptly, because those were early July and by 27th August he paid his bill which was £1.

Mrs DUFFY

At the bottom of Tan Bank was Mrs Dunn the sweet shop, Mr Joe Dickinson's tailor and then there was another double fronted flathouse level with the pavement, and Mrs Jones and her daughter lived there. Then came the skating rink started by Mr Wright (later the Grand Theatre). They had variety shows there; it was a place where they had travelling theatres, but we lived in King Street opposite The Plough at that time, and two of the actors stayed there. One of them was a nice young man, also a teenager like myself. He and I had a little affair, I used to sit and look out of our window and he used to sit in their sitting room window, and we just used to look at each other. That was as far as it went but he did give me a couple of complimentary tickets to the show, that's how I remember they had shows at the theatre.

Later when Mr Wright bought the theatre and turned it into a skating rink in 1910 or 1912. They had a competition night which was on a Friday. I had a special partner and he and I used to win the partners race, the prize being a week's free skating. I must have left school because we could go whenever we liked. I used to go morning, evening and night of a week, but we couldn't win another during our free week. We had to pay of a Friday night so my pocket money used to go on paying for a night's skating for another week. I won sixteen free weeks' skating and I have a cup to prove that. Father used to fetch me home, and it used to annoy me that he wouldn't let me stay until the very end, but I think it was because he enjoyed the five minutes gents fast skating. he was always there for that. Everybody could go round at their own rate you see. I was sixteen then. The rink closed a year or two before the First World War.

Next was Cliffs Coach Works; they were later taken over by Mr. Casewell. They were very good coachmakers and repairers, they were horse-drawn coaches and they were made completely there. It was an old established firm and had been in the same family for three generations. They made coaches for nearly all the gentry in Wellington, and the coats of varnish they used to put on was nobody's business. They were "the" coach-builders in Wellington. Wesley Clift had a marvellous brain, to look at him you wouldn't think he had anything; but he had. They had trouble getting the finished coaches into the street so he invented the first up - and - over door.

After the coachmakers came Dr Mackie's surgery (now Pisces Restaurant), Dr Mackie later moved up to Dunrobin House on Glebe Street. There was nothing else after Dr Mackie's Surgery until the two chapels going around the corner onto Glebe Street.

On the right hand side going up Tan Bank was Dudley and Reece's workshop opposite Cliffs, and on the corner going into Foundry Road were two old houses, Mr Reece lived in one but I don't remember who lived in the other. Next to the furniture workshop came the chapel (now Comet) and then Purcells the painters, there was another shop after that which was a coal merchants. Next a school and then the Y.M.C.A., there was a room on the second floor big enough for a good sized party. They also let it for magic lantern shows and that sort of thing. There was no cinema in those days and everyone wanted to have an evening with magic lantern slides.

Going to the top of Tan Bank across Foundry Road on the right hand side were some cottages and then there were two red brick houses, in those days they would be called villas, and then a hairdressers on the corner. The little cottages were two up and two down and I think there were four of them. At the top of Tan Bank was an alley going straight through to New Church Road and it is still there. The Billiard Hall on Tan
Bank used to be a Rechabite Hall, it was built as an ordinary hall for meetings etc, but it was rented out to the public.

Coming into the Square from Tan Bank we come to the Wrekin Hotel. Mrs Ray the Manageress used to stand outside with her pet parrot on her shoulder, she had a perch made for it which stuck out into Market Street, one day the parrot fell off into the street, she didn't put it out there again, I think the idea was to give it some fresh air. All the political announcements were made from the hotel, the top window overlooking the Square. When the elections were on we knew it would be announced from there, and anything else that was important. In my time it was always a private hotel and the bar was on the corner where Contessa is now. Later the bar was taken over by Stead and Simpson. In the same block where Stead & Simpson are now was Scotts the Jewellers and Lloyds the Milliniers. For some reason the hotel lost their licence.

I must tell you about the wool sale. Where North Road is now was the wool sale field. Wool sales were held there at various times of the year and there was a huge fair. Wool merchants came from all over the country, hundreds of people attended, it was a three day sale because there was too much for one day. The sale was for cloth manufacturers and wool manufacturers and wool merchants and anyone in that trade. Mostly I should imagine they came from Yorkshire way. They had a big marquee for refreshments and the wool would be undercover ready to be auctioned off. I used to walk down to see the wool and see the crowds. The wool sales stopped around the beginning of the Second World War. A lot of things seemed to cease because of the war. There was a gradual decline since then but things seem to have picked up recently and this has accelerated in the last few years.

Coming back to the corner of Market Street was Drurys the butcher, Ledger and Ledger the shilling shop. Then came the entrance to the Corn Exchange, now the Market Arcade, then came Harry Webbs shop, the corn merchants, the Town hall was over this shop, then there was the entrance to the Market Hall then another shop, Daisy Pritchard's shop was on the end, she sold flowers, seeds and vegetables. It was a funny little shop, it angled on the corner and angled into the market itself. Then came the other entrance to the outside market. The Ercall Hotel then the Wrekin Brewery. Turners the gun shop and the blacksmiths was round the back. Patersons auction rooms were where the arcade shops are now.

One character I remember was notorious, always drunk. I don't even remember if she had a home at all, but she would sleep in All Saints churchyard, the Station, the streets, anywhere.

All the pubs kept her supplied with drink because she apparently had no means, but she was able to find enough money to get drunk. I remember seeing her being taken to the Police Station many times as a child, "Old Sophie's going in again".

There was a lot of drunkenness in Wellington in those days and there were seven or eight pubs in High Street. Remember gin was a penny a nip in those days and it was quite easy to get drunk.

Part of the original Fox and Hounds and the village pump at the bottom of Tan Bank; late 1800's
There was no television or radio in those days so people used to go out in the evenings more. They would go out onto their doorsteps and talk to their neighbours or stroll about the streets and of course most of the shops would be open until about 10.00 o'clock. The shopkeepers would stand in their doorways waiting for customers and watching the people go up and down.

Well I remember Freddie Bean had an outfitters shop in New Street, he and his wife used to go to Nantwich for Christmas, there was a train that went just after 9.00 o'clock, they kept the shop open until the last minute with everything ready to lock up at 9.00 o'clock and catch the train. They always kept open until 9.00 o'clock on Christmas Eve anyway and until they were sure there would be no more customers. A friend of ours, Jack Laddiman who worked at Bates & Hunt, used to wait outside Hobson's along with Freddie Martin and another boy for their girl friends, they always waited till round 9.00 o'clock for the girls to come out. Saturday night was the late night but the rest of the week was 7.00 o'clock opening at 8.30a.m. there was a break for lunch and a break for tea at 4.00 o'clock and the wage was 10/- (50 pence) a week; that was the regular wage for shop assistants, remember there were no unions then. My father was earning 28/- (£1.40) a week and when he asked for 2/- (10p) a week rise, his boss refused and said he couldn't afford it, so father started up in business on his own.

We lived in Albert Road then. There was a wash-house across the yard and although mother and father were not very well off we employed a washer-woman. Why they paid a washer-woman I don't know, perhaps it was because of mother's condition, but one day when I came home from school Mrs Morris, who always came in a white apron, a plaid shawl and bonnet, was wearing a hessian apron. When I asked where mother was she said "Oh! she's in bed" and when I said "Is she ill?" she said "You go up and see what she's got" and she had Trevor, my brother. Trevor is three and a half years younger than me so I obviously started school when I was three. As far as I know we used to get ourselves to school, walking in all weather. If it happened to rain while we were at school mother used to come and meet us with our raincoats and umbrellas, we used to think it was marvellous if mother came to meet us, it was quite an event.

The first school I went to was Constitution Hill, and my class was known as The Babies. The Infants school was a separate building from the Boys and Girls, as I said. I went there when I was three years old, if parents said their child was old enough to go to school at that age they were accepted but it wasn't the usual policy. The school-leaving age was fourteen but I liked school so I stayed until I was nearly sixteen. All the money which should have been spent on my education had to go to father's business. My sister Eva had a scholarship and she went to Merryvale College, Newport, that's what I was supposed to do but I wasn't very anxious, I had no idea what I wanted to do so I left. I stayed on at school and they were quite willing to have me because I used to do sewing for the headmistress. She used to have fancy camisoles, all lace insertion in them, I was pretty good at sewing so that's what I did the last year I was at school. I also helped Miss Purcell, I used to look after the babies, and I was almost like a teacher actually, unpaid though, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. When I left I went into the office at my father's works for a short time helping with the day-sheets. By this time he had got staff together and I would allocate jobs or anything. He had a man in the office and I tried to learn typing. There was a typewriter and I used to play about with that.

When the 1914/18 War started I got a job with the War Agricultural Committee at Shrewsbury where they had an office. All the farmers had to plough up so much land which they strongly objected to doing, all objections came into the office where I was. Then they would have objectors meetings and I used to go out with the boss, take notes and take all the books etc.

I used to travel to Shrewsbury by train; every day our train used to pass the train carrying prisoners of war from their camp on the other side of Shrewsbury. Their train used to stop at Harlescott or Walcot station where they would help the farmers. Our train used to stop at the station at the same time as the train the Germans were in, we used to pretend we were not taking any notice of them but some of them were very good looking and everybody had their eye on them. We used to have a jolly old time pretending we hadn't noticed, but we did.
Later on the County started a school dental service and I applied for a job there. The advertisement was in the Journal and I applied. There were four dentists appointed by the county and I got the job with them. I travelled to all the schools in the County with the dentist in the car, there isn't a village in Shropshire I haven't been to. We used to take the equipment out to the schools with us and use one of the classrooms. In a place like Oakengates we would stay in one place for a week and all the schools around would come to us. I stayed in that job until I was married.

The children's teeth used to be rotten in those days. Dr Wheatley the Medical Officer of Health was very keen on statistics; we had a sheet of paper on which we put down whether the teeth were sound, saveable or unsaveable, that was for every child we saw. It ended up with a row of figures all across and a row of figures going down; and at the bottom all the totals had to comply. It used to take two of us when we did a big school-the whole of the evening. For instance when we went to Ludlow we stayed at the Clinic, immediately we had tea we used to go and start our report and work steadily from 6.00p.m. until 10.00p.m., eventually the other girl's father objected and he said it was slave labour - nobody should have been expected to do that after a hard day's work. I can still see those rows of figures having to go all the way across every child in the school and sometimes with a school of three hundred children.

The parents were notified when their children needed treatment and they had to attend school on a certain date unless they objected. If they didn't want their children to have the treatment they wrote and said so. If they wanted treatment they came back in a fortnight's time and there would be the qualified dentist and we two assistants. They were given a local anaesthetic by hyperdermic needle, occasionally, if it was a bad case they would have a general anaesthetic which a doctor did. We used a hyperdermic syringe to freeze the gum and being children the teeth were not hard to get out. If the schools were close to each other such as Crudgington and High Ercall we would do them both in one day as they were in the same area.

I can't remember what my actual wage was, we did get a luncheon allowance which was 3/- and 1/6d for tea if we were out in the country. I know the hours were long but that was the job. We were operating from Walker Street next to the library, that's where the dental clinic was then, before returning home we always had to go into the clinic for various things so we never got home before five or six o'clock. I always used to think it was a good night if we got home by then.

There is such a difference now, we were not in a union of any kind and if they advertised a job, you took it; well that was your look-out wasn't it? You had nobody to stick up for you. All the same I really enjoyed the work.

**HOBSONS OF WELLINGTON**

Hobsons of Wellington can boast as being the oldest trading shop in the whole of the Telford area. The business was founded in 1765 on the present site of the Shop in Market Square in Wellington. There does not appear to be any records as to the name of the owner at this date. However in 1779, Thomas Houlston took over the business as a Printer, Publisher and Bookseller. The output of books was very considerable for that period, the largest by far in the County and possibly the Midlands. A considerable
number of works published were of a religious kind, among them being the sermons of John Eyton, Vicar of Wellington Parish Church.

The Authoress Mrs Sherwood, wrote very many books for younger and older children. Hobson & Co. printed and published most of these works for sale throughout the country, again raising the moral tone of the town.

In the early days the printing was done on the shop premises, where also the proprietors lived. After some 12 years, due to the expansion of the business, the actual printing business was moved to the Market Buildings at the rear of the shop; the premises being named the "Armoury Printing Works" so named because the old Army Volunteers had their training headquarters in part of the old building. The printing works remained there until the mid 1960's when the premises were demolished by the T.D.C. to make room for a new road to be cut through. This ended the era of the printing business which had been in existence without a break for some 200 years.

There are very many publications during the period 1860 to the early 1900's which referred to the business whose name had changed to Hobson & Co., this being on the death of Thomas Houlston, and being taken over by Richard Hobson. One of the publications was a weekly newspaper called the "Wellington Advertiser" which continued to be published until taken over by the then Wellington Journal in 1903, this being on the death of Robert Hobson, the son of the original R. Hobson. The business was at this time taken over by his son Hugh Hobson who carried on until about 1912. Mr Morris bought the business and expanded the printing side in particular. He also had a flourishing side-line in the sale of gramophone records particularly HMV and Columbia (many of these unsold are still in the original
Mr Morris died in 1943 and after a short period the business was purchased by Mr Frank Ferriday who continued to run the company expanding the stationery side until 1966 when the printing side was sold to Mr and Mrs O.L. Saxton and subsequently in 1973 the shop.

Mr and Mrs Saxton have endeavoured to maintain and improve the retail business until the present time. Hobsons were the original retailers of Coalport China in Telford, also selling fine gift-ware produced by Josiah Wedgwood of Stoke on Trent.

The Founder of Hobson's, The Square
Mrs Hope

On Tan Bank in the Old Chapel (now Comet) was a pinafore factory run by Mrs Hilton a farmer's wife, they owned a big farm at Little Wenlock, she used to do a lot of good work for the poor, and as an employee my Aunt used to pack up parcels to be distributed in the Parish Hall at Wellington. When Mrs Hilton gave up the factory Auntie kept it on for a while, and when it finally closed down she went to live in a little cottage in Haygate Road, nearly opposite to Mary Roberts, known as Mary the Bull (she ran the Bull Inn).

On leaving the factory Auntie put all the large sewing machines into storage and set up a small dressmaking business in the back room of the cottage. She borrowed my mother's sewing machine, her sister's and another lady's and carried on dressmaking from there.

In those days ladies wore chemises, they were under-bodices gathered into a little waistband and edged with calico lace. She also made unbleached calico knickers, these were gathered onto a waistband and fastened with two buttons at the back. There was a large opening at the back, they were gathered at the knee and edged with lace. In summer they were in unbleached calico, and if you were well off it was white calico. In the winter it was flannelette ones. Then there were petticoats made in the same materials, these were gathered into a band and it was tied with tapes which went around the waist two or three times. If she had the order she would make built up ones too. Then the pinafores she used to make, nobody was without a pinafore in those days, they were made on a yoke with a frill and were gathered with two buttons down the back. She also sold men's shirts, trousers and overalls which were bought from a warehouse. The pinafores and underwear were sold at the market.

My Aunt used to have a stall in Wellington Market with all the things she had made and I used to work for her. We also did Ironbridge, Newport and Welshpool markets. She would take orders each week and she would have them ready for the following week. I remember an old man who attended Wellington Market; he was nicknamed Needle but his real name was Hargreaves and he lived by Ward's Shop.

I can remember the prices of some of the goods we sold; calico knickers cost 1/-(5p), a pair of stockings were 10d and men's socks were also 10d. She also made pinafores from material bought by the yard; she always called them 'hurdon aprons'. She used to go to the warehouse and buy rolls of material and they always knew what her repeat order would be; two of wincyette, two of flannelette, unbleached calico, white calico and black satin.

Aunt carried on at Haygate Road until after the War, that of course was the First World War. I can't remember what year she moved up to High Street, but she bought a shop; it wasn't really a shop, it was a double-fronted dwelling and some people called Croomes lived there. She had the windows altered, turning one side into a shop window (this side became a drapers shop) and the other stayed as it originally was. She took the factory machines out of storage and put them into the large cellar at the premises, eventually she got rid of them to Mike Welsh a scrap dealer opposite, that is now Rollasons. Mike Welsh also took rabbit skins which he paid 4d for. Mother used to say "Go and take this to Mike Welsh", she would wrap it in newspaper. Mike Welsh would give us a ticket at a little window, we would take the ticket down the yard where a man would give us the fourpence. He would take the skin and throw it up in the loft with the others.

I would like to go back to the machines. My aunt had two machines in a big long room at the back, my mother's younger sister did all the machining and looked after the shop and still carried on making a lot of the old-fashioned garments as well as men's shirts. She went on with it for a long time eventually closing down for one reason or another. She retired and she and her husband moved to Meole Brace near Shrewsbury. Auntie Charlotte carried on at the shop but just made children's clothes. She specialised in girls' anniversary dresses, they were made from Broderie Anglaise, they had long bodices and just a little skirt.

I remember High Street in the vicinity of the shop. There were two little cottages, Roberts in one and Tommy Palin in the other. Tommy Palin sold milk and coal; we
used to say "Milk at one door and coal at the back door". I used to go and fetch a pint of milk from there, the milk came in large cans. Mrs Palin was a tall woman and she always wore one of those black velvet bands around her neck. She used to serve the milk using a ladle with a very long handle and she used to dip it in the can and draw the milk from it. The handle had a hook on the end of it and she used to hang it on the side of the can. The milk was about 3½d a pint and a gill would be a penny. After Palins came some cottages, then a brick wall and a placard with a great big advertisement on it; it used to advertise 'the pictures'. Further on came Clarakes Lodging House, then came Hitchins and some more little cottages. The Misses Hitchins used to do dressmaking and they made dolls clothes. Mr Hitchin was a cobbler. They had a large window and his sister used to display some of her handiwork in the corner of the window. Mr Hitchin was a batchelor, there were two sisters and a brother. If he had any shoes unclaimed he would put them in the window. We were poor in those days and sometimes I would come home with my feet sore because I had a piece of cardboard in my shoe. My mother would make me go down to Charlie Hitchins to see if they had a pair to fit me. I would go home with a pair of shoes for sixpence. I suppose somebody hadn't been able to pay for them. A lot of people were poor in those days. Father would never go into debt, so if we hadn't the money to pay we would have go without.

Then we came to Waites the bread shop; we used to go there and see Mr Waite bringing the bread down from the bakery, we could see him taking the bread out of the oven with one of those long handled shovels. There were cottage loaves and crusty loaves, all red hot. We used to get our cakes from Heaths. five cream buns for a shilling.

We now come to the Nelson which was kept by a family called Downes, then came Cobbler Jones' shop, then a turning into an alley-way leading into Nelsons yard. Some of Wellington's well known characters lived up there, there was old man Griffiths who worked on the railway, he had a big red face with a ginger moustache. there were quite a few cottages up that yard. There was an old woman up there called Kiss Mag. she had been a Vaudeville artiste. she took to the bottle and she had to be pushed home in a wheel-barrow every Saturday night. There was another woman called Hetty and another called Ginny Childs. she was just a little woman.

There was also a place called Dolphin Yard further up High Street at the back of my Aunt's shop. I understand it was named after someone who had lived there many years before my time, it wa a dreadful place, that and Little Ireland.

Going up High Street towards King Street were four pubs. one of them was the Shelton Oak, next to Cobbler Jones were two more houses, Childs lived in the end one then there was an entry which went up to a place called Charles Yard where the O'Sheas lived. My sister-in-law lived in St. John's Street and the back wall of the garden overlooked the O'Sheas' cotage. When one of them died they propped the coffin up in the corner of the room and they danced and made merry until the morning and fought afterwards.

Back onto High Street to two cottages, Dickie Weston lived in one and someone had a sheepskin yard in the other. This man kept ferrets to kill the vermin. There was a toilet in my sister-in-law's yard which was flushed with a long string. They had to cross the yard to get to it and the ferrets from the adjoining yard used to get through and run about.

A little further down High Street we came to the Penny Shop kept by Miss Richards. She sold pretty nearly everything for a penny. Miss Richards was a little old lady with glasses on.

Up St John's Street was a family named Clarke, they used to sell cakes. Every Bank Holiday mother and daughter used to walk from St John Street up to the cottage on the Wrekin where they would sell their cakes, they made merry afterwards then walked back home.

Next to the Penny shop came Chad Valley, then two cottages before Frosts the bakers. Elsie Frost the married daughter lived in one of them and her parents in the other. Frosts yard had double doors where they kept the horse-drawn cart. Next door to that
was a fish and chip shop and Mrs Smith's Little Dustpan. She used to have antiques hanging outside on the wall. In the corner house with bay windows lived Freemans, a relation of theirs used to live there, he worked for Owen's the Pork Butchers. Then came Wards the Jewellers who was a relation of Wards the Paper Shop over the road; next came Mr Tranter; he was a surgical shoe-maker, he made shoes to order for anyone but specialised in surgical shoes. The shoes would only cost about two or three pounds then, and soling and heeling would cost 1/-.

After that was an entry which went through Parton Square through to Glebe Street. Parton Square was surrounded by cottages, one up and one down, and one door; at the back of the cottages would be a row of toilets. They stood in one big yard, there was no water in the house, they had an outside communal tap. There was a wash-house with a boiler and a fire was lit under it and the residents would take turns to use it. The neighbours got along very well together and even when some of them moved away they still remained friends. If anyone had a baby everybody in the street would take something and one particular person would take gruel. One woman had twelve or thirteen children and they were all clean and well turned out. In the cottage where I used to live in Haygate Road the people who lived there before me had eleven children. The landing bedroom held a single bed and the big bedroom held a double bed and a single bed and that large family were brought up in that small cottage.

Back to some of the shops. I can remember a rope spinners which I think was on the Shutt up to Glebe Street. Next to the alley after Mr Tranter's shop came a bicycle shop, this belonged to a Mr Parton who used to sell and repair bikes. It was a very old fashioned shop with little square windows and double fronted. He used to hang bikes on a piece of rope in the rooms. Next to Partons were two more cottages, you had to climb six steps to get to them and these were just before the present DHSS car park.

We come now to the Methodist Chapel and to Belmont, once a Grammar School; Belmont took its name from the School. I can remember when I used to go to the Salvation Army which was held in the rooms above Astons.

On the corner at the bottom of High Street opening onto Victoria Road was a furniture shop called Poole's - later Sansons. The furniture was bought in, they didn't make it on the premises. When Sanson took over they sold furniture made by the ex-servicemen under the name of Rembrandt. We have started back up High Street now. Next to Sansons was the Outdoor Licence and was reached by some steps; at this time it was kept by a family called Osborne. Further along were two cottages, Steers lived in one and some people called Boughey lived in the other. Then came a little entry and then a fruit shop kept by somebody called Thomas, then Talbots the gentleman's hairdressers, then there was a cottage. A little bit about Keays, Mrs Talbot looked after the Keays. The Keays owned most of the property in High Street. Mrs Hiatt who founded Hiatts College was a Miss Keay.

By Thomas's was an entry which led straight down into Victoria Avenue, it was called Keay Shutt. Evertons lived at the top then there was Wards the paper shop, there was Norah, Eileen, Dorothy and twin boys. One was called Vic, they used to have to take the papers out. Then came Steven's seed and fruit shop, the seeds used to come packed in strong brown paper bags, kidney beans, broad beans and peas. These bags were folded to a point at the top and they were displayed in the window. It was rather a select shop. Then came Jordans the butchers. Mrs Jordan was a tiny woman and a very kind lady. I used to buy meat from there for my Auntie. Their living accommodation went a long way down the shop. He was a high class butcher who killed his own meat; his slaughter house was on Mill Bank. After Jordans came the Queens Head, it was kept by some people called Delves. When you went in the off-licence was facing you. The smoke-room had a big old fashioned grate in it with old fashioned ornaments on the shelf. The other side was the common bar with sawdust on the floor and black-leaded spittoons round the counter. At a later date the smoke-room was converted into a hairdressing salon. From the Queens Head you came to a little entry leading to the back of the Three Crowns, that is still up, next door to the Three Crowns were two shops, George Johnston used to sell shoes in Wellington Market, next another little cottage and then Annie Johnsons where you could get anything; knitting needles, caps for your gun, a pennyworth of parsley, sprouts, apples, they were all in little baskets outside on the footpaths. Annie Johnson's daughter lived with her and she later married a policeman whose name was Herrings.
After her mother died Mrs Herrings kept on the shop. The next was a cottage in which Greenfields lived, they used to have a dancing class at the back of Greenfields; Mrs Breeze was the pianist. They used to have a whist-drive as well. Next to Greenfields was another little shop called Bickleys, they kept it first then Mansells had it. They sold groceries, cakes and bread, it was a sort of general store. Then Chapel Lane, you used to go straight down Chapel Lane and that brought you straight into Victoria Avenue again. There were houses each side of Chapel Lane. I'm sure if I could cast my mind back I would know everybody who lived down there. Back up to the top of Chapel Lane was Averys Weights and Scales, Sherwoods used to live there. Then there was Heskeths the fish and chip shop. Summers's had that before Heskeths. Next was Corbetts the cobbler's shop. He used to make and repair shoes and also sold them. After that was the Dukes Head, commonly known as The Bottles. I don't know how it got that name. Next door to The Bottles was another yard called Dolphin Yard - there were cottages in there, then coming back there were two cottages on the corner. I can remember May Jones had a wool shop there and Dolphins were next door. After that was another little cottage and Daisy Wakeley had that as a second-hand shop.

Then there was Mrs Dixon - Davies which was a lodging house connected with Clarkes across the road. She was the daughter and she kept a lodging house. Then there was Griffiths's and next to that was Clifford the barber, he also made and repaired umbrellas. It was a really old fashioned hairdressing shop. You would come from there to Smiths the brush shop. Marjorie Smith married Ben Titley. Then came what is now Austins, then there was another Smith which was a dressmakers shop. Both the Smiths' shops were run by brother and sister.

There were three cottages where the DIY shop is now. Miss Weaver lived on the corner, she was a dressmaker. Reg Pouner lived in the middle, he worked at Agnews, and then there was Edwards old shop where they did all their own woodwork around the back, coffin making and everything. Mr Edwards lived this end with his four children. They had a back entrance. They were also cabinet-makers.

Austins the paper shop used to be next door to where Frank Tinsley had his grocers shop. Mr Tinsley used to make his own ice-cream down the yard at the back. I used to go in for a halfpenny cornet and he used to say 'It's not ready yet'. I would go back in again and he would have it up in the corner. They were little, tiny cornets, he used to have a butter pat to make the cornets. It was beautiful ice cream. You could buy a pennyworth of tea; all the lodging house people used to use it. They would go across to Tinsleys and have a pennyworth of bacon bits of tea or sugar. He would put it in a screw of paper. His shop was open until after 10.00 o'clock on a Saturday night. It was an interesting shop, he had flitches of bacon hanging up on an iron rail. He kept great big lumps of butter at the back; people would go in and buy as little as 2ozs of butter, but if they could only afford a pennyworth he would weigh them it. He never used a slicing machine, he cut everything by hand. I used to go in on washing day for a quarter of corned beef and a fresh loaf, he would slice the corned beef beautifully by hand. On the other side of the shop he kept vegetables.

There was another little cottage next to that and then we came to Briscoe's. I can go back to when Briscoe's had the oil in a round vat and Mr Briscoe used to pump up and down and pump the oil into your can out of a tap at the front of the vat. I used to fetch oil for Granny to light the lamp. I used to take a can with a spout on it and a cork in it. We had lamps in those days, there was no gas. Granny used to have a lamp in each room, she later had gas.

Mr Alfie Davies

Coming down from High Street was Magness's sweet shop on the right hand side, then some cottages which were quite old. The families who lived in them were Parton, Ellis and Moyden. Mrs Rousell also kept a shop which sold odds and ends, then came a public house called the Shelton Oak. A fish and chip cafe followed that, it belonged to someone called Summers. Then three more cottages, Cheyneys lived in one, Rigbys then Laura Evans. Then another fish and chip shop kept by Whittinghams, then Owens the pork butchers - they also made bread.
Now we can go back to the top of High Street, on the left hand side at the top was Jones tobacco and sweets, the family lived at the shop. A little further down was a big house with a lot of steps and a family called Jones lived there, they sold coal which was kept in the yard. People would collect the coal in home made trucks (an orange box on wheels). I'm talking now of the time when I was around twelve years old, that would be in 1917. Past this house there were four cottages, Williams and Dunn lived in two of them but I can't remember the names of the other two. Then came the Coach and Horses, another very old pub kept by Mrs Round. I sometimes think that was one of the oldest parts of Wellington. There was an entrance to the Coach and Horses from the side. All the gardens at the back of this row of buildings went up to Christ Church grounds. Next to this were two cottages, the Pickering's lived in one and Hicks in the other. Then came the pub, the Hand and Heart, then two red bricked houses, we lived in the one in the corner and Wilkinsons lived in the one next to us. Then Mr Purcell's house, the grocer's shop which he owned next door to it, and the Red Lion pub on the corner which was kept by Beards.

I would like to return for a moment to the right hand side to Owens the pork butchers. Monday was the day when the pigs were bought at Smithfield and taken to the slaughter house behind the shop. They also had a bakery and they made box loaves, cottage loaves and tinned loaves. Owens private house was next door to the business along with a row of little cottages. A Mr Smart who worked at Haybridge lived in one, he was a little man and I used to take his dinner down to Haybridge Works for him. Edwards and Buckleys used to live in the other two cottages and there was an entry by Edwards and the entries were divided at the back of Edwards, then Grants and Roberts lived in the same row, there was also a family there by the name of Houlston. Then came a small butchers shop called Poppets where later Jack Twinney had a cobbler's shop. Next door to that lived a Mr Groome.

I will now go over to the left hand side leading into town. At the top there was a row of houses where Mr Bailey, Martha Scarratt, the Bougheys and the Taylors lived, then there was Leaks shop. He sold second-hand furniture, also antiques; his private house was next door to the shop.

On the corner on the right hand side was a little vegetable shop owned by Mrs Boughey, that was a mixed shop selling rabbits, vegetables and groceries etc. Rabbits were then about sixpence each. There was another family next door named Tilleys. Next came a row of cottages with dormer windows. Wenlocks lived in one, then Adams the sweep, the other was occupied by two brothers who worked on the Railway but I can't remember their names, but I think it was Smith; then we came to Johnsons the oil shop, that was a general store. They sold candles, matches, paraffin etc. They had a side entrance where they used to keep the van. Two more cottages - Harris's lived in one, then came Beards the tripe shop, then the barbers, another little shop kept by Mrs Bagley then a little cottage on the end kept by Old Lady Fox. She sold home made treacle toffee and rice pudding. Then came the Oddfellows pub, then the scrap-yard kept by Mike Welsh. Briscoes the oil shop, then Tinsleys. Austins kept a shop next to there and that is where Austins first commenced as a shop.

Then came Edwards the Undertakers, Miss Powner and Mr Freeman. Next was Mrs Delaney, she used to dressmake on the premises also selling cotton and bits and pieces for dressmaking.

Next door to Mrs Delaney was Smiths the brush maker, followed by Clayton's Barbers, then some cottages - a family named Bethell lived in one; Hilda the eldest girl won a scholarship to the Girls High School. Mr Griffith

Austins as it is today
bricklayer was in one and Mr Wakeley the other. Then there was another shop which was kept by a Mrs Jones, this stood back a little off the pavement. Another three cottages in which lived the Dolphin family. Then came a private house where the Corbetts lived, they also kept a boot and shoe repair business. Then came another fish and chip shop owned by Heskeths, that was followed by Avery’s weights and Scales. Scales were repaired on the premises. Then came a little shop kept by Carringtons who sold groceries etc. It was later kept by Mansells, this was followed by Greenfields, he used to repair gramophones. There was another cottage where the Hitchins lived, then came Annie Johnson’s shop, later Mr Herrings. His son George lived a bit lower down, he kept a shoe shop. Then came two pubs, the Three Crowns and the Queens Head which is now a hairdressers. Then came Jordan’s the butcher. Steventon the florist, Keays the barber, then below the barbers was another fish and chip shop, they used to cook the fish in old fashioned boilers, two more cottages down there. Steers lived in one and Bougheys in the other, next came the off-licence, there were steps up to that building. Pooles the furniture store was on the corner. This later became Sansons.

Now back to the top of High Street where there were some cottages, Baileys lived in one, the Griffiths and then Mitchells, and old Mr Cole; then came a quaint little alley way that led to some cottages, this area was known as Little Ireland. Mr Griffiths who repaired shoes lived in one of the cottages and he had an old lady living there. She sat by the fire smoking a clay pipe, she was probably his mother.

Coming back onto the street again we would come to two little cottages; after the alleyway McCormack’s and Slack’s, two more cottages came next lived in by Williams and Price. Then Thea Hitchins the boot repairer, next was Pullins, they used to sell coal and also go round selling vegetables from a cart. Clarke’s lodging house came next, then Waites the baker, they weighed the bread in those days. If you went in for a loaf and it wasn’t the weight they would put a piece of cake on. Then came a pub The Nelson, there were one or two houses up the back, Nelson Yard it was called. I can’t remember all the people who lived up there but one family was called Griffiths and there was Mrs Everton, she had a little shop and she used to make toffee. Also in that area was a family named Evans, a man who was a painter. I never knew his real name but he was always known as Painter Bill. Mr Childs lived in the corner cottage there.

Back on High Street again came Westons and Rushtons then a little general store on the corner kept by a woman with a French sounding name. Then came the Chad Valley (toy factory), this was followed by two cottages, one was Sumnells and the other was Frost’s, these were followed by Frost’s shop, their bakehouse was next door to the shop. After this was a row of cottages; in one of them lived a Mrs Smith who had a shop called The Little Dustpan, in the corner was a bay windowed house where a family called Stone lived. By Mrs Smith’s The Dustpan was a family called Tilley’s, later they moved up High Street. Their cottage later became a shop which was called The Missing Link, you could buy an odd shoe there and he sold second hand clothes and all that.
We have got now as far as Wards the watchmakers and Tranters the boot repairer. After Tranters came four more cottages, Mr Parton lived in one of them but I can't remember the names of the others.

I was six months old when we moved from Sussex to Wellington. We lived in a two bedroomed cottage in Foundry Road, there were eventually nine children. As the family grew we moved up to the top of High Street. My elder sister Dolly had left home by then, that left Will, Bert, Stan, Reg, Winnie, Cyril, Bessie and myself. Will joined the R.A.F. after the First World War. This was a much bigger house, it had four bedrooms, two were a fair size in which we could get a full sized bed and the middle room took two full sized beds and so did the one over the entry. Downstairs there was a long hall, sitting room, a back kitchen leading onto the yard and coalhouse; the toilet was outside. Our entry was large because we had to share with the Hand and Heart public house which was next door. The house was rented from Mrs Hornblower who kept the Hand and Heart, the rent was 7/6d weekly. Mrs Hornblower was an old lady, there were old fashioned beer pumps which were pulled straight from the wood. She kept poultry and all manner of things and they used to run in and out of the pub.

Our house which was next door to the Hand and Heart was much larger than any of the others we had lived in, there was plenty of room. Purcells outbuildings were at the back of Wilkinsons' house next door to ours and they made the house so dark they had to have the light on all day.

When Father came up here to work two of my brothers went to Wrekin Road School and later I went to Constitution Hill with my other brothers. Mrs Purcell taught me in the infants and little Miss Dot Williams taught me in Standard I, Miss Leeds in Standard II and Mr Barton taught me in Standard V. I left school at fourteen. My dad came back from the war and we made the front room of the house into a cycle shop. I started working with dad doing the repairs and so forth. Bikes were very popular in those days, I can remember some of them such as Newelsons, Raleigh, Triumph, Royal Enfield, BSA, Sunbeam; there was also the new bike called Hercules. We were the first agents for that, they cost £10, £1 down and £1 per month. BSA and Sunbeam were more expensive than others but they were good machines. We sold a lot of bikes but also sold second-hand ones for around seven or eight pounds. We also did repairs such as punctures for 6d (3p) and repair chains. We sold five or six bikes a week, perhaps more. Some were second-hand ones that we had stripped down to the frames, then built up again. A lot of people rode bikes in Wellington because there were very few cars then. There were one or two cycling clubs but I can't remember what they were called.

We used to repair Austins bikes for them, they used to deliver the papers. I remember one Saturday night they brought the bicycles at 12.00 o'clock wanting tyres and tubes put on the wheels and they wanted them ready for the Sunday morning rounds.

I carried on at the shop for a number of years until I went into the orthopaedic hospital at Gobowen in 1923. The driver on the train used to shout 'Next stop Jo­Bowen'. When I returned from hospital there wasn't much business left. My dad used to go to help a friend of his in Berkshire, they were very good friends and they joined up together in World War one. Father needn't have joined up because he was over age. I can remember him saying 'I have volunteered because my King and Country needs me'.

For a time while I was in hospital he worked at Grooms Yard and then Sankeys. Sankeys were famous for wheels, they had been there for some time then, I think before the 1900's.

After my dad died I had been out of work for a while then I heard of a little shop going in New Hall Road and I thought I would have a go at running my own business. Two or three people had a go at the shop before me but they didn't make much of a do of it. I knew the landlord so I walked all the way down to Donnerville to see Mr Tom Smith the brushman.

I finally got the shop which was a grocery store, it was only six shillings a week and I had about two pounds worth of stock and just enough money to pay the first week's
rent. Things weren't very good in the 1930's. When the Second World War broke out we could sell anything. I remember a travelling fair used to stop near here during the winter, they used to come up and buy things from me, the rationing was on then. One man asked for sugar but I told him I had none. As it happened I had some soda in blue bags which I was putting onto the shelves, the man said "I will have four pounds of that", I replied "You can have four pounds of that". I wrapped it up for him but I didn't charge sugar prices, I charged for soda. The next day he came back and said "This is soda". I said "I told you it was soda". He didn't ask for sugar again after that. Another day a lady came in and asked for a bottle of Camp Coffee which was very scarce in those days. I told her we had no coffee, she said "Yes you have" so I turned a bottle with the label towards her and said "Here, you can have some of that", and she would have taken it, but it was gravy browning.

It was a struggle getting the business going because there were so many small businesses in those days, people said I would only last six months, but I was there for twenty years, taking £100 a week when I left there.

I had heard some shops were going to be built on the Dawley Road. I went and had my name put down but Phillips Stores had theirs down so I didn't get it. Somebody advised me to go and see my old headmaster Mr Lowe at school. He knew nearly all my family and he put a word in for me and I got it in the end. We moved into the shop in 1954, I was married by then and stayed there until I retired when I was seventy.

I never had any assistants in my business. I worked from 8.00 o'clock in the morning until 8.00 o'clock at night and 9.30p.m. on Saturdays. When I worked at Mr Purcell's grocers up High Street we never closed until 9.00 o'clock and I remember one customer who used to bring her order in just on 9.00 o'clock. She lived in Regent Street and I had to deliver the order, two baskets, one on each arm. I didn't do deliveries at my shop but when I was with Mr Purcell I had to go to Limekiln Lane; it was a rough old road then because the timber wagons had to come down. I had to deliver to two or three houses up there.

I can remember some of the prices in those days. Lyons Tea was 4d a quarter, that was the cheapest, the medium one was the green label that was 8d and the orange label was 10d, that was the best. Before packets came in, tea was delivered in a tea chest and we had to weigh it out. We sold a quantity of the best tea, mainly to people from Victoria Avenue, High Street and Regent Street. The butter didn't come in packets in those days, it was delivered in large slabs and we cut it to the customer's requirements. It used to be the same with cheese and I had a wire for cutting that. I didn't have much sale for bacon. I bought all the tinned goods from a firm in Newcastle under Lyme. The rep. came every week, I would give him an order and it would be delivered the next week. We used to get a lot of travellers when we were at Dawley Road shop; one of them used to wear an old fashioned bowler hat, it was very amusing. He was from HP Sauce.

Wellington was a very busy town in those days and during the war there was plenty of work; Priorslee Furnaces were working then, we could see the glow from the furnaces from our back yard. There would be no boys hanging about street corners without work then.

We have only been up to Carrefours and Sainsburys twice. we prefer the small, private shops. My wife's nephew is running our old shop now so we do all our shopping there. I don't think there is much room for the small private grocer in Wellington now.

Memories of the Late Dorothy Wheatley

My Mother Ann Bentley, 2nd Daughter of William James Bentley the Late Dorothy Wheatley.

"The Duke of Wellington" known to all of us as the Duke was kept by my Grandfather William James Bentley, a well known sportsman in Wellington, breeder of horses, game-cocks and a fine shot.

It was later kept by his daughter Miss Catherine Bentley.

I am his grand daughter of his second daughter Annie, also the grand daughter of
another well known and respected hostess of "The Raven", Mrs Sarah Wheatley.
I remember the Duke when the yard on Thursdays was packed with traps and the
farmers wives went in to the front kitchen or in fine weather the billiard room and
talked to my grandmother while their husbands and other favoured tradesmen sat and
talked to my Grandfather in the smoke room, while my Aunt presided in the bar
serving lesser mortals.

Everything was done in a delightful way and no nonsense was ever tried. On Thursdays
I joined Grannie in counting the yard takings which I believe was two pennies (old
money) per trap.

I also remember when a circus came to Wellington and once we accommodated the
elephants in two huge sheds at the end of the yard and the particular smell of those
animals seemed to linger on for many years.

There is a right of way across the yard and the gate was closed at Easter for one day.
There was also a one room up and one room down cottage used as a tailoring
workshop for the tailor whose shop was between the Duke and the entrance to the
yard of both the Bulls Head and the Duke.

I used to watch the men at work sitting cross legged on a flat platform. Before then I
believe it was used by a basket maker who allowed mother to split his willows for him.
Earlier I believe the Duke was a posting house providing horses for travellers.

My grandfather once sold a matching pair of carriage horses to a Mr Gilbert, pen
maker, of Birmingham.

There was as there still is today a passage straight through the Duke and one could
have access to any of the upstairs rooms but no one ever intruded even when my Aunt
was on her own.

Sadly, the Duke of Wellington has been demolished. The site is now Fine Fare.

The Wrekin Cottage where
Mrs Clarke and Daughter
sold cakes

G. Pierce, Cycle and
Motor Works

Mr Sid Owen

Before 1934 my father-in-law was a publican in Market Drayton. He had a lodging house in Wellington afterwards which served the town very well I thought. It was a three bedroomed building, there were about 45 beds in three bedrooms. It was 15 shillings for a full week or nightly. This place was always full, you had a job to get in actually. Then there was 5 flats attached to them. They had everything provided, bed clothes and everything. At the bottom they had a community place where they used to do the cooking and washing you see. They just paid for the bed. 7.00 o'clock it opened and by 9.30 nobody was able to get in. Every Sunday night they used to have a service. Mr Abbey used to come down and give a service after the Christ Church service, my father-in-law used to play the organ. Some very clever men used to come there. One bloke he used to have a bag of sovereigns, it used to fascinate me to see those sovereigns. He used to say that somebody was going to pinch them.

There was another chap, this may not sound very good but it was a fact. Every Saturday evening he would go up in the woods and collect rabbit dropings and he would put a coating on them and sell them as pills in Wellington Market. He made a fortune. I expect they would do you as much good as some of the rubbish the Doctors give you today. Some of them were brilliant chaps but they were just happy to live like that. They lived there all the time, not just for a week or two. Some of them died there. When they built the Sugar Beet Factory a lot of people lived there all the while they were building it. All they had was a single bed, they would go across to Mr Tinsley's for half a loaf of bread, some butter and some corned beef and that would be their evening meal. They would have their breakfast before they went out to work. You could give them a piece of steel and they could make you a pair of scissors or anything. There was no trouble. The flats were for couples who wanted to stay there. There was a big demand for that in the Town but it just went and went. When my father-in-law died it did slip a bit because my mother-in-law had got a family that had no interest. It just went.

Clarkes served the town well. The police used to come along every morning about 11.00 o'clock, it was always tea and toast, all free and there would be about 10 policemen there. I have seen my mother-in-law go through the week and give 40 dinners away. She wasn't short of a bob or two, she had two shops and about 8 houses in King Street. In those days if you owned a bicycle you were a millionaire. A very good person and she did a good job for the town. They were all good buildings you know.

I have had some happy hours in that place with those chaps. We had a Bishop who came to stop once, we didn't know that he was there. A chap named Claude Hulbert, he is dead now, he was an actor, he stayed there but we didn't know. He was brother to Jack Hulbert. These people used to go around to visit these places and after they had been they used to send a letter saying that they had enjoyed themselves and passed various comments about it.

There were one or two little places like this, there was one across the road, Dixon-Davies, they would take about 8 or 10 in. I think there was another one, Braddock's, where the carpet place is now. There were cottages then straight down past the pub and the fish shop. The cottages went down to where the coffin place is now. Yes that's right because Kay's and Dolly Steers lived there. The other greengrocers place was only like a private house, which this policeman chap had. Carrington and Herrin.

In those days I used to go down to the fish and chip shop and fetch the mother-in-law her supper. Her supper was 4½d. Her fish was 2d from the shop, that shop is still there, but the pub isn't. I used to take a jug and it was 2½d for half a pint of shandy. I had to fetch it in a jug because if it came any other way she wouldn't want it. I used to take a jug and a dish for the fish. It was always 8.00 o'clock that I had to go, and she would be in bed then. I would take her this, two pieces of bread and butter, the shandy and the fish. The pub was called The Bottles, it was nearly opposite the Chad Valley, on the corner going down the back of Horton's place. It used to be her supper every night bar Sunday. The fish shop was Hesketh's, they were right opposite the
Valley. He had it a good many years, then he retired and went to Blackpool. It was quite a good fish shop then, there were quite a few who have had it since but I don't think it did much good after he went.

They used to amaze me some of those chaps, they were just satisfied living like they did, go to work and back. They would all get together at night in this place, about 40 of them, and then they would start. I used to go and sit with them and listen to them, where they had been, some of them had been all over the world. What they could do with their hands was out of this world.

High Street was a community in its own right. There were a lot of families all together. My mother-in-law reared all her daughter's kids. Dixon-Davies she reared all them, there was another one named Merrick, she reared them. She used to have an attic in the top and she used to feed them. I have never met a person so good for doing anything for anybody. She did some fantastic work. The same as Christ Church, she did a lot of work for them. I think that was the last funeral that I remember on a Sunday from Christ Church. I don't know whether there was one since. There were that many there, the coffin was going by the Chad Valley down to the cemetery, they were still coming out of the Church. The police thought that much of her they lined the High Street.

There was Mr Edwards, Mr Briscoe, Mr Johnson and Mr Tinsley. There was another place that she had, she had two more places next to it. There was one double room, a chap named Price had it. I think he was a painter and decorator. Coming up High Street past the entrance to the Lodge there were some double doors and a bit further up there were some more double doors, well he was a painter and decorator and he worked from there, he had all his stuff at the back of his house. There were more cottages nearly next to the Lodge and there were more cottages which my mother-in-law owned as well. A decorator lived there.

Tommy Payne worked for Webb the corn merchant down Market Street. well my mother-in-law reared that family in those flats, only they didn't pay anything. I bet if she reared one she reared 30 kids. She was taken ill and Bambridge who was her doctor came, a specialist in those days would come to your house. Well this chap came at 6.00 and he came to the house on Sunday for £5.00. The specialist examined her and we had a word with him after and he said "It's her spleen", "I can have her in hospital and operate and perhaps guarantee her a bit longer", but she wouldn't hear of it. I don't know where he came from. Bambridge fixed it up. She went to the R.S.I. She may have gone private somewhere but there wasn't much private in those days. She lived for 3 months after the day the specialist came to see her.

The first doctors that I remember in Wellington were by the Bus Station, that was where Hawthorne was and Prentice. Dr Bambridge came with Dr Mackie in Glebe Street. Dr Prentice and Dr Hawthorne were by the Bus Station. Other doctors were Dr. Bambridge, Dr. Wedd, Dr. Davidson, Dr. McClure and Dr. Lawrence. It has just struck me that there were a lot of doctors then, there are no more now and the population is twice as large.

For hospital treatment you joined the hospital scheme and they came round and collected it. It started at 1d a week and then it went up to 3d a week. Actually there were a lot of miners around here in those days. The miners had their own places, my dad was a miner and he had a serious injury in 1936, well they had their own places like the one in Blackpool and they had a big one in Llandudno. I don't know whether the one in Llandudno is still going but the one in Blackpool is. That's where they took my dad straight away to Llandudno because we had no Wrekin Hospital, all we had here was the work house, this was the first time my father had seen the sea.

The first dance I ever went to was at the Wrekin Work House, now the hospital, and it was 6d. In those days there wasn't a dance on its own, it was a whist drive. This whist drive started at 7.30 and the dance was at 9.30. I wasn't very old, and the band was a chap with a violin, that was all we had and it was 6d.

The same at Christ Church, we had some happy hours with Mrs Abbey. On a Monday night we had old time dancing, nobody could dance. We used to start one another off. Mrs Abbey used to sit on a stool and play this gramophone that you used to wind up
and we had some very good nights there. We had a piano off Mrs Greenfield years ago when we were in King Street, but I don't know where they were. Greenfield's started in Walker Street and from there they moved up to Espley's and Miss Dabbs' shop, but it is down today.

You could go to the market at night with 2d, and your pockets were bulging with sweets. If you got there about quarter to ten you couldn't go wrong. Then there was the ice-skating that used to be at the Grand. We used to buy a pig's foot to go in and eat inside.

I had a relation, she used to run Thompson's the pawn shop. She was transferred from Thompson's here to Thompson's at Rugby. Thompson's had more than one shop. The shop in New Street stopped being a pawn shop just after the Second World War.

Wellington is nothing today, it is just like a desert. Wellington in my day, if you came to Wellington on a Thursday it was just like going to Buckingham Palace in London; it was out of this world.

I remember Oswald Mosley coming. I'm going back before the War now. He was a Fascist, mad to me, I have never seen anything like it, the Square, you could not move, they let him go on for about 20 minutes and then that was it. The eggs started and the tomatoes started and the police did nothing. The local people or outsiders came and broke it up. Well there was that many there that night you just couldn't move, it was just solid the Square was, they had a job getting him away because meetings around here at one time were terrible, if you got the Labour and Conservatives speaking it was really something. You couldn't get in the halls. The chairs would start, let's be fair because Wrockwardine Wood, Donnington Wood, St Georges were very poor districts and Labour was very strong but down here Conservatives just started to get in a bit. Heckling. Oh! it wasn't safe. At St Georges one night there were 200 chairs broken it was that bad. I remember my father always said, he was a staunch Conservative, and he was going with the Conservative Agent up to Oakengates and of course there were the pit mounds then and they were pelting going through Ketley. I saw a man at Wrockwardine Wood, it is a billiard hall now, but it was a bigger place then with a dance hall over the top. It was the first time Baldwin-Webb had come around and he had a chap by the name of Skitt to speak for him, he was the Secretary of the Shropshire Association, this Skitt came, he had got a hard hat on. I have never seen anything like it, they hit this hard hat and they knocked it straight over the back of his head and pushed him back down the stairs. It was a terrible thing to do but those things happened at these meetings. Baldwin-Webb, when he came first he wasn't allowed to speak at Wrockwardine Wood and Donnington, they would let him come in but he never said a word, it just started and of course like I said it was miners, and let's be fair, a miner in those days, my dad used to go six days a week and he would come back and my mother would have to put his shirt and trousers through the mangle and hang them up on the line for the next morning. He had 32/- for that, so you can see what they had to put up with. There were no baths or nothing and you had no hot water in your house in those days. If you wanted a bath you had to get the fire going in the washing place and then you ladled it out into a tin bath.

Oakengates on a Friday market was very good; it used to go on until 11.00 about 10.30 you could bring as much beef away as you could carry for about 3d. Well there again you see, beef in our days, they used to give it you but if you had a turkey or a chicken we used to think it was great. You couldn't walk up Oakengates market at 10.30, it was solid all the way from top to bottom with stalls. Wellington was mostly of a Saturday and a Thursday and Oakengates was a Friday.

It was a fantastic place Wellington was, to me anyway. I mean it used to cost us 2d to come from Wrockwardine Wood, that was when we had the 2d to come, it was mostly two feet. I would run from the Majestic at four in the morning to Wrockwardine Wood through Oakengates and over the Cockshutt and I have got to Sankeys for 7.00 o'clock. We didn't have the money; we used to have to walk or run, to me it was a better world than it is today I think, to live in. I would sooner live in that world than this world.

My mother -in - law had some money and she had some property, but if somebody had told me that I would own a house and a car when I was 60 I would have said they were a lunatic because at 16 I hadn't even got an overcoat.
There were a few rich people. Mynett's made a lot of money. Ison's made money then there were Espley's. They had a gold mine. They were butchers. You know where the Barley Mow is, well there used to be two double doors there and it used to lead to the back of Espley's yard and every Monday they used to bring the pork. Today you get a pig out of Wellington Market on a Monday and you are eating it the same week. Where as in those days you had to salt the flesh for 3 weeks, and the ham it was a month. Then you had to hang it where there was a draught to dry. Now it was bacon then, but I can't get bacon as good today, to me it is a load of rubbish; given some bacon and a blindfold, you wouldn't know what you were eating and you wouldn't. If you had a piece of proper home-cured bacon you would know what you were eating. I used to kill mine, and my hams I used to put white-wash on them and leave them for about twelve months.

Espley's used to buy pigs from the market here, Wellington auction. We had a marvellous Smithfield here, it is one of the oldest ones there is. Espley's used to supply a lot of the shops all over with everything, chawl, brawn, everything. If it was Espley's you couldn't grumble, you couldn't go wrong.

On a Monday towards dinner time after they had killed - boney pie used to be the thing. It's the same as scratchings, you could go and get 1d's worth of scratchings you would think you had something. Today it would probably fetch £1.00.

Boney pie, you used to put the bones in and boiled eggs and a pie crust on top. That used to be our supper at home on a Saturday night.

Wellington any time after 10.00 o'clock on a Saturday night you couldn't get down the street 1932/33/34 you couldn't move.

The shops you see were nearly all family businesses and it is only since they have had Managers and staff that the hours have come down. The market never shut before 10.00 - never. There was no 4.00 o'clock and 3.30's, then it was 5.00 o'clock and 6.00 o'clock. Apart from that it wasn't a sin to work, it is a sin to work today. Then there is another point you have got to look at, coming from Madeley, if you could afford to come from Madeley or Broseley to Wellington, it was like a trip to London is today. If you went to Wellington you thought it was fantastic. I remember the first trip that we had, it was one of those open things and that used to be 2d. It was like a car with no top on. The brake was on the foot pedal as you got out - you had to lean out to pull the brake on. It wasn't a charabanc it was a car. I am going back now to perhaps 1920, something like that.

Wrockwardine Wood, St George's and Oakengates there was nothing, there was no entertainment or anything. The Grand in Wellington started off as a skating place, then the pictures and there used to be a show as well. Then the Clifton came along and the Town Hall, the pictures were the main thing. The Town Hall had a picture house, and they used to have dances upstairs before the pictures commenced. There used to be Balls in those days. I remember the dances being there but I thought that was after the picture house was closed. The gentlemen wore white gloves and tails then.

There was the Majestic and the Palais, if you went there at 9.00 o'clock on a Saturday you were lucky to get in. The Palais was where the new supermarket is now by the Belmont Hall. A chap named Boffey used to own that, it was one of the finest floors in the Midlands that was. On a Saturday night if you weren't there by 9.00 o'clock you couldn't get in. If for some reason you couldn't get you had to knock and they would have a look at you to see who you were and then you got in. It cost 6d. There was never a bar there. There was a pub, but it's been knocked down now, opposite Sidoli's that's where we used to go for a drink. Boffey would go down to Espley's to get the boiled ham on the bone to make sandwiches. The dancing went on until Sunday morning. It was proper ball-room dancing, the bands were out of this world. Today it isn't dancing it is only a row. There were local bands, a chap named Freddy Lawton, he committed suicide, he came from Madeley way. Then there was a band from Whitchurch, the chap must be 80 now. Freddy Lawton was the best band we had around here. He could make a piano talk. In wartime he went to play for the troops, all over the world. He had about four different bands, all under him.
On a Saturday night then you may well have had two or three dances going on and a cinema. There was plenty of entertainment with the cinemas and dancing and the whist drives. At Christ Church there were two or three whist drives every week, Mrs Palin organised them, she was a whist drive fanatic.

I used to bike from Wrockwardine Wood but that was only when I was 17. Between 15 and 17 it was too dear, you couldn't afford a bike. For the first two or three years that I was at Sankeys I used to run it from Wrockwardine wood and run it back. About 7.20 the buzzer would go and as the buzzer started the gate shut and if you didn't get in before the gate shut you had to get a new job. I can remember them coming to you at 3.00 o'clock in the afternoon and saying "8.00 o'clock" and you had to stay until 8.00 o'clock, there was no saying "My granny's ill", you know, like the tales they have got today. If you didn't work you just had your cards and you went. I have gone many a time on a Friday morning at 7.30 to work and haven't come home until Saturday dinner time - 12.00 o'clock. There was more work in the area for people, it wasn't too bad really, there was Sankey's with about 600 and then the canteen, it used to be 1d for your dinner, a thick bowl of soup, that was all you had, it was alright. That was one of the finest engineering places that I have ever known in St Georges, New Yard. Fantastic that place was. They turned some of the finest craftsmen out in the world. They also did some of the finest work as well. They used to make all their own engines, I have seen more there than came from Sankey's. When they used to come out at 5.30 or 6.00 that road was solid. We used to take their lunches in a basin with a saucer on the top and a red handkerchief. At about 11.30 they would say anybody for lunches and everybody would rise, off they would go. It was a chance to get half an hour off - they used to wait for them to see if they had got any food left.

The work was not bad but the wage was terrible. When I started I had 7/4d for a week's work. It's hard saying £1 was £1 but you had still to pay your rent.

O.D. Murphy was a man who made money in Wellington, he started in Ironbridge later moving to Wellington taking over a warehouse at the back of Ann Windsors. The pop was at first made from nettles, later on came the mineral waters, he expanded by taking over a works on Holyhead Road.

There were two sons, Ron and Graham, both are now dead. There was a tragic accident to Ron's wife, they had moved to Donnerville and while she was giving attention to a cow she was kicked and died a few days later.

Miss Clay used to live at Donnerville Hall, she left to go to Scotland in 1937. Miss Clay attended All Saints Church giving generously of her money. The tower was repaired by her generosity and other things as well.

Miss Carver was another character - she died recently leaving £90,000, she was brilliant. She would stand in front of a building that was going to be and her dad would say so and so and she would tot up the lot. Mr Carver was one of the finest builders in the country. The last houses I remember him building were Stone House and the two before Tommy Edwards'. Now it took him 5 years to build them houses. If he was short of work, I mean and in those days was cheap, there were no legal fees and people coming to look at it and telling you one day you could do this and another day that. You could just go and buy a bit of land and that is what he used to do. When he had no work he would buy a bit of land and start his people on that. They would perhaps get the foundations out and then he would have an order for a house so he would take them off. They used to keep going up and down these houses. Fantastic houses.

There was a few out of work around here. I remember the 1926 strike and all that, you know but on the whole it wasn't bad, it was the wages actually and the conditions. The strike affected everything, there was nothing, all you had to do was go to school with a cup and when you got there all you had was some bread and butter and some jam.

Wellington had some very good cabinet makers. There was Addison's works, they used to make the school stuff. There was another old place at the back of the Gas Works. It's still going, Corbett's, they dealt in galvanized steel. They used to employ quite a lot of people. Then there was another, Corbett and Leeds, he used to have the builder's yard across the road where the Park Inn is now. They were very good builders. Dixon-Davies who married my sister-in-law worked for them for years.
Pearces the timber merchants are another firm of good tradesmen, they have been in Market Street a long time, the business was small to start with but has extended and improved with the passing years. Pearce's have now moved to Spring Hill. The yard was shared at one time with Jones a monumentalist but this business has closed down with the passing of time.

There was the Drill Hall where we used to go dancing. There used to be a dance there nearly every night. It wasn't a bad place actually, they used to get bands and choirs there.

We also had some of the finest choirs anywhere around here. We had a choir, The Hadley Orpheus, it was out of this world. They are the only choir that I know that went to Wales in 1933 and wiped the floor with the Welsh choirs, now when you can do that you have got some choir, they were local people. I was at the practice and they finished at 2.00 o'clock in the morning and then went home. They went off at 9.00 o'clock that morning and stopped in a field at Oswestry and they had 2 hours there. There was Donnington Wood, they were a very good choir. We also had some very good bands around here, brass bands, but they have all gone now. All they are interested in now is this Rock and Roll or throwing something at somebody.

It's the same with the Churches, be fair, I have seen the time that if you didn't get to Christ Church Harvest Festival before 6.00 o'clock you couldn't get in. It was packed solid. What would you get now. A week last Sunday we had 11 Sunday morning and 13 Sunday night. Mr Abbey would come and have a cup of tea at your house, but today it's all different again isn't it. You could go to Abbey and talk about your problems and he would come to your house.

The Rev. Dodd he came from Eaton Constantine and was a wonderful preacher.

*Capsey's Store, taken over by Hepworths, and is now Talk Of The Town.*
Baby Show & Garden Party, Wrekin Hospital.
Dr. Hollies seated right and Dr White, County Medical Officer, standing behind.

1918 Peace celebrations in Market Hall

Orleton Hall grounds 1913.
Gustav Hamel, aviator, back to camera. Tall Gentleman is Rev, Turreff, Wrockwardine Wood.