To the latest issue of Wellingtonia, which is the first of two issues scheduled for 2011 (the second will, hopefully, be available in the autumn).

As our supporters know, we were most fortunate in obtaining a grant which enabled us to produce full-colour magazines for issues one to five inclusive, and let readers have them at no charge.

Because we were unable to obtain another grant, we then produced issues six to nine during 2010. Unfortunately for many of our followers, these had to be published via our web site, which meant we were unable to reach the wider ‘audience’ we had previously.

Now, in response to countless requests, we are experimenting with having paper versions produced again, but this time with a modest charge to cover the cost of printing.

However, we shall not be able (in normal circumstances) to sell magazines in shops because it would entail supplying them at a discount, which would then mean having to charge more per copy to cover our costs, and we would also have to enter the murky world of chasing up payment of invoices.

This means that we shall have to rely on you, our readers, to spread the word and buy copies at our events or from committee members (the details for the main ones are listed on page 5).
It is difficult to understand just how internationally famous and widely read Hesba Stretton’s novels were during, and for quite some time after, her lifetime. What is even sadder is that modern readers have little knowledge of, or no regard for, her achievements, much favouring names ‘of the moment’.

There were already signs that her fame was becoming overshadowed by misconception at the time of her third and final death in 1911. Using the obituary printed in the Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News as a contemporary example, Hesba’s works were, by that time and with little or no understanding of her range of subject matter, classified as ‘for children’, typically concerning waifs. Then, as now, the standard of journalistic accuracy was somewhat lacking.

This over-simplistic view of her achievements as a writer have become her legacy, which is a terrible shame.

She didn’t just write about ‘waifs’, although a fair number of her books do feature street urchins of one sort or another.

However, it is the manner in which Hesba’s stories expose the harsh realities of poverty, ignorance and the way arcane, unsympathetic and often inhumane laws affected the circumstances in which so many people lived, often through no fault of their own.

There were so many circumstances wherein seemingly happy folk could fall on devastatingly debilitating hard times, and Hesba’s tales highlight the shortcomings society had in dealing with them. Or not. Such is the variety of subject matter in Hesba’s books that they provide an insight into the realities of Victorian society that no non-fiction history book could ever hope to achieve.

Nevertheless, her novels aren’t solely confined to life’s traumas in England; her penmanship took world affairs into account, including the American Civil War, the Seige of Strasbourg and the plight of Christians in Russia.

Hesba works attracted the admiration of, for example, Charles Dickens, George Bernard Shaw, Victor Hugo and Queen Victoria. It is a sad reflection of our times that Hesba Stretton is not given the acknowledgement she so richly deserves.
WELLINGTON JOURNAL
14 October 1911
SMITH – 8th inst. In her 80th year, at Ivycroft, Ham, Middlesex, Sarah Smith (“Hesba Stretton”), daughter of late B Smith, formerly of Wellington.

DEATH OF “HESBA STRETTON” – A Gifted Shropshire Writer
The death occurred on Sunday at her residence, Ivycroft, Ham Common, Middlesex of Miss Sarah Smith, more widely known as “Hesba Stretton”, an authoress, of considerable ability. The deceased lady is the daughter of Mr B Smith, bookseller and publisher of Wellington and was born at Church Stretton 79 years ago.

She began her literary career while resident in Wellington. Her first effort, a slight little effusion under the title “The Lucky Leg” finding acceptance by Charles Dickens, who published it “Household Words” and sent her a cheque for £5 in payment therefor.

Her frequent contributions to this and other periodicals was very favourably received by the public and she soon gained considerable repute as a writer for children.

Her first great success was “Jessica’s First Prayer” published in 1867, a book which earned world-wide reputation, and was translated into a number of European and Asiatic tongues. Her stories were all of an evangelical character [not strictly true!] and were primarily intended for the young [also not strictly true.] though they were read with avidity by adults also [very true!].

“All alone in London” was a tale considered by many to be even superior to “Jessica’s First Prayer” as a picture of child life; and among her other works which number about 40, the most popular proved to be “Pilgrim’s Street”, “Half Brothers”, “Fern’s Hollow”, “Bede’s Charity” and “Fishers of Derby Haven”.

It was estimated that upwards of 200,000 copies of her stories have been sold in various countries. [We now know it was considerably more, and that’s not counting ‘pirate’ copies produced in, for example, America.]

Of a somewhat different type was her novel “The Clives of Burcot” a work which excited much interest especially in Shropshire for one reason because the scene of the plot was laid in Wellington and immediate locality and it commanded a wide sale.

Apart from literature her interests were few but to the success of some modern movements she contributed materially.

The most important of these was the crusade against the ill-treatment of children which resulted in the formation of the London (later National) Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

During the famine of 1892 in Russia Miss Smith collected £1,000 for the relief of the peasants and went to much trouble to see it was properly distributed.

It is said that Alexander II was so much struck by her story “Jessica’s First Prayer” that he ordered it to be sent to every school in the Russian Empire, but his successor revoked that order and directed that every copy of the work should be burnt.

“Hesba Stretton” never married. Her long life was a beautiful example of good, works, Christian faith and patient suffering nobly borne.

She was a very shy and sensitive nature and greatly dreaded publicity and show in every way. A charming friend, a true woman, a real companion, so well worth knowing and loving. This is what all those who found her were honoured by her friendship.

She had been confined to her room for the past 4 years and had twice had the “distinction” of reading her own obituary notice in the London press – the first occasion being in January 1909, and the other in February of the present year when her sister Elizabeth (rumour had it at first that it was “Hesba”) died at the residence at Ham where they had spent upwards of 20 years together.

The funeral took place in Ham Common churchyard on Wednesday. The service which was conducted by the Vicar of Ham (Rev J R Pridis) was very simple, no hymns being sung.

The mourners were Mr G B Stretton (Assistant Master at Dulwich College), and Mr Philip E Stretton (nephews), Mrs Webb, Mrs M Stretton and Miss Hope Smith (nieces).

A few personal friends gathered around the grave in which Miss Smith’s sister was buried last February. Those present included Lady Sudeley, Mrs John Biddulph, Miss Lawrence, Mrs J W Harker, Miss Maddison, Miss Percival, Miss Anna Buckland, Miss Alice Reacher, Dr Roger N Goodman, Mr G Randall (Secretary of the National Orphan Home), Mr J H Noble and the Rev E H Knott.

If you’d like to know more about Wellington during the years Hesba Stretton lived here, and the way town life affected her writing career, together with the impact her novels had on important people who were responsible for changing English laws, Allan Frost’s book The Life of Hesba Stretton 1832 – 1911 explains why she is our most celebrated home-grown daughter and an authoress of note; it also includes the full story of Jessica’s First Prayer.

Allan will be leading a ‘walking talk’ around Hesba’s Wellington in June and giving an evening talk at the Literary Festival in October.

www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com
In the mid 1960s there was a great popular national cause called the Freedom From Hunger Campaign. The idea was that Western nations like ours should help some of the poorer, emerging peoples to grow more food for their expanding populations. What we would send them was not food but the technology to grow it. It seemed an exciting new idea. A national organisation was set up.

At the time I was suffering from 'Ex-Mayor Syndrome', as I had recently been chairman of Wellington UDC, and was back to being my usual, unimportant self. I needed something important to do. As a geographer I thought this filled the bill. So we naturally set up a committee of which I was chairman, using the contacts and bit of influence derived from the UDC. We had an excellent secretary, Chris Townsend, whose employers at British Sugar supported the project, and he spent a great deal of time working for the campaign, especially when the factory was between seasons.

Wellington quickly became quite excited with the idea but did not want to be tied to the national programme. We always were an independent town and we would do our own thing. We thought that if we could show the people who contributed to our charity exactly where the money was going and what it would do, they would be happier than simply pouring hard earned cash into a general fund. Then we hit on Uganda.

The project involved sending an agricultural expert to Uganda at our expense and letting their government send him to where he was most needed. We contacted Harper Adams College for advice and lecturer Maurice Eddoes was a tower of strength. We advertised the job – three years in Uganda for a minimal wage, working with the local folks and improving their lives. There were several applicants and we selected a short list and interviewed them. One chap was getting a hard grilling from Maurice; I felt sorry for him. His name was Frank Pitkin and had many useful attributes and skills. We gave him the job.

Meantime Wellington set to and raised the money by diverse means. We persuaded thousands to pay 6d to plant a seed of wheat, including the chairman of the NFU. Girl Guides polished shoes in the market and charged. Little boys (including mine) gave puppet shows and made their friends pay to watch. We gave a 'Bean Feast' at the Majestic Ballroom, a black tie event, charging for a 'posh' dinner and served bean soup, bread and water. Of course we rattled buckets all over the place. We raised over £3,000, a large sum then. We also had a lot of fun.

Students from Harper Adams lent glamour to the occasion at a time when foreigners, especially black ones, were rare. Henry Shashawanyana, from Uganda and Kent Ntekhe from Basutoland attracted crowds with their talks on life in their exotic countries. The students also organised their ‘Rag’ to support us. We had money coming in from Hadley, Ketley and the country around as well as Wellington.

We were held up for a while because Milton Obote, Ugandan president, was marrying his fourth wife, which stopped the country for a time. Chris Townsend talked to him on the phone. Eventually Frank Pitkin had his send off and we waited for action. It soon came. He was sent to a village near the Nile and rapidly befriended the locals. Soon they were clearing bush land for crops – cash crops as well as food. There was some unrest so the Government Agent took Frank a shotgun for protection, though he never needed it. Frank played Rugger for Uganda occasionally. They planted sorghum, wheat, coffee and cotton. They brewed beer from the grain and had to put Frank to bed one night. The project was a great success; Frank went back to farming in England.

Meantime in Wellington the money was still coming in and we had more than enough. Rather than send it to headquarters in London we decided on a new project. We sponsored an Indian student at Harper Adams on a Poultry Husbandry course. This was Ramashwar Kishore, who virtually hitch-hiked by air from Calcutta as he had no money. After the course Ramashwar took over a huge poultry business in northern India.

So far it was a great success and we in Wellington were proud of our contribution to the great world problem. Later came disillusion. Idi Amin (‘Dada’) became President of Uganda, set about exterminating all who opposed him and unleashed a reign of terror. The newly prosperous, happy village was overrun, the Asian businessmen who handled most of the trade were expelled and misery returned. Worse was to come, after Idi, when the Lord’s Army of boy soldiers murdered and ran riot.

Better times are now back, so I’m told.
MEMORABILIA WANTED

We are always on the lookout for old photos, event programmes and anything else connected with Wellington, The Wrekin Hill and the Weald Moors. Yes, we already have many, but we need YOU to delve into your own archives and let us borrow anything relevant for a short while to take copies.

For example, does anyone have a better quality photo of the Ercall Stores in Wrekin Road seen here on the right? This poor quality picture, taken from a sale leaflet, is the only one we have and we could do with something better. Also, can anyone tell us more about the history of this shop?

HESBA STRETTON'S WELLINGTON

2011 marks the centenary of Hesba’s death in 1911, so now’s the time to discover more about the town’s most famous writer. Allan Frost will lead a two-hour talking walk around Wellington centre, revealing why certain places were significant to this internationally famous and politically influential author. Meet outside the entrance to the Civic Offices, Wellington, at 7.00pm on 29th June 2011.

After the walk, attendees will be able to purchase Allan’s biography The Life of Hesba Stretton 1832–1911 for only £5.00 instead of the recommended price of £7.50.

WELLINGTON HISTORY GROUP FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 2011

Saturday June 11th
WELLINGTON'S MIDSUMMER FAYRE
Visit our stall in the parish churchyard.

Wednesday June 15th: Allan Frost
WELLINGTON'S ARCHAEOLOGY
Talk starts at 7:30 p.m. in the Civic Offices.

Wednesday June 29th: Allan Frost
HESBA STRETTON'S WELLINGTON
Two-hour walk. 7.00 p.m. from Civic Offices foyer.

Saturday September 3rd: Neil Clarke
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WILLIAM REYNOLDS
Guided walk around Ketley; details to be announced.

Tuesday October 18th: Allan Frost
HESBA STRETTON'S WAIFS (AND MORE)
Literary Festival talk; details to be announced by the Town Council.

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The only visual evidences of Wellington’s Market House are a map (above, showing the approximate position of the building’s footprint) produced for Lord Forester in 1793, and an engraving by W. Gauci (below) in *Shropshire Gazetteer*, currently believed to have been published around 1795 by T. Gregory.

Other documentation is frustratingly scarce but we have been able to ascertain certain facts. The building measured approximately 12 by six metres. It had columns which supported a timber framed hall. A weather vane probably projected above the roof and there may also have been a small bell tower for sounding an alarm or calling townsfolk to a central meeting. If the engraving below was made before 1805, it implies there was a belfry but, as I have yet to discover more reliable evidence, am unhappy to state this as a fact.

Even these basics raise questions. For example, how many columns were there, and were they made of timber (possibly) or stone (more likely)?

In *The History of Wellington* by R.M. Baxter (1949), he says, ‘This [Market House] is reputed to have been as fine as the one which still adds interest and character to Much Wenlock, but it must be admitted that its situation gave some excuse for its removal. Some forty years ago, pictures of this market house were still to be found.’

He also says, ‘Miss Auden, in *Memoirs of Old Shropshire*, after writing of the fine half-timbered old market house at Much Wenlock, says, “Wellington possessed an equally fine Market House as late as 1804, but it has now disappeared” and “drawings are extant of a fine half-timbered Market House of seventeenth century date”.’ Does anyone have copies of these old pictures? If so, please get in touch.

Trying to track down references to the Market House in deeds and other old documents is difficult, not least because alternative names like ‘Market Hall’, ‘Town Hall’, etc., are used at different times. For example, in the Quarter Sessions records for July 1760, there’s a note saying that ‘Wellington Townhall’ was licensed as a Dissenters’ Meeting House, which met in a room on the first floor. (There would undoubtedly have been more than one room in that part of the building, with steps providing access from below.) Part of the ground floor may also have been used as a holding cell for miscreants awaiting a hearing.

The Market House served a variety of purposes. At ground level, sheltered between the columns, it was customary for women to sell cheese, butter and other dairy products as well as fowl on market days. Other trading would also take place here, including the annual Hiring or ‘Mop’ Fairs which sprang up throughout the country after the devastating effects of the Black Plague led to a shortage of labour.

At such fairs, the Market House became the equivalent of today’s Job Centre, where men and women stood around holding or wearing symbols of the work they were able to undertake, like women holding mops to obtain jobs as servants, while men clutched at straws to show they were farm labourers. Hiring fairs gained a bad reputation for encouraging exploitation and victimisation, but they were a necessity of life for folk wishing to gain a few months’ wages to stave off poverty and hunger.

While the covered area was useful at markets and fairs, the essential purpose of a Market House was to provide the town with a public meeting house in a central location.

This was where town officials were centred, such as the Ale Conner who tested the quality of ale before it could be sold. Essentially, this was where traders paid tolls (the fee required to enable them to sell livestock, produce and other goods on market and fair days).

One of the rooms acted as a manor court where hearings were held and judgements passed. On fair days, it became a sort of ‘trading standards’ court, known as a Court of Pie Powder (from the French *Pied Poudre*, ‘Dusty foot’), so called because many of the main offenders were traders who had travelled miles to sell items which weren’t always of
acceptable quality, or sold in short measures.

Courts of Pie Powder in Wellington were introduced when King Henry VIII granted the market charter of 1514 to Sir Christopher Garneys (for further details of this charter, see Special Paper 1 on our web site).

The point of such courts was to deal with transgressions in trading standards and petty criminal activity without delay and met out immediate punishment, often making the punishment fit the crime. Consequently, the town pillory, stocks and often a whipping post were standard instruments of law enforcement within the market place.

A butcher caught selling rancid meat could expect to spend a few hours in the pillory with a large piece of evil-smelling meat hanging around his neck, and folk selling poor quality vegetables could suffer the indignity of being pelted by rotten food while resting their blistered feet in the stocks. Pickpockets and other petty criminals, always prevalent at crowd gatherings, suffered even more violent short and sharp retribution at the whipping post.

In addition to Pie Powder, the Market House also seems to have been the place for other legal and court functions, such as the Quarter Sessions.

Rob Francis has told me a note (SRO 999/Uu 4) at Shropshire Archives includes the words, ‘At the town hall in Wellington, 24th April, 2 Charles [1626]: Depositions of witnesses taken before Thomas Powis, John Foster, Thomas Forster and William Cheshire, gent, by virtue of HM Commission from the Council in the Marches of Wales to them directed on behalf of the plaintiff...’, which makes it the earliest reference unearthed so far.

Wellington must have had a market house/town hall functioning as a court house and local administration office long before this particular Market House.

The chances are that it was located in the market place, and possibly even in the same place, we simply don’t know. Perhaps our ‘seventeenth century’ market house dates back to 1514 or even earlier. We’ll never know. But we do know this Market House existed from sometime in the 1600s until about 1805, and may well have looked similar to the one at Wootton Bassett (above) in Wiltshire, the design of which was common in many English towns.

But why was the Market House eventually dismantled, and where did the building materials go? The short answer is that the House, situated as it was at the narrowest end of Market Square close to the even narrower entrance to Market Street, caused considerable congestion to horse drawn vehicles and people alike, a growing problem as the town economy expanded during the eighteenth century.

Lord Forester, despite someone at the time noting ‘Wellington Market Hall, resolution to ask Lord Forester’s leave to rebuild’, said it had to go, so it went, and some of the official functions previously conducted here seem to have been transferred to rooms within the Sun Inn, Walker Street and the Talbot Inn, which stood roughly where the HSBC Bank is on a corner of Market Square.

Sadly, we don’t know where the timbers forming parts of the building, or its columns, went.

At my suggestion, Telford & Wrekin Council, as part of the repaving project recently completed in the centre of Wellington, kindly agreed to mark the existence of this economically and socially important historic building by incorporating cast iron markers and a plaque (below) featuring a conjectural drawing of our long-gone Market House.

What a great way to mark some of our heritage!
The Willowmoor Enigma

Neil Clarke

The road from Wellington through the Forest Glen to Little Wenlock passes Willowmoor Farm (above) before it climbs towards the village. A number of factors suggest that Willowmoor is an area of some historical significance: first, there is the name of the place; then, the remains of mounds in fields on both sides of the road; and finally, the discovery there some time ago of a hoard of weapons. So, what does all this mean?

The name

The most obvious explanation of the name Willowmoor is that the area was once associated with willow trees; and the expert on Shropshire place names, the late Margaret Gelling, suggested as much.

Apparently, the bounds of Wellington Hay, as described in the Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey in 1301, had ‘Le Salyn’ as a boundary marker in this vicinity. This was probably derived from the medieval French ‘salegn’, meaning ‘willow copse’, and there are similar examples of this usage in the neighbouring counties of Worcestershire and Cheshire.

However, an earlier explanation of the name was that the ‘llow’ element of Willowmoor is derived from the Old English ‘hlaew’, meaning ‘burial mound’. And there are, of course, the remains of a number of mounds in the Willowmoor area.

The mounds

The earliest description of the mounds was made by the Rev. C.H. Hartshorne in his book Salopia Antiqua, published in 1841. Hartshorne had been curate at Little Wenlock a few years earlier and clearly knew this particular area ‘…lying on the south-east side of The Wrekin, in a sequestered and highly picturesque valley, from which there seems at first to be no outlet. To this secluded spot I frequently wandered when residing in the parish’.

He lists nine mounds – five in the field to the west of the road and four to the east (all ‘now almost undiscoverable without the assistance of the farmer to point out where they lie’) – and describes them as tumuli (i.e. burial mounds).

The next reference to the mounds was by Samuel Bagshaw in his Gazetteer of Shropshire, published in 1851. In the entry for Little Wenlock, he states that ‘in the immediate vicinity (of Willowmoor Farm) are five barrows, which were opened about 16 years ago, but nothing was discovered in them’.

It wasn’t until the 1920s that a serious archaeological assessment of the site was attempted. In an article in the Antiquaries Journal in 1928, Lily F. Chitty (who was to become a foremost authority on Shropshire archaeological finds) stated that ‘not less than twelve low mounds, of varied shapes and sizes, but having the appearance of ploughed-out barrows, can still be traced at Willow Moor’, nine to the west of the Wellington-Little Wenlock road and three to the east.

Although it was impossible to take accurate measurements of the mounds owing to their damaged condition, the best preserved of all (no.1 on the map) had the following dimensions: length about 130 feet ENE-WSW, width 70 feet and height 5 feet. Only this mound showed signs of the excavation referred to by Bagshaw in 1851.

Larger scale Ordnance Survey maps (6 in and 2½ in.) published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries marked some of the mounds as ‘tumuli’, but they are not shown on the 1 inch or current Explorer maps of the area.

The hoard

In addition to referring to the mounds at Willowmoor, the Rev. Hartshorne’s account also mentioned the discovery of some broken weapons in the area in ca.1790 (fate unknown) before going on to describe the discovery of a large hoard of weapons in 1835:

‘From residing in the parish…I am able to describe from personal observation the circumstances attending their discovery. Whilst a labourer was cutting a drain about a hundred yards from the left hand side of the road leading from Little Wenlock to Wellington, by a hedge side separating the two fields lying between the top and the bottom of the ascent, he suddenly came upon a heap of broken spears. They lay piled up together, and were two or three hundred at least, but all much injured. Among them were three or four whetstones [for sharpening weapons] and a celt [chisel-edged implement]. The spears and celt were made of brass [sic.], many of the former precisely like some of acknowledged British origin that have been dug up elsewhere’.

Miss Chitty, in her 1928 article, gives a far more detailed account of the contents of the hoard, which she confirms were in fact made of bronze (from the period ca.2000-500 BC); and she attempts to trace where they were deposited. Apparently, some went to Shrewsbury.
Museum, some to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries in London, and others to the collections of individuals, including the landowner, Lord Forester. Many of the weapons cannot be traced.

A selection of those that found their way to Shrewsbury are now on display at Rowley’s House Museum in Barker Street – six spear head fragments (one complete), a socketed axe and a flanged axe. The display caption suggests that hoards such as the one found at Willowmoor may have been the result of:

1) bronze smiths collecting scrap together and burying it for safe-keeping (but in this case never reclaimed), or

2) weapons carefully buried as ‘religious’ offerings, perhaps marking battle sites or places where spirits needed to be appeased.

Conclusions

So, taking all these factors into consideration, what conclusions can be reached about the significance of the Willowmoor site? An hypothesis postulated by the Rev. Hartshorne – that there was a battle in the neighbourhood, followed by the burial of the slain – has some merit. This would account for the diverse collection of tumuli, their curious situation near the head of a marshy hollow overlooked by higher ground, and the fact that two hoards of shattered weapons were found in close proximity.

Also, the importance of a route through the Forest Glen and Willowmoor in the Bronze Age, where rival warriors may have clashed, is suggested by the mapping of finds from that period which extend from the Severn at Buildwas, over the ridge east of The Wrekin and northward through the country east of the River Tern, probably aiming for the Peak District, the copper mines of Alderley Edge and the port of Warrington.

On the other hand, it was once suggested that the mounds represent a small terminal moraine of the ice that encircled the northern end of The Wrekin, penetrated the Forest Glen and was baulked in its progress by the Little Wenlock ridge; but the OS Drift map shows boulder clay and not stony drift of morainic character at Willowmoor. A further idea, that the mounds are waste material from mineral workings in the area, does not hold up because the former adjacent mining and quarrying at the Hatch (limestone) and Maddock’s Hill (camptonite for road-stone) took place at over 100 feet above the Willowmoor site.

The latest pronouncements on the origins of the mounds state that:

1) they are ‘almost certainly the result of water erosion’ (OS Archaeological Division) and

2) ‘their interpretation (as mounds) can be questioned on topographical, morphological and stratigraphical grounds’ (Sites & Monuments Register).

So, an enigma.

Which of the above theories do you favour?

Historical Accuracy?

Do you remember this photo appearing in Wellingtonia a few issues ago? It was printed to show how sloppy attitudes hide or, in this case, completely ignore historical truth.

The sign implies that the street (off Mill Bank) gets its name from someone called ‘Greenman’, whereas in fact it’s supposed to recall the existence of The Green Man public house which once stood here.

It’s rather disconcerting to see another gross historical error on the opposite side of Mill Bank where a new street sign has been erected to replace an old one.

Prince’s Street (note the apostrophe) came about when our Victorian forefathers thought it more respectable to rename ‘Brewery Street’ (so called because of its proximity to the Shropshire Brewery (later Murphy’s Pop Works)). It was most unusual as it is the only street within the town which includes the grammatically correct apostrophe. Whereas modern convention drops the apostrophe as a matter of course, previous replacement signs here have always retained the apostrophe, but not now (below).

So much for respecting historical tradition. The errors in both Green Man Close and Prince’s Street signs have been reported to (and ignored by) the relevant authorities.

It seems that our public servants and elected representatives are still not fully committed to preserving important, albeit sometimes quirky, aspects of our heritage.
If your ancestors served in the armed forces during WWII, these notes may help you discover more about what they did.

‘W’

hat did you do in the War, daddy?’ You may have seen the poster which depicts a couple of children asking their daddy what his contribution to the ‘war effort’ was. It was a recruiting poster designed c.1915 and an attempt to boost recruitment of volunteers to the forces at a desperate time during the Great War.

It played on the emotions; guilt ‘daddy’ wasn’t doing his ‘bit’ and after it is all over what could he tell his children – ‘he shirked the job’?

The records of soldiers who ‘did their bit’ in the Great War are quite easily available for anybody to research – both in ‘paper form’ and ‘on the net’. But what of your father, grandfather, brother what can we find out about their war service in the second great catastrophe of the Twentieth Century, World War II. How can we research their war record?

Like any good family history research you begin by talking to your family, asking them to tell you about what they know, perhaps using family photographs as a starting point; we wouldn’t be surprised if you haven’t got plenty of photographs tucked away and haven’t a clue what they are about. This asking isn’t always easy; recently we heard from a family member who was asking her mother about the ‘family’ and “mother was so upset and angry we gave up”, mother is 94; what a fund of knowledge if only we could ‘unlock’ it.

Talking to men who spent years fighting in WWII, particularly abroad, is not easy, we cannot imagine the horrors they may have seen or endured; perhaps all they want is to forget and so when they returned home they didn’t speak of their experiences.

Both Mary’s father and uncle, two brothers, who served in the Far East never spoke of their life in the forces. Mary is fortunate that her father, although he never spoke of that time, did leave paper records – his call-up papers and discharge papers, which included details of the Naval Establishment where he served and other incidental papers, letters and photographs, thoughtfully identified on the back. From these, since his death, we have been able to reconstruct a framework of those four years away.

How can you find out about your relative’s war service, if you are not so fortunate ? You might think it is easy, but the Forces Records from the Second World War are ‘closed’, not available; they are not in the ‘public domain’.

The only available information are personal recollections, maybe published, after all there has been countless books published since 1945 about incidents during the war-years, you may find your relative mentioned, stories and memories shared by ‘unit associations’ and the rather impersonal, but official ‘unit records’.

Knowing the force, army, navy or air force and the unit can be a great help. There are numerous associations for each force and within each of these there are particular separate groups; squadron, ship, or regiment, often identified on its ‘web-site’. We had photographs of Mary’s dad on a ship and a date – from this we were able to visit the ‘internet’ and access some records of this naval vessel (from the unit association) and identify the photographs as being taken at a Japanese surrender off the Island of We off the northern tip of Sumatra.

Similarly Geoff was searching for the service record of an aircrew who was killed on active service. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission internet site identified his death and the unit in which he served.

Air Force lists of Officers were searched and it was possible to identify the promotions and dates for this officer. From a very useful reference book ‘RAF Squadrons’ which provides ‘a comprehensive record of the movement and equipment of all RAF squadrons … since 1912’, he was able to identify the location and type of aircraft flown by this aircrew on their last operational flight.

This opened the way to look at the Operations Book for that squadron, at the National Archives and find further information. In addition the Station Log Book also provided additional information – the fact a second aircraft was sent out to search for survivors, and dropped a dingy to two survivors in the water.

These Squadron Operations Books provide a wealth of information; the one Geoff looked at provided a daily log of aircraft operations, identifying the aircraft, its call sign, the individual members of the crew, the mission (task), time of take-off and return. In another section there are details of personnel posted to and from the unit, casualties and decorations.
These are more detailed than similar operational logs for other service units. These exist but too often they do not identify individuals, perhaps an officer but very rarely other ranks. It is difficult using these records to follow the service career of an individual.

It has been possible to obtain service records of a deceased individual but only if you are next of kin and then by paying a large fee. Very recently the rules have changed; since the end of 2010, it has been possible for anybody to get the service record of a deceased person, on payment of a fee, but only if the person has been dead for 25 years or more.

Of course, if your family lived in the Hadley area during the war and your relative served in the armed services you could well be fortunate with the publication Memorial & Souvenir Brochure.

This publication is a revelation, a credit to those who had the foresight to set up the Welcome Home Fund in October 1944. The Parish Council asked the Committee which had worked from 1939 to raise funds for the Comfort of fighting men to take on the task of providing for the Welcome Home of men of Hadley.

Perhaps other local districts produced such records – do you know of any? If so, please share this knowledge.

World War II memories are precious and we ought to preserve them in any way we can – they are our HISTORY.

A heading, recently, in a local paper proclaimed “Couple share war memories with A-level class”, this is just one channel to keep our history alive.

The photo below, which appeared in the Wellington Journal, shows (from left to right): Cllr H. Herdman, (chairman of the school managers), Mr. S.C. Brookes (head teacher), Mrs. Herdman, Clive House captains Christine Rubery and Howard Bowen, Cllr Ernie Griffiths, Mrs. A.N. Gwynne, individual champions Jane Gale and Roger Whittles, and Cllr J. Pearce.

As was usual at that time (July 1961), Park Junior School in North Road (now renamed ‘Wrekin View Primary School for some unfathomable reason; and what happened to the ‘Junior’ suffix?) invited Wellington Urban District Council members to distribute prizes and add a degree of dignity to the occasion.

The photo below, which was inspired by our assistant secretary is the result of an ardent desire of the Committee to place on record briefly the doings of Hadley people who have served in H.M. Forces during the fighting years of the second World War.

Its distribution at the price of 2s. 6d. is only made possible by the generous assistance of the advertisers, who have contributed largely to the cost of the book. Purchasers will therefore be contributing almost entirely to the Welcome Home Fund, because the entire profits will be distributed, with other accumulated funds, equally among those who qualify.

The Committee has endeavoured to collect the names of all from the village who have served between September 1939 and V-J Day, with a photograph of each where obtained; also information as to rank, unit, length of service, movement, awards, etc., and the result has been very encouraging.

PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL SUMMER SPORTS DAY, 1961

They just don’t have the same Sports Days in Primary schools any more, do they?

Do you remember having to take part in at least one event? Egg-and-Spoon, Wheelbarrow or Three-Legged (even Slow Bike) Races for fun (but run oh, so seriously) for those less athletically gifted; and ‘proper’ competitions (High and Long Jumps, 80 yard sprints and hurdles) for those with limbs that managed to achieve some sort of purposeful co-ordination.

All good fun, of course, unless your doting mum happened to turn up and scream embarrassing exhortations of encouragement from the sidelines.

Then there were the certificate presentations and trophy awards.
January
Three men were charged with refusing to perform their allotted task of stone breaking for the relief afforded them at the Wellington Workhouse. It was in accordance with the regulations that each defendant should have broken a certain quantity of stone. One of the defendants observed that there was not sufficient water in the bath on Friday night to cover their ankles. Mr Frost, Master of the Workhouse, replied that in his experience the complaint was that there was usually too much water – the shorter the supply the better they liked it. (laughter). The defendants were each sentenced to 7 days’ hard labour.

February
CLOTHES-TEARING TRAMP
The defendant was charged by the Master of the Wellington Workhouse, Mr W Frost for having destroyed his clothes at the workhouse. He pleaded guilty. … The Porter reported that the defendant had torn his coat, trousers and shirt to shreds and the defendant had torn his coat, which was not true, they were not worth wearing. (laughter). The defendants were each sentenced to 7 days’ hard labour.

April
SHROPSHIRE
HALF A CENTURY AGO
The following extract is from the Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News. The Committee of the Wellington public soup kitchen has just issued their first annual report from which it appears that the kitchen was open from 11 January to 22 February last - a period of 6 weeks and during that time about 350 poor families were supplied with soup twice a week … The subscriptions were most liberal and enabled the promoters to lay the foundation of a permanent institution … the committee are of the opinion that with careful management the soup kitchen may be made almost self-supporting …

A small annual subscription from the well-to-do inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood is all that would be required for the support of this institution unless it is wished and intended to extend its usefulness by giving bread with soup. In some districts a loaf of bread worth, say, 2d or 1½d is supplied for 1d to each applicant for a quart of soup during most inclement weather and when work is scarce. This would be a great boon to the poor and it is thought might be adopted here next winter if the funds permit.

May
SHROPSHIRE
HALF A CENTURY AGO
The 1861 Census. The following is the return of the Census of the Wellington district as furnished by Mr Howlet, Registrar of Births and Deaths. The population for the whole district (which includes the village and park of the adjoining parish of Wrockwardine ) was in 1851 about 12,550, for 1861 – 14,044 showing an increase in the last decade of 1,494. Deducting 1,048 for Wrockwardine the population of the parish of Wellington amounts to 12,996 on 8 April last.

May
NEW WELLINGTON
SUB POST OFFICE
The Post Office authorities have sanctioned the establishment of a sub Post Office in Haygate Road, Wellington. It is probable that Mr Partridge’s shop will be utilized. The applicant said that one door did and the front door could be made to do so if it was desired.

June
CORONATION INCIDENT
The Litany during the Coronation of Queen Victoria was discharged by two elderly prelates who were unable to make themselves audible beyond a short distance. Seeing as it was necessary for the choir in their distant gallery to follow with the usual response at the end of each petition it became desirable devise some method by which a general muddle could most easily be avoided. The expeditious resort to sounds strange to modern ears, to say the least of it. A functionary was employed to stand hard by the two Bishops with a flag in his hand. At the end of each sentence this gentleman proceeded to signal with the said flag to the singers in the distance so as to ensure the voices coming in at the proper moment.

May
CINEMATOGRAPH LICENSE
Mr Sydney Bray applied for a license for cinematograph entertainment in St Patrick’s hall, Wellington (see photo of these Mill Bank premises at the top of the next column).

The Clerk – there was some objection about the doors.

The Superintendent – do both doors open outwards?

The applicant said that one door did and the front door could be made to do so if it was desired.

It was stated that that would be a condition and if that were done the license would be granted.

October
At his ordination as pastor of Wellington Baptist Church (see photo taken by Wellington photographer W. Cooper Edmonds c.1904 at top of next column), the Rev Frank Pickles – in his closing remarks - said he would like it made known through the Press that he had never been in a place in this country in which he had seen so much begging to go on as
in Wellington. He had never experienced such persistent professional begging as that with which he had come into contact in Wellington. He was not ungenerous and whenever he found a case of real need he was always willing to help as far as he could but where he found people who were too idle to work and who tried to make a living out of misrepresentation of their needs or by professional begging, he thought a Police Court was the proper place and that they ought to be punished for it (applause).

October

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
I should like to endorse the remarks of the Rev. Pickles made at the ordination service at the Baptist Church Wellington and reported in your last issue ... I can quite believe him.

Wellington at times appears to be besieged with beggars of the type named. I have seen them begging in twos and threes each one taking every 2nd or 3rd door thus doing the begging in a perfectly organized manner and apparently with very little interruption.

The professional type often becomes abusive if his demands are not conceded, and leaves you with very unkind wishes for your future welfare.

I would also like to take the opportunity of calling attention to the fact that it has become very unsafe in Wellington to allow a cycle to remain outside any shop door in the town for the space of one minute without running the risk of lamp, cape, or pump being stolen.

I have lost both cape and pump in this way and I know others who have lost lamps and I am told it is becoming quite a common practice.

My view is that Wellington is very much under-policed otherwise this kind of thing could not exist to the extent it does. As regards to professional begging the remedy is largely in our own hands. If we refuse to help - and the percentage of deserving cases is very small - if indeed there is any percentage at all then the professional tramp would soon seek other pastures.

A Jones,
Watling Street, Wellington

December

Police Court News
TOO GOOD TO LAST
At the previous Court it was recognized with satisfaction that there was only one charge of drunkenness. As will be seen this has quickly lapsed into the normal.

Charlton Bowling Club
NOTICE.
Members who have been playing are requested to deposit a penny in the box provided to receive same, to defray the expense of the Boys.
BY ORDER OF THE COMMITTEE

The Charlton Arms Bowling Club ‘employed’ young boys to help members who found bending down to retrieve bowls somewhat difficult or irksome. This notice was intended to remind bowlers to make payment to defray the meagre costs incurred.

22nd June 1911: John McCrea (below) won the above Charlton Arms Bowling Club trophy, presented to him by G.W. Corbett. John McCrea went on to help found the Civilian Volunteer Corps (a sort of ‘Dad’s Army’) in 1914, which met in the grounds of Wellington (later Wrekin) College. The trophy was recently ‘found’ and returned to the Club.
Plans to commemorate the Coronation in Wellington began with a public meeting held in the Town Hall in April. Apparently attendance was poor, but eventually it was agreed to focus the celebrations around festivities for the children (according to the Census, about 2000), ‘the aged poor’ and a permanent memorial in the form of an extension of the Free Library. The Council guaranteed a sum of not more than £80 to the festivity fund on the clear understanding that the Council was voting the money to save the Coronation Committee from ‘a very distressing condition’ and it was hoped money would be raised by voluntary subscriptions and that ‘the festivities would be worthy of the loyalty and dignity of the Urban District and creditable to them all.’

However, compared with plans in other areas, as published weekly in the Journal, it was reported that ‘the loyalty of Wellingtonians has been expressed in a tardy fashion’. Plans were admittedly not as elaborate as at smaller places, but as the public was given the opportunity of subscribing either to a day-long festivity or a permanent Free Library extension, it was noted that ‘those who chose to support its enlargement rather than the transient rejoicings must not be accused of a want of sympathy with the passing display of popular enthusiasm’.

Celebrations for the children, gifts for old people, a procession and church services were planned, and it was hoped that townspeople would decorate their shops and residences.

Although there was slight rain on the morning of Coronation Day, by 10 am the weather had brightened and the whole town was in a ‘general carnival of colour’. Even the poorest householder had made an effort to enliven the town, in some cases bunches of flowers from cottage gardens. A special market was held in the Square which was decorated with Union Jacks, festoons, garlands and illuminations, and flags fluttered from chapels, public buildings, churches and schools. During the day fog signals were frequently discharged from the Railway Station and the bells of the Parish Church were rung.

As there was no venue large enough for a united service, it was suggested that each denomination attend a special service in its own place of worship. Portions of the service at the Parish Church were similar to that at Westminster Abbey. The Commemoration service under the auspices of the local Free Church Council was held in the Wesleyan Church and a collection was taken up for the Shropshire Sanatorium. Mass and Benediction were celebrated at St Patrick’s Church with impressive ritual, beautiful music, loyal tributes and prayers offered for the King and Queen.

Due to the prevalence of measles, there were many disappointed children, as even those convalescing were not allowed to attend the planned revelry, and had to be content with the promise of celebrations at a later date. Those not afflicted attended their respective Sunday schools and then made their way to the fields at King Street. The children wore badges, ribbons and most of them carried small flags. ‘Although the Roman Catholic school was comparatively small it was made attractive through a number of girls being dressed in white and enveloped in long muslin veils which had a very pleasing effect.’

A Union Jack flag subscribed for by the children of Wellington, New Zealand was presented and a telegram read out from Mr Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand ‘I am very pleased that you propose to present the New Zealand flag to the school children of Wellington. Please extend my best wishes to the young people.’ The children sang Children of the Nation and continued their festivities in Apley Park, generously let for the occasion by Sir Thomas Meyrick, with the provision of tea, sports, and a band. Twilight was a signal for the children to return home carrying ‘blissful experiences of their Coronation treat.’

The inmates of the Wellington workhouse fared well that day – they dined on cold roast beef and pickles, hot roast mutton and vegetables, followed by milk puddings and stewed fruit, boiled currant and raisin puddings. For tea they had bread and butter and seed and raisin cakes and later received gifts of tobacco, snuff, Coronation handkerchiefs, tea and sugar. The guardians of the workhouse had spent £2 on decorations which was put to ‘delightful advantage’, the dining
hall being transformed into a 'charming resort', and the front decorated with flags and coloured lights. It is gratifying to know nothing was wasted, as the next day the children partook of 'some of the good things which had remained unconsumed'!

'As the curtains of the night began to close nothing was more pleasurably anticipated than the Wrekin Bonfire whose towering flames illumined the shadowing landscape.' Although everything was in readiness some days before, it was considered prudent to delay erecting the pile in case some mischievous fool might set fire to it 'for a lark' prematurely. The bonfire was of the typical beehive form – 20-24 ft high, and 18-20 ft circumference at the base. It was lit at 10 pm, and it was anticipated it would be seen at its best at about 11.30 pm – not only from people in the town, but also, it was expected, from 19 counties. Hundreds of people ascended the hill, the National Anthem was sung on the summit and cheers given for Lord Barnard and his agent, Mr Ashdown, who had made the necessary arrangements for the beacon. In this instance the beacon did not warn of an approaching foe but was a signal 'of what it hoped to be the beginning of a new era of national prosperity.'

There was a distinct air of optimism in Wellington at this time and the Journal reported on Wellington’s marked advancement since the coronation of King Edward VII. The town’s health record had improved with reduction in disease-producing centres, streets had been widened, there was 'increasing attractiveness and extension of its architecture', more facilities for 'moral and mental culture and wholesome recreations and betterment in nearly everything that characterizes a virile and progressive community.'

Wellington had also enjoyed a certain amount of commercial prosperity 'and has not to a very perceptive degree felt that pinch which has crippled many other localities.' 'No wonder then that the dominating notes of Thursday [Coronation Day] were the paeons of a 'people happy in the pleasant places upon which their lines had fallen.'

Despite preliminary misgivings, it was apparent that Coronation Day had ended on a positive note as reported by the Wellington Journal (24 June):

'During a long and honourable history Wellington has contributed its adequate share of all that is best in the development of the nation. Though comparatively few of its citizens have had their names prominently inscribed on the roll of illustrious deeds, yet hundreds of them have in successive years gone forth to fight their country’s battles or to help in building up those vast colonies of which Britain is justly proud. Plutocrat and democrat reside within the Wellington area and occasionally the demarcation of capital and labour and the dividing lines of political faction are perhaps more visible than they should be but on the auspicious occasion of the Coronation those individual differences were lost in a united and unmitigated outburst of loyal devotion. It was fully recognised that in the petition 'God save the king!' the people were looking beyond … blazing bonfires, musical bands, the glitter of pageantry and luxurious feasts and were really praying that they themselves may be saved and realizing that in the reigning monarch they recognised not only the embodiment of principality and power but the direct descendant of a Queen whose sceptre swayed during an era of matchless achievement and which shone with unparalleled lustre. It was only to be expected then that Wellingtonians should industriously see to it that so far as their acquiescence and resources would permit, the crowning of the King should be invested with fitting dignity and afforded every facility for its adequate commemoration.'

P.S. – ‘Throughout the country a number of children signified approval of the festivities by being born on Coronation Day.’ A boy was born to Mr and Mrs Knapton of Victoria Avenue, Wellington and received royal recognition of the event ‘Knapton-Wellington-Shropshire. The King congratulates you on the birth of your boy on Coronation Day.’

New ‘Zeland’ and Union Jack flags in Market Square (above) and the presentation of the New Zealand flag which actually took place opposite the Drill Hall in King Street.
Wellington and Ironbridge were centres of soft toy and teddy bear manufacturing in England in the twentieth century, with the Chad Valley, Merrythought and Victoria Toy Works. Merrythought is now the last surviving Teddy Bear factory in the country and is making the commemorative 2012 Olympic Games Teddy Bear.

Norah Wellings was a key figure in the development of this industry in our town. She was born in Wellington on the 17th January 1893, in her grandmother’s home, called ‘Brookside’ just off Watling Street. Her father Thomas was a master plasterer and his wife, Sarah, had two children, Leonard and Norah. The family lived in Arleston Village on the edge of Wellington.

Norah was two years younger than Leonard. She was well educated, excelling in art and botany and left school at the age of 14 to help her mother look after her invalid father. Norah continued her education at home with private tuition from a cousin who was headmaster of a local school. She embarked on a correspondence course with the London School of Art where she studied drawing, painting, still life, landscapes and sculpture. She also developed a love of gardening and a knowledge of herbs; Norah always sprinkled rosemary from her garden through her hair when she washed it, maintaining that this was why her hair retained its softness and colour throughout her life. She had a lifetime close friendship with her brother Leonard. Norah was softly spoken and shy, and was not given to small talk.

She considered herself plain and was once overheard speaking to her reflection, ‘Norah, you are never going to be beautiful so you had better make yourself useful’, so she remained at home with her mother until her father’s death in 1918.

Norah was extremely keen on art and design and, after the death of her father, obtained a job with the Chad Valley Company in 1919. The Chad Valley Company (a subsidiary of Johnson Bros of Birmingham who had bought part of the former Central Hall in New Street in 1916, whereupon it became the Wrekin Toy Works) had been manufacturing toys for a number of years and was well known for its boxed games and toys. The company had decided to diversify and had just started to produce soft toys, mainly teddy bears and dolls. Norah quickly became one of the chief designers specialising in soft toys and dolls.

Brother Leonard was a very bright boy and, after leaving junior school, the headmaster recommended that he be educated at Wrekin College but he became an apprentice at his family plastering firm instead. In 1914 Leonard joined the Royal Horse Artillery and served in the Great War. In 1918 he returned to Wellington, just before his father died and he became the family breadwinner. Leonard was also an artist and was well known for his plastering skills. He had his own business in workshops off Victoria Avenue.

In 1918-1919, land was sold in Arleston Village by Lord Forester, and the Wellings family bought a house and two other plots of land. Leonard, Norah and their mother moved into the house; Leonard built his own home (which he called ‘The Cottage’) on one of the plots, and a bungalow (called ‘The Bungalow’) on the other plot into which Norah and their mother eventually occupied.

Norah rarely spoke of her time at the Chad Valley and left there in 1926. It is said that she decided to leave after the managing director wanted her to take on an apprentice. She refused, and terminated her employment, reportedly tearing up her designs so that her successor could not use them.

Norah decided to set up her own business and, as Leonard had his plastering premises in Victoria Avenue, rented a building within the workshops. In 1926 the Norah Wellings Company at the Victoria Toy Works began making soft dolls and toys with a staff of six women (including her cousin Mary Wellings, and the sisters Alice, Florrie, Margaret and Norah Tinsley).

There is no doubt that she was one of Chad Valley’s chief designers and that her design talents were much sought after. In June 1931, one of Chad Valley’s directors, Mr Johnson, wrote to Norah offering one of two opportunities:

1) Chad Valley could purchase her business but allow...
work 12-hour days to fulfil special orders for the Coronation.

Interestingly enough, around 70% of the stock was exported, especially to the USA, Canada and Australia.

The Second World War had a devastating impact on the company, although it managed to carry on, albeit on a smaller scale, with most of the workforce laid off while a selection of military dolls was produced. After the war the company specialised in manufacturing dolls as holiday souvenirs for luxury cruise liners, particularly those of the Cunard company.

The end of the Norah Wellings toy factory came quite suddenly. Norah’s soft toys and dolls quickly became popular, and Arthur Ferriday (a cousin) joined the company as sales manager. The Norah Wellings company received Royal acknowledgement when, in 1927, Queen Mary was set to visit the factory to be presented with a ‘Cora’ doll. Unfortunately, bad weather delayed the Queen and altered the arrangements, so Norah and six members of staff had to go to Shrewsbury railway station to present the doll. This was wonderful publicity for Norah’s young business.

Because of her success, it was not long before Norah and Leonard decided they needed to expand into larger premises and in May 1929 they purchased the neglected former Baptist Chapel in King Street. In 1934, Norah and Leonard bought Dr. Cranage’s large house adjacent to the Baptist Chapel. All the buildings were eventually joined together by long corridors as the factory expanded, and employees commented on their pleasant working.

At the height of production there were around 250 employees. The 1930s were a very successful time – in 1930 Norah opened a showroom in Regent Street, London, and dolls were sold to all the major stores, including Harrods. In 1937 the staff had to work 12-hour days to fulfil special orders for the Coronation. Interestingly enough, around 70% of the stock was exported, especially to the USA, Canada and Australia.

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The end of the Norah Wellings toy factory came quite suddenly. Leonard Wellings died on the 9th January 1959 at the age of 67. This must have had a big impact on Norah as she lost her brother, best friend and business partner at the same time. At the age of 65 Norah decided it was time to retire. She had offers from other companies to take over the business, but she could never allow anyone else to takeover what she and her brother had created.

On September 4th 1959 all employees were given two weeks’ notice. It was reported that there was a large fire in the factory gardens, where Norah was burning the tools and designs for her dolls as well as all the unfinished dolls.

The factory was put up for auction at the Charlton Arms by Barbers on 2nd June 1960 (see brochure below) when it was bought by an electrical wholesaler. In 1974 the buildings were demolished and replaced by flats and a petrol station.

Norah remained in Wellington, living at the Bungalow and spending her time painting, gardening and cooking. She died on 19th February 1975 at the age of 82.

Norah is now remembered as the most famous soft toy and doll designer and maker in England, and her dolls are much sought after collectors’ items today.

It would be a welcome gesture if Wellington commemorated her life and work in some sort of permanent memorial.
Do you recognise the large rectangular shape of the Buck’s Head football ground? If so, you’ll see Watling Street running horizontally across the photo, and joining up with Holyhead Road on the left and Bennett’s Bank on the right.

Dawley Road runs downwards from its junction with Holyhead Road, Mill Bank and Watling Street, while Lime Kiln Lane follows a winding route to the bottom left.

The centre of the photo shows what the Council housing estates on both sides of Dawley Road looked like at this time, with the ancient settlement of Arleston set among fields at bottom right.

Facing the Buck’s Head ground, on the opposite side of Haybridge Avenue, we can see building work well under way on the Walker Technical College.

How many other features can you recognise, and can you see how much has changed since?
The reason for an example from this particular reign appearing in the church is probably connected with the building of an extension to St Lawrence’s – the present nave – in 1822. Presumably an earlier Royal Arms had been destroyed or simply fallen into disrepair. Further investigation of the Churchwardens Accounts of the early 19th century in Shropshire Archives might throw more light on these matters.

The Friends of St Lawrence can be justly proud of funding the restoration of an item of such historical significance. After all, Royal Arms have survived in only two other local churches – St Michael’s and All Angels, Lilleshall, has those of Charles II; and St Andrews, Wroxeter, those of George III. The fate of the Royal Arms once displayed (one assumes) in Wellington’s two Anglican churches is not known to the writer.

Recently, the framed coat of arms that had for some years been stored in the vestry of St Lawrence’s Church, Little Wenlock, was returned to its former position on the back wall of the north aisle, having been cleaned and fully restored. This is no ordinary coat of arms, but an example of Royal Arms which can still be seen in some of this country’s Anglican churches.

So, why were Royal Arms set up in churches in the first place? When Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1534 and assumed the title of ‘Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England’, it was ordered that the Royal Arms should be displayed in every church as a visible sign of the king’s authority. The Royal Arms were to be placed above the chancel arch, below which previously had been a wooden rood screen supporting a large wooden crucifix. Most of the Royal Arms set up in churches during the last years of Henry VIII and the short reign of his son Edward VI, though, were removed during the equally short reign of Henry’s daughter, Mary, who temporarily restored the control of Rome. But, following a new Act of Supremacy in 1559, which made Elizabeth I ‘Supreme Governor of the Church’, Royal Arms were again set up in churches during her reign; and in the early 17th century two Archbishops of Canterbury ordered a nationwide survey of churches to see if their Royal Arms needed repainting or repair. However, following the Civil War and the execution of Charles I in 1649, many of the Royal Arms in churches were destroyed or defaced during the Commonwealth period. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, a Statute requiring that the Royal Arms should be displayed in all churches resulted in many old boards being brought out of hiding and repainted and new ones made.

Most Royal Arms were painted on square or oblong boards or canvas, though there are also examples in cast plaster, carved wood and cast iron. All reigns from James I to Victoria are represented, though there are a few from the 20th century. The example in St Lawrence’s, Little Wenlock, displays the Royal Arms of George IV, who reigned from 1820 to 1830. It is painted on canvas, within a wooden frame.

In recent revisions to the official Wellington Town Council website at www.wellington-shropshire.gov.uk include a new section of information on the page accessed via the ‘Our Parish’ > ‘History of Wellington’ tabs. This new section provides a detailed and comprehensive explanation of Wellington’s development as a market town; where the first markets were held; why they were obliged to relocate and how they expanded over the centuries.

Also included are notes on the general development of the town, plus brief biographical details of a few famous people born in Wellington.

Well worth a visit.

In and Around Telford 100 Years Ago is Allan Frost’s latest book which does exactly what it says on the cover.

Using an impressive collection of postcards published between the 1890s and 1917, many of them appearing for the first time in a book, Allan reveals the history behind each scene and, whenever possible, has made use of contemporary studio-coloured versions of what were otherwise monochrome photographs.

Furthermore, he’s been able to include unusual images of towns and villages – even single buildings – outside as well as inside the present Telford borough boundary, from Much Wenlock to Cheswardine, and The Wrekin Hill to Shifnal and Tong, making this a worthy addition to the book collections of everyone interested in the history of Shropshire.

In and Around Telford 100 Years Ago

New Reading

In and Around Telford 100 Years Ago

NEW READING

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According to the notes which accompanied these photos, they were all taken in 1961. If you know otherwise, please let us know. Anti-clockwise, from top left, are:

Wrekin Buildings (otherwise known as the YMCA Building) in Walker Street, with Watkins Garden Stores which had previously been located round the corner on the left in an old building in Tan Bank. Wrekin Buildings was built c.1909 on a site formerly occupied by C. Venables & Co., ‘silk merchants, general drapers, dress and mantle makers, tailors and outfitters’.

Featuring white glazed tiles reminiscent of a public convenience, Crown Buildings in Walker Street became the new home for H.M. Inspector of Taxes (which had previously occupied Belmont) and the County Court office. Since Tax Office staff relocated to Priorslee in the 1990s, the premises have been used as a low-price furniture outlet and, for a brief spell in recent months, a Chinese supermarket. It currently lies empty.

Passengers standing at Platform 3 on Wellington Station.

A memorable visit by the Flying Scostman passing through Wellington Station.

The annual Remembrance Day service at the Lych Gate to All Saints parish church in November.