This time to Issue Three. As with our previous two magazines, we seem to have struck a chord with our readers wanting to know more about our district’s fascinating history.

We’d like to thank those of you who’ve come to our talks for your patience and understanding. We’ve fallen victim to success, with audiences of up to over 80. Finding meeting rooms of a suitable size for hire at an equally suitable charge hasn’t been easy, especially since we have to fit in with dates upon which our speakers are available. That’s why we’re committed to holding our season of talks at the Civic Offices.

You may be aware that the Borough Council intends building a new Civic Quarter in Wellington. You may even have seen initial proposals. Wellington History Group, along with representatives from several other relevant and interested groups, has been working closely with planners to get the new complex to fit in with the town’s character as much as possible, subject to financial considerations. Like domestic households, the Council has a budget to work to.

Thanks should go to Andrew Eade, leader of the Borough Council, for the work he is doing to rectify 30-odd years of relative neglect by his predecessors.

As well as a new library (to include Wellington-related archives currently stored at Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury), the Civic Quarter will have several meeting rooms of various sizes, which should go some way to improving the situation.

We continue to receive requests for help from family researchers as well as folk wanting to know more about our area’s past. As we’ve said before, one way or another, we’re all historians.

We’ve had a few offers of help but could do with more; some have lent us their house deeds, others old photos and other items. We could do with more involvement from people such as you, especially if you’re willing to supply us with brief articles for future issues of our magazine.

Please don’t be afraid to have a go ... that’s what the history game is all about. We all have to start somewhere, so don’t be shy or embarrassed to run an idea or two past us. We’ll give whatever help we can. Take a look at the range of articles in this issue: they vary in subject matter and style, but essentially they’re all interesting.

Our chairman needs your help. Those of you who know him will realise this is nothing new. Over the years he’s amassed (on his computer) an incredible amount of information and photos. Much of it has been supplied by ‘ordinary’ folk in the form of family photos. He knows there’s a lot more lurking in lofts and in envelopes shoved in the back of drawers. So, please take up the challenge and spend a few moments seeking them out. They could help provide answers to questions no one has yet asked.

The same applies to artefacts made in Wellington. We would like to find out who has what with a view to taking photos to aid our research; they could help if or when a town museum (a building or Internet-based) should transpire. Every little helps.

Finally, if you’re feeling generous, donations are always welcome. All our contributors and Committee are unpaid volunteers. Even the smallest amount helps to defray costs. In the meantime, enjoy this issue of Wellingtonia!
Maps are wonderful, magical things if you know how to use them. We are very fortunate in this country to have the Ordnance Survey maps – the world’s finest. There are times when an apparently insoluble problem can be solved by carefully studying a map and I think this is a case in point.

The question I was asking myself was, ‘What sort of industries went on in Wellington from late medieval times to, say the eighteenth century?’ Believe it or not, this is before my time.

There are evidences of industry in street names, like Tan Bank, Butcher Row, Walker Street and especially Ten Tree Croft or Tenter Croft.

Lots of historians have talked of cloth being hung on tenterhooks to stretch and dry in the wind and sun. It has usually been assumed that this was woollen cloth, though some of us wondered where the wool came from.

After all, most wool supplies came from the Welsh mountains and Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Oswestry had cornered the trade in wool long before it reached Wellington.

To the north of Wellington, however, are the Weald Moors, an ideal place for flax growing, especially before the Strine drainage system was fully implemented. So, is that the key to Wellington’s cloth trade?

Having lived (existed rather) in a deserted flax mill in Keady, Northern Ireland during the War, I learned a little about the flax/linen trade.

One of the key requirements for flax working is retting; that is soaking the flax plants in water for a long time so that the fibres remain after the rest of the plant has rotted away. To do that you need a shallow pond. Did we have one? Well there’s no pond now in the centre of town, though it’s quite clear that several small streams must have flown through the town centre and presumably still do in culverts.

One of the joys of this area, around The Wrekin, is that it has one of the most complicated geological histories of anywhere on Earth. This means that geologists are interested and that leads to a very fine 1:25,000 (or approximately 2.5 inches to a mile) map by the Geological Survey.

Puzzling with this map I suddenly saw something quite tiny that caused a great shout of joy. Just to the north of the Tenter Croft is a small oval of – lake clay! There it is, right where a couple of streams would have filled it before the railway cutting caused them to be diverted.

The area is now Queen Street, Vineyard Road and Charlton Street. The Royal Balti is about the middle of the pond with the ‘bus garage. It’s pretty much all built up now. Several times I have looked into service trenches when being dug and the layer of thin, messy grey clay is quite clear.

Stand one end of Charlton Street and you can see that it goes down and up again. Ask people whose gardens are in the pond area and they will tell you that they have dug up this clay and it’s not the usual boulder clay that’s common here, but a thin grey type.

Some readers may remember when the gloriously silly Victorian Gothic old Barclay’s Bank was cruelly demolished and replaced by the present ultra simplistic, ugly monstrosity of a fag packet that took its place. There was pile driving, day and night to insert concrete foundations because they hit an area of ‘running sand’ incapable of supporting the new building – though of course it had supported the old one for a century or so.

Look at Church Street and wonder why it has that little wiggle in it. Look at the backs of houses and other buildings and see them go down and up again. Peer into trenches when the chaps are digging another hole. Wonder why what is now Bridge Road was called Water Lane before the railway was built.

Remember, only recently, that Morrison’s car park was dug up for waterworks.

Just have a walk round the area – I’ve just done this again this morning – and you will see how it dips in the area between Church Street, Vineyard Road and Queen Street, with Charlton Street going through the middle. That’s where I think the Town Pond was once and where the flax was retted to make linen.

Hemp (for ropes and cloth, not for smoking) may also have been grown and processed here but I have no thoughts about that – yet. So far as I know the Town Pond is an original idea, published here for the first time. I’ve talked about it with friends but never written – nor has anyone else – so what you are reading is a ‘first’.

Someone may well challenge my theory or perhaps support it. They are welcome and if I’m proved wrong it won’t be the first time.

Watch this space.
Many people are surprised to discover that the first published work by the Brontë family was not by Charlotte, Emily or Anne – or even brother Branwell – but by their father Patrick, then curate at Dewsbury parish church.

It is Patrick Brontë who links Wellington to the work of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. Patrick Brontë had moved to Dewsbury from Wellington, where he was curate from January to 4th December 1809, and it was while there he is believed to have written two volumes of poetry: his first poem Winter Evening Thoughts was published in 1810, followed a year later by Cottage Poems, a collection of moral verse that included Winter-night meditations, a revision of the 1810 poem.

The man
He was born Patrick Brunty in 1777, on 17th March (St. Patrick’s Day, which suggests the choice of name). He was the eldest of the 10 children of Eleanor and Hugh Brunty, his father being a native of Southern Ireland but working as a farmhand in County Down.

In 1802 Patrick sailed for England with £25 he had saved. Entered for St John’s College, Cambridge, at the relatively old age of 25 (and the only one of the 10 children to pursue an academic career), it was while he was there that Patrick changed his name from Brunty to Branty, then to Brontë, and finally to the spelling we know today (Charlotte added the dieresis over that ‘e’).

The choice of spelling was probably influenced by Nelson, one of his heroes who had received the title Duke of Bronte from the King of Naples.

Brontë met Maria Branwell (1783–1821), whom he married in 1812. The children were born in Thornton, notably Charlotte in 1816, Emily in 1818 and Anne in 1820.

Outliving his children, Brontë remained active for local causes into old age – between 1849 and 1850 he helped procure a clean water supply for the village, which was eventually supplied in 1856 – and died in 1861.

The church
Ordained in 1806, Brontë’s first curacy was in the Essex village of Wethersfield. It was in January 1809 he left Essex to become curate of All Saints parish church at Wellington.

The present All Saint’s church is thought to be the third or fourth on the site, positioned to the east of the previous buildings. Begun in 1789, it was completed the following year.

The architect was George Steuart, whose local work also includes Attingham Hall and St. Chad’s in Shrewsbury. Records of a priest in Wellington begin in 1086, and Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury (d. 1094), gave the church there to Shrewsbury Abbey.

There were plans to rebuild the medieval church as early as 1747; it was eventually demolished in 1787. Work on the present church started the following year and was completed and consecrated in 1790, some 19 years only before Brontë’s appointment.

HALFWAY HOUSE FIRE

Every now and then, a little more interesting information on aspects of our history comes to light. Someone recently gave this Newport Advertiser cutting dated 4th June 1859 to Tom Bolger, owner of the famed Halfway House on The Wrekin.

This is what it says:

FIRE ON THE WREKIN:–The pleasant cottage erected on The Wrekin some 30 years ago since was destroyed by fire on Thursday evening, the 26th ult. The occupant, Mr. Charles Jones, was in Wellington when fire broke out, and at once proceeded to the place. Between seven and eight o’clock the alarm was given, and in a short time many persons residing in the neighbourhood were present, and at once set to work to stop the raging flames. As these progressed, the number of visitors increased, and all appeared anxious to do something to gain the desired object, and the result was that the larger portion of the furniture was saved. The value of the furniture destroyed is estimated at about £40. The conjectured origin of the fire is, that a spark from the chimney, alighting on the thatched roof caused it to ignite, and when discovered by some of the family it had kindled into a flame. The cottage belonged to the Hon. R.C. Herbert, who it is hoped will erect another similar to supply the wants of tourists.

What does the report tell us? That the original Halfway House was built around 1830 and it catered for tourists even at that early date. We also learn that it had a thatched roof, as shown in the contemporary drawing below. When the cottage was rebuilt, either totally or in part, after the fire, the columns at the front of the dwelling were retained.
Their predators, sabre-toothed cats and men. As warming continued the forests became colonised by deciduous trees; first hardy birches, followed by oak, ash, elm and especially willow and alder in the dampest places.

The vegetation would have varied according to the soils that developed from the sand, gravel, clay, alluvium and water of varying depth. In places were deep peat deposits, open water, dense forest, grassy patches, swamps and streams. Some open spaces were caused by grazing animals, by fallen large trees; others by burning and clearing for agriculture.

To early men the opportunities were varied. There was hunting and fishing, stock grazing and crop growing. There were also wild and dangerous areas where a fugitive could hide. Paths were made through the forest, some using piles or rush mats to construct a causeway through bogs. At Wall Farm is a settlement said by archaeologists to be a ‘hillfort without a hill’, though it looks to me more like a lake village.

Long before the Duke of Sutherland’s great development that led to the Strine Water Board, smaller areas had been drained and the peat bogs were turned into productive fields for stock and crops. As well as food crops, perhaps linen and cannabis (hemp) were grown for the Wellington cloth trade. Crudgington used to be famous for producing eels by the million.

There’s the stage; bring on the historians (and take a look at Robert Baugh’s 1808 map below).
One of Wellington’s most interesting and useful maps is the one produced for the Tithe Apportionment survey of 1840. We are very fortunate that an extremely well preserved one hangs in the offices of solicitors Lanyon Bowdler in Church Street.

It would have been almost impossible to take a computer scan of the map because of its fragility but, fortunately, I have been allowed to take digitised images of essential portions of the map to help anyone researching the history of the town or their families without disrupting the firm’s normal business activities.

What makes this map all the more interesting is that, in 1854, someone added the line of the new railway, so we can identify precisely which properties were demolished when it was created.

The map itself shows a unique number for every field and building plot. However, a mere number isn’t much use unless you can find out more about what it represents. And that’s where the Tithe Apportionment itself proves invaluable.

The Apportionment is simply a list which gives various items of information relating to each numbered plot. That detail includes the names of the owner of each plot, the first and last names of each occupier and a brief description of the nature of the property.

As a tool for researchers, the Tithe Map together with its Apportionment list is immensely useful. In addition to telling us more about businesses and dwellings in Wellington at that time, it can form the basis for further research when used in conjunction with the more personal information contained in the 1841 Census.

Lanyon Bowdler doesn’t have a copy of either the Apportionment list or 1841 Census; I have, so their map provides the last piece in the jigsaw.

In the examples above, we can see there were many small houses and gardens in the area around The Green (682) and Plough Road. Most notable are the plots now occupied by the Charlton Arms Hotel. In 1840, they constituted a malthouse and dwellings, not the hotel which became a jewel in Wellington’s crown for nigh on 150 years from about 1849 when it is first listed in trade directories as an hotel. Presumably the hotel was intended to take advantage of the influx of visitors as a result of new railway services from 1849.

Also of interest are the town prison and fire engine shed, almshouses for the poor and the school room to the north of the church yard run, appropriately enough, by the vicar at that time, Rev. Banning. Whereas the prison has long since gone, it is still possible to trace foundation remains of the Alms Houses on land to the north of the church.

We are most grateful for the support we have been given by Lanyon Bowdler as we are now able to give this remarkable map greater scrutiny than hitherto.
The Quarter Sessions had their origins in the second half of the fourteenth century when local justices were obliged to meet four times a year: at the Epiphany, the week after Easter, at the Translation of St. Thomas Martyr (7 July, marking the removal of his bones from the tomb to a shrine in Canterbury Cathedral after his canonisation), and the week after Michaelmas.

New statutes were introduced in the second decade of the nineteenth century in an attempt to regulate the criminal code and subsequent punishment. A number of ancient acts dealing with larceny, benefit of clergy, etc., were repealed and barbarous punishments like branding on the cheek, burning the hand and flogging of women were discarded, although public and private whipping for men was still enforced.

After 1827 sentences were harsher. There were more whippings and the first sentence of transportation for poaching was in January 1828. Felonies and larcenies could warrant up to two years’ imprisonment with hard labour. Shropshire Justices of the Peace (JPs), on the whole, appeared to act fairly. Cases were often dismissed if owners couldn’t identify their goods, and JPs were often more lenient if needy cases brought before them were for petty theft.

The records give a good insight into the lives of people in Wellington parish during the 1820s: their work, what they ate, how they dressed, forms of transport, tools they used, household objects, and all-too frequent accidental and untimely deaths.

Many of the Wellington parish cases that came before the 1820-1830 Shropshire Quarter Sessions were for petty theft, such as household items and clothing. Labourers were brought before the courts for stealing from their employers, e.g. wheat and barley, coal and iron, and poultry.

Denials were most inventive: a thief who stole a petticoat from a garden and then tried to ‘sell’ it on for a pint of beer, declared he ‘had found it just above the pawn shop and supposed it had fled out of some window’. For this and other items he had stolen, which turned up at the pawnbroker’s, he was transported for seven years.

The public sometimes took matters into their own hands: before mantraps were made illegal in 1827, Samuel Dawson of Wellington in 1823 set one at his house when he suspected William Matthews, a shoemaker, of stealing ‘seed beans, shoes, knife and a small glass’. The suspect was injured in the trap and was seen ‘returning to his own house walking very slowly and appearing to be lame’. Upon being asked to show his leg, he said he was bitten by a dog the evening before. However, it was of the ‘opinion the wounds were occasioned from having his leg caught in a man-trap’. He was brought before the Court and, for stealing 2 pairs of leather shoes (5s each), knife (1s), and 6 quarts beans (2s), he was given 6 months’ hard labour ‘as soon as he is fit’. It is tantalising that no reason is given for a shoemaker stealing shoes.

For stealing a shirt (1s), cloth (6d), 6 lbs bacon (3s), 1 lb cheese (6d), Mary Dodd and Maria Christian were transported for seven years. The JPs’ harsh sentence was no doubt influenced by the fact that they had stolen the items from a blind woman’s home, having gone there to beg for water. Rather endearingly, the woman identified her husband’s shirt ‘by patches’. (Oct 1825)

Among the articles allegedly stolen by Ann Bagley (domestic servant) from a bookseller were The Roundelay; Select Remains; History of Prince Fatal and Prince Fortunatus and The Little Warbler. For this she was found not guilty, but was found guilty of stealing a spelling book, ‘other books’, two paintings, an engraving and other items and was given six months at the House of Correction. Did she mean to sell them on? Was she an erudite thief unable to avail herself of the facilities at a Wellington Library?

In an attempt to bring culture to Wellington, John Robson ‘a Wellington player’ put on a stage entertainment called Pizarro, or The Spaniards in Peru in a barn on Tan Bank. The play lasted more than an hour, the scenery was changed several times and Robson took the part of Rolla the Peruvian Chief.

However, a ‘dissenting teacher’ also from Wellington informed on him, and Robson admitted acting without patent or licence or the Justices’ permission, but insisted it was not for gain. The ingenious plan was for Robson’s wife to sell tickets (two tickets for 2s) for the play from their lodgings. With the tickets were two small papers of tooth powder, and the sale was concluded with the injunction ‘I give you the tickets and sell the tooth powder’. However, the JPs were not impressed and fined this enterprising couple the rather large sum of £50.

Fairs were a popular form of entertainment and fertile grounds for pickpockets. A fuller account of

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**Quarter Sessions, 1820s**

Joy Rebello

‘Thomas Satchwell of Wellington says Mary Lomas came asking for a place, he did not hire her but said she might stop, if she proved a good girl he would behave well to her...’ However, ‘... she left taking his wife’s wearing apparel in two bundles including silk spencers and stockings’.

Mary Lomas was taken into custody and the garments were priced at:

- Pair of silk stockings – 2s
- Cotton stockings – 1s
- Purse – 6d
- 2 spencers – 3s
- Flannel petticoat – 1s

For these thefts she was sent to the House of Correction for one year.
such an incident is given in the Salopian Journal and Courier of Wales (April 1830):

‘Joseph Bates a hawker was convicted of feloniously taking a silver watch out of the pocket of Mr Samuel Haden Jones, surgeon, at Wellington – it appeared that on the night of the 29th of March last, which was the fair-day at Wellington, the prosecutor and many other persons were spectators of a fight in the street at Wellington, when the prosecutor was hustled and pressed by the prisoner, and feeling a pressure at his neck from the chain of his watch-guard, he found that some person had abstracted his watch; he seized the prisoner; and several persons that were present proved that they saw the prisoner draw the watch from the fob; the watch, however, was not lost, for although it was drawn from the fob, the guard-chain secured it, and it remained suspended thereby to the person of its owner. – The Jury found the prisoner guilty, and he was sentenced to three months’ hard labour.

A self professed conjuror (after first taking his fee of £3 5s 0d) advised a conscience-stricken thief to throw the notes he had stolen out of the window and put the blame on someone else. Unsurprisingly, not all the notes were recovered but the thief was found not guilty – the victim’s brother could not identify the notes.

Did this gift of clairvoyance run in the family? A female with the same surname (which, incidentally, was ‘Light’) was given one month’s hard labour in the House of Correction for ‘pretending to tell fortunes in Wellington’.

No allowances were made for age and children over the age of eight were treated as adults. A householder found his house broken into and ‘observed marks of a small foot’. The next day he pretended to go to work but stayed to watch and caught the thief, who was given two sentences of six months and once whipped. But the next year he was apprehended once again and on this occasion sentenced to seven years’ transportation. This time the records say the constable ‘took the boy into custody’.

The Coroners’ inquisitions contain tragic stories of children’s deaths by drowning, scalding, falling under wagons, or perishing in fires at home – often being alone, or with other children. Quarrying and mining accounted for many deaths. Women usually worked above ground but one died working underground at the coalpit at Lawley Common, and another fell to her death while assisting with the rope at Ketley Bank coalpit.

Intoxication was a recurrent cause of fatality – ‘returning home intoxicated fell down and by inclemency of weather was starved to death’; ‘riding upon shaft of wagon … and being intoxicated fell getting off and the near wheel went over him at Orleton’; ‘Eliz Tranter intoxicated with liquor dropped down dead in street’.

There was the sad case of a ‘lunatic’ who threw herself into the canal at Potter’s Bank. Some cases were merely reported as ‘found dead’, but rather more detail is given in reporting the death of Thomas Evans who was ‘ailing with rupture of bowels, his bowels protruded and gave such violent pain as to cause temporary insanity and he threw himself into a pit of water at Red Lake’.

I have barely touched on the fascinating accounts of life in the parish of Wellington in particular, and Shropshire in general, as contained in the Quarter Session records for the 1820s.

If you’d like to learn more, peruse the folder of transcribed records in Wellington Library or Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury.

PIPE DREAMS

Graham Parkinson contacted us asking for information on why there was evidence of burning on an old wall in his garden in Linden Avenue.

It transpires his house is located in what was Richard Stone’s cabinet works: see page 18 for more details of the great fire.

He has also found these remarkable remains of Broseley clay pipes while gardening. These pipes were very cheap to buy, which was just as well considering they broke all too easily. Perhaps one of them started the fire …
The Maltings at The Lawns were located in an area of the Medieval town of Wellington, Shropshire. It was developed during the nineteenth century as a direct result of changes to national laws governing the production and sale of beer. This is a brief history of that site.

The Maltings at The Lawns (originally named Back Alley) lies off the northern section of Park Street. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Park Street was little more than a lane leading from the countryside into the town centre. There were very few houses there at that time, and the area enclosing what is now called The Lawns was occupied by a few buildings which were probably involved in agricultural activities.

To all intents and purposes, The Lawns marked the northern limit of town development. In time, the northern part of it would become a thriving maltings complex, unique in the history of the town.

Piecing together the story of the site can be a little confusing: in some documents, ‘The Maltings’ refers to the maltings complex as a whole, in others the term has been applied specifically to one or other of its properties, depending on their individual use at given times.

There is some evidence suggesting one particular building was already in use as a maltings sometime before 1832, and remained so when the 1840 Tithe Apportionment map was produced.

Unlike many properties used in the malting process, that building (Lot 16 on the 1853 plan, probably originally built during the late eighteenth century as a barn), did not show many of the features consistent with the layout of later maltings and for this reason was unique in the area.

The property was described in 1853 as ‘a very extensive and substantially built range of stabling, 84ft by 24ft, with colonnade front, supported by iron pillars, together with a large yard and other appurtenances.’ It makes no mention of it being used to malt barley although this activity was certainly carried out prior to the erection of Lot 17 on the map.

The property in Lot 17 appears to have been built in 1838 on land formerly containing just a house and garden owned and occupied by maltster William Griffiths; he processed barley at a malthouse in Lot 16 from the early 1830s after moving from his previous maltings on Walker Street.

By the time of the 1853 sale, Lot 17 included a barn and subsequently comprised two cottages, a stable and coach house. It was acquired by Edward Leah at the 1853 sale and rented thereafter by maltster George Wycherley.

The Maltings complex is all the more interesting because the creation of the newer malting (‘Coach House’) buildings arose following the introduction of the Duke of Wellington’s Beer House Acts of around 1830, which were intended specifically to wean the English public off gin by reducing the duty on beer production to nil in many instances.

It took several years but these Acts led to a massive increase in the demand for beer and, as a direct consequence, malted barley. This then created an unprecedented demand for newer buildings built specifically for malting, taking into account developments in the malting process.

That appears to be why the ‘Coach House’ maltings over the road were built, whereupon the older premises, still required in the process, were also used for storing materials and water (which, sometime before 1918, was stored in an enormous tank, supported on iron columns, with a capacity of almost 6,000 gallons) and, of course, retained its several connected buildings.

Incidentally, the Beer House Acts also encouraged the construction of breweries to cater for rising demand for beer and ales on a scale hitherto unseen; the first one in Wellington was the renowned Shropshire Brewery on Holyhead Road which, since it also had its own malting house, provides us with another stage in the history of malting in the town.

Another maltster, James Shepard, acquired land adjacent to Lot 17 from Griffiths and, in June 1860, purchased both Lots 16 and 17 with a view to developing the malting trade into a large-scale operation.
James Shepard, whose name is synonymous with malting in the town, had moved to Wellington in the early 1850s from Collingbourne in Wiltshire, where he had also been a maltster, and made a successful business here. This was partly because of the appearance of independent breweries (the most famous of which, The Wrekin Brewery, became the largest privately owned brewery in England).

Furthermore, the growth in the number of pubs selling beer (there have been almost 100 in Wellington alone) increased demand for malted barley to an unprecedented degree.

By the 1880s, James Shepard added more properties in the complex, unhindered by the fact that the town’s breweries usually acquired their own maltings. Processing grain was not all that was done on the site: Shepard also supplied grain to other merchants in the town as well as farmers.

Changing use of The Maltings properties meant that all its three major buildings were used as malthouses at one time, or could be regarded as ‘warehouses’ at others. Hence there is no definitive answer to the precise purpose of each property.

James Shepard’s Estate was auctioned off in 1918; plans and descriptions included in the Sale Particulars (see plan below) confirm that his business had grown so much that there were then four malthouses (Lots 3, 4, which had two, and 5) leased to Messrs. Clarke, maltsters of Oldbury.

Therefore, the contention that the building demolished in June 2008 was only used as a warehouse is false; in fact, it was a malthouse for considerably longer than a warehouse (and there were several architectural features confirming this) as late as about 1950, since when it became a potato and grain store, followed by it being used for more general business premises in recent years.

In fact, one of the author’s relatives can distinctly remember the building still being used for malting purposes in the late 1940s: she often saw workmen raking malted barley on the floor of the building and can recall the distinctive smell!

The fact that these premises have been demolished is a sad reflection that neither architects nor planners seem to appreciate and have not taken the trouble to determine the unique relevance of the whole complex and have failed to understand the site’s importance to the development of Wellington’s malting and brewing businesses, or the town’s evolution from a large village into a major Victorian commercial centre.

* * *

Detail from a 1918 Sale Particulars plan of The Maltings complex.

The Coach House (left) and James Shepard’s third malthouse (Lot 3 in the 1918 sale) as seen before redevelopment in 2008.

Views of the fourth malthouse (above) and (below) the original malthouse (perhaps formerly a barn) before demolition in 2008.
Those who know Leon Murray tend to associate him with the Methodist church in Wellington, and they’d be right. But there’s a lot more to him than meets the eye.

Leon was born in May 1938. His grandfather was of Scottish descent, his grandmother half-French, while his mother’s parents came from the Punjab in India. It’s an unusual mixture.

In addition to his British government service in Jamaica, Leon’s grandfather ran a small farm of some 600 acres at Tranquility, Buff Bay, Jamaica, growing coffee, coconuts and bananas as well as rearing cattle. After his death in 1946, the land was divided between William and his seven brothers, several of whom continued the family tradition of working for the British government. One, Harry, was shot at his desk by Fidel Castro’s rebels while working in Cuba.

Leon’s father maintained a strong affection for England, to the extent that he always bought his shoes and suits from the Mother Country, even if they did take several months to arrive. In 1961 Leon decided he’d like to migrate to England. Although two sisters were already living in London, he had his eye on Wellington where one of his friends had a job at the Allscott Sugar Beet factory.

Leon had been brought up a Methodist. He arrived in the town on a Friday and resolved to attend New Street Methodist church so, two days later, he turned up and met a man puffing on a pipe at the church steps. It was Billy Rochelle, a Methodist stalwart with a wonderful sense of humour and well known in the town’s business circles. While chatting, it transpired Billy had served with the armed forces in Jamaica ... and knew Leon’s family quite well! He took Leon home for lunch after the service and made him feel very much at home.

Initial impressions count a great deal, and Leon regards the Methodist church as his spiritual home. He realised early on that the best way to settle in a foreign place is to make friends with the locals and adapt to their ways and customs, even to the point of learning ‘English’ English, which can be very different to ‘Jamaican’ or ‘Colonial’ English. It would be an understatement to say that Leon, that man with a skin colour so different to everyone else’s in the church congregation, fitted in and was accepted straight away.

He joined the youth club. Not only did it help him make new friends, it also helped to break down cultural and ethnic barriers. In short, he was a person in his own right, not someone regarded as ‘another black immigrant’.

A committed Christian, Leon wanted more involvement in the Methodist church and studied to become a local lay preacher.

In 1984 he became the first ever Black Vice-President elect of the Methodist Conference (the church’s ruling body), the highest position a non-minister could achieve.

He subsequently became an Executive member and chaired various working parties and Commissions, including that of the panel appointed to hold enquiries into church discipline.

During his Vice-Presidency, he met Barbara Pott who had just returned from the Friendly Isles after a period of missionary work for the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, where she had particular responsibility for education in its Methodist schools. They were married in 1986 and have two daughters, Christine and Rachel.
Working at GKN Sankey, for the Methodist church and in the courtroom widened Leon’s experience of human nature considerably. Being black, he was able to bring a new dimension to decision making. He also saw that racial discrimination is not confined to the white majority: folk from all ethnic backgrounds are just as capable of showing discrimination in their everyday lives. It’s an ongoing problem.

The GKN Group had many factories in Britain; its workforce numbered thousands and included folk from a multitude of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Not surprising, then, that racial tensions could reach breaking point from time to time. That’s one reason why a multi-cultural society like Britain’s needed to change attitudes. Our ‘rights’ are one thing but tolerance, once a characteristic British trait (or so we are led to believe), needs to be accepted and adopted by every resident in the country.

That’s one of the areas in which Leon’s experience and background has been most helpful. Confidant that Leon had a valuable contribution to make in the sphere of improving race relations, GKN agreed to second him to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce from 1986. His involvement would last for 15 years.

During that busy period, and duly impressed by his negotiating abilities, GKN sponsored him to learn business law and business counselling while at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. This led to him becoming involved in three specific areas: giving business advice to migrants; inspecting small business within the Birmingham conurbation and making recommendations for improvement; and acting as liaison officer between small businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.

It wasn’t, by any means, plain sailing. Not every migrant or ‘ethnic’ business or community group welcomed his appearance on their doorsteps with open arms.

Some, sadly, were hindered by less scrupulous people who failed to make good use of grants. As a result, Leon recommended that the City Chamber of Commerce took over control of funding to these groups with the result that greater control could be exercised to ensure grants and other funds actually reached the people for whom it was intended.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the Police sought his help. Racial crime is a major problem and members of the West Mercia Police have benefitted from his advice when producing training materials. Again, this was done with GKN’s blessing. In fact, he gave lectures and advice on Community Relations to the police for 20 years, and is a member of the West Mercia Probation Board, appointed by the Ministry of Justice.

He is also a director of four charitable trusts based in Shropshire, Birmingham and Worcester which distribute funds to churches and other buildings.

Leon’s most justifiably notable civil accolades came when he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Shropshire (2004) and awarded an M.B.E. (2007) in recognition of diligent and effective service to the community over a very long period of time.

When Leon came to Wellington, it didn’t matter how well educated a ‘coloured’ immigrant was, the majority of jobs available to new arrivals involved manual labour. After working for a short time on a building site, Leon managed to get a job at GKN Sankey, Hadley. It would prove to be a good move.

As the Sixties rolled into the Seventies, it became increasingly apparent that something had to be done to improve relationships between all ethnic and migrant groups. Sadly, human nature is such that folk who can be readily identified as being ‘different’ are in some way inferior or troublesome: ‘Immigrants take our jobs’, ‘They don’t adapt to our ways of life’, ‘They’re always causing trouble, often between themselves’.

People, from whatever country of origin and outward appearance, are people. They have the same feelings and aspirations as everyone else. That was just one of many messages that had to be addressed. And that’s where a man like Leon could make an important contribution. Yes, he was an immigrant. But he knew what it was like to suffer unjustified racial prejudice and abuse.

Interest in the Law led to Leon becoming a magistrate in 1983, a duty he performed for 25 years until he reached the compulsory age of retirement for magistrates (70) in 2008. His work involved weighing evidence and reaching verdicts in three courts: the Criminal, Family and Youth. He became chairman of all three.
It was a case of try, try, and try again for the Blackshirts as they attempted to stir the folk of Wellington into a fascist fervour.

The Wellingtonians finally lost patience and responded with a barrage of fruit and veg before running the Blackshirts out of town.

There are one or two eye witness accounts which have it that Sir Oswald Mosley himself, the leader of the British Union of Fascists, was the speaker at Wellington’s ‘night of the Blackshirts’.

It is well documented that Mosley held rallies in places like Shrewsbury and Market Drayton in the 1930s. He was to some extent a ‘local boy’ who had spent part of his younger years in the county.

But none of the reports of the three rallies in Wellington in 1939 make any mention of him being there. And had he really been there, it would hardly have escaped the notice of Action, the British Union of Fascists newspaper, dated May 27, 1939, which carries an account of the Wellington riot which had happened just a few days before, on May 20.

In the spirit of fair play to fascists, let’s put their side of the story first.

The headline in Action was RED VIOLENCE AT WELLINGTON. The report said:

For the past few weeks highly organised bands of imported Red hooligans have been attempting to smash British Union meetings in Wellington, Shropshire.

The campaign of violence reached its climax last Saturday, when the mob brutally attacked the thirty odd local supporters of British Union who surrounded the platform. Although hopelessly outnumbered, British Union supporters fought back valiantly and drove back the mob. In all, the Reds attacked six times, yet not once were they able to achieve their objective of breaking through to the speaker’s car.

Every form of violence was used. Missiles were hurled from the crowd and sticks, screwdrivers and bars were used in the various sorties. It is to the credit of the British Union supporters present that the meeting was kept going for some considerable time.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was found that quite a number of those present had sustained injuries to head and body — many of these due to kicks received when struggling on the ground.

H. Hobson Cooke, who opened the meeting, was among those injured. This is the third successive occasion on which he has been assaulted in this town.

Two of the casualties had to be taken to hospital, where one was detained for an X-ray on the jaw, where a fracture was suspected. Another meeting is being arranged shortly.

Cripes, couldn’t they take a hint?

The Blackshirts’ attempts to win over Wellington began shortly before 8pm on April 1, 1939. A car drew up in the Square, an improvised platform was speedily organised, and a youthful speaker, probably the same hapless H. Hobson Cooke, addressed the Saturday night crowd.

At first, he had a good hearing. But when he touched on some of the ‘delicate’ questions of the day, a certain section of the crowd got rather fidgety, observed a reporter from the Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News.

And when he began to talk about the rise of Germany under Adolf Hitler, the same crowd got very fidgety — indeed so fidgety that he was dislodged from the platform.

On April 22 they came again. With a similar result. ‘It was not long before the improvised platform was somewhere in the crowd, as were the speakers,’ it was reported.

The climax came on May 20. The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News report of the riot says a huge crowd assembled in the Square, packing the entire space, and the Blackshirts, both men and women, marched from Park Street into the Square carrying with them the Union Jack and their own banner.

Police formed a human ring round them. From the crowd came shouting, catcalls, the ringing of handbells and blowing of whistles, and one section attempted to sing Rule Britannia. Later the crowd surged forward, and one or two eggs were thrown at the Blackshirts.

‘This started the pandemonium, and in the next minute dozens of eggs, tomatoes, oranges, cabbages etc were hurling through the air from various parts of the crowd.’

The Blackshirts tried to sing the national anthem above the din. Police cleared an escape route through Duke Street, and a section of the crowd made a final rush and tried to seize the Blackshirts’ banner, and many blows were struck, the newspaper reported.

Followed by the crowd, the Blackshirts were ushered by police down Walker Street and into Wrekin Road where police formed a line across the road, and the throng finally dispersed.

It doesn’t look as if they ever came to Wellington again. Or if they did, it was so low key that it was not reported.

Maybe some Wellingtonians were disappointed. They must have been some of the best Saturday nights out they had had for ages!
If we look a bit further back, in fact to the town’s Market Charter of 1244, Midsummer Fayre was historically marked in England a day or two in early June. Much of its content, however, is inspired by another annual celebration of 500 years later, the Whit Monday ‘Wellington Jubilee’.

Thanks to the Shrewsburry Chronicle, first published in 1773, we have a rather better idea of what this event was like. According to the adverts, the ‘celebration of this ancient festival’ began with a breakfast on the town Bowling Green, where the fashionable drinks of coffee, tea and chocolate were served. (Our version is a refreshments stall inside the porch of All Saints church, run by enthusiastic members of the congregation. I recommend the cakes.)

Processions were a regular part of Whitsun celebrations, and Wellington’s Jubilee was no exception. It included a colourful costumed pageant and featured a host of characters – historical, modern and mythical. It displayed, amongst other things, a typical Georgian fondness for classical mythology, with the likes of Cupid, Venus and Bacchus putting in an appearance. Spectators could even look forward to seeing their own King George and Queen Charlotte represented, along with other kings and queens.

All this provides us with a fantastic blueprint for the revived ‘Jubilee Procession’ at our own Fayre today. It includes many of those same characters, alongside a handful of other notable natives of Georgian Wellington – the easiest to spot will be Dr Withering, clutching his beloved foxglove and escorting a wily wise woman on his arm.

Every year between 1773–78, the Jubilee concluded with a Grand Ball in the evening. We re-interpret this as a slightly less grand barn dance at Wrockwardine Village Hall, with music from Odd Socks Folk Band and a Shropshire barbecue and real ale bar. And with that, our colourful, musical and historically-confused Midsummer Fayre will draw to a lively close.

As a history student, you’re always taught to look for the evidence, to avoid allowing your imagination to run away with itself. The great thing about the Midsummer Fayre is that imagination is allowed – in fact, it’s precisely what brings that essence of the past to life. Does it stand up as true historical re-enactment? Definitely not. Does it recapture the spirit of Wellington’s ancient June festivities? We can never really know. Is it an event worth restoring to our town’s calendar for good? We hope you’ll think so.

For a full programme from June 1st, visit the Events pages of the H2A www website at: wellingtonunderthewrekin.co.uk
at Overley Hill west of Wellington) to reduce the gradient and resurface the whole road with setts (square stones) and gravel. The improvement was remarkable.

One thing he couldn’t provide was illumination for night travel, so coaches had to rely on their lanterns. Nor was the provision of signposts part of his remit. They weren’t considered a necessity. Everyone knew which was a main road: it was the one used by coaches. All other roads served local areas where inhabitants knew where to go anyway.

Mileposts showing the distance on main roads from one settlement to another had been around since Roman times but, over the centuries, had all but disappeared. They reappeared from the 1740s onwards when turnpike owners were required to provide them, but their quality varied.

Telford replaced them, with clearer lettering on his improved and new roads; many of his original flat-fronted ones (made of stone with cast iron lettering plates) can still be seen, particularly on the side of the A5 in Wales. Closer to home, there is one alongside the Shelton Tollhouse, reconstructed at Blists Hill Open Air Museum.

An interesting fact about these new posts is that when distances were remeasured using ‘modern’ techniques, almost all previously accepted distances were found to be incorrect: London, for example, was now about 150 miles away, not 140. Some turnpike trusts raised prices to take account of the ‘increased’ length of their roads.

Sometime around the 1830s, a new design was introduced as the number of coach services grew. Mileposts became much taller and were painted white with black lettering to make them more noticeable and easier to read, especially by lantern light.

We are lucky to have three surviving mileposts on the north side of the Holyhead Road as it passes through Wellington; they are, of course, spaced one mile apart. Travelling west from Ketley Interchange, there is one on Bennett’s Bank, the second (below) near the former Wrekin Hospital opposite Christine Avenue and the third near the turning onto the old A5 close to Junction 7 of the M54.
During his time he visited just about every town in the country, although nothing had previously been written about him. ‘The smell mentioned in the Wellington News story was the formalin preservative with which he was coated every day. Any whale sighting prior to 1954 could have been Eric the Whale (a Finback) which came from America in the 1930’s and was first displayed on Southend’s Kursall. I feel sure however that the Wellington sighting was Jonah the Blue Whale.’

The story does not end there though, because a reader in Bridgwater in Somerset picked up on the story and told us of a whale visiting his area in the 1940 period.

It became an annual event and the good people of the West Country took it to a different level and invited people to sit at a table laid for four – the difference being that the table was situated inside the whale’s jaws!

So, whether Wellington’s whale was Jonah or Eric, it is clear, and photographic evidence proves, that a whale of some origin did exist. And it is also clear that the whale was expected to do its tour of duty for many years!

Long before the Discovery Channel on television, the good people of Shropshire had the opportunity for a close-up inspection of one of the world’s most intriguing animals.

And if the smell or sight of the whale was not to their taste, there was always Pat Collins Funfair!
The first proposal to build a railway was in 1844, but was rejected by Parliament. A second attempt in 1846 gave permission for the Shrewsbury & Birmingham (S&BR) Railway to construct a line between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton. In the same year, the Shropshire Union Railway won the right for a line from Stafford to Shrewsbury, with the stretch between Wellington and Shrewsbury held jointly by the two companies.

Work began on purchasing land along the proposed routes (the Lord Forester apparently did rather well from his holdings in Wellington), levelling the land, creating cuttings and laying the track. The Shrewsbury – Wellington line was inspected on 2nd May 1849 and found to be safe to use, but the stations needed a few more days before they were ready to accept passengers.

Speculation also led to attempts to buy land in those spots likely to be used to lay tracks or, better still, stations, when substantial profits could be made when the railway companies purchased them.

There were other matters to consider; for example, where should Wellington’s station be situated without causing too much disruption to business? And, if Wellington was to become a major railway junction, where should its goods yard be located? Certainly not in the centre of the town! And how would the parish graveyard be affected?

Wellington station and sidings, 1849, as seen from the bridge on Church Street.
ARRIVAL AT WELLINGTON
At Wellington, the opening of the railway seemed to create the liveliest interest; the shops were closed, and the inhabitants seemed bent on making a joyous holiday in honour of the event. Vast crowds of people lined every point where a view could be obtained of the trains arriving and departing, and an extensive view was easily afforded by the position of the Station, which is opposite the parish church. The station itself is neat and commodious erection, built chiefly of blue bricks and quoins. After a short delay at Wellington, where the lines to Stafford and Wolverhampton diverge, the train moved on to Oakengates.

REPUBLIC TO WELLINGTON
PUBLIC DINNER
On our return from Oakengates to Wellington, we were in time to be present at a public dinner at the Bull’s Head Inn, given in celebration of the event of the day. Shortly after four o’clock a party of about eighty gentlemen sat down to dinner; the repast and the dessert did the greatest credit to Mrs. Goodman, the landlady, and to Mr. W. Griffiths of Shrewsbury, who prepared the banquet. Mr. J. Slaney of Wellington was chairman and Mr. J. Webb of Wellington was vice-chairman ... Stanier’s Band of Shrewsbury was stationed convenient to the lower end of the dining room and, as each toast was announced, an appropriate air was played.

[The lengthy report goes into a lot of detail on the speeches and toasts made after the meal ... no doubt the reporter’s pen ran the risk of bursting into flame as he struggled to record every word.]

Having instigated a railway service between Shrewsbury and Oakengates was all very well, but future rail prosperity depended on completing the link to Wolverhampton, and thence to the rest of the railway network. The tunnel near Oakengates was completed and pronounced safe towards the end of October 1849, and preparations were hastily made to run the first through trains from Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton on Monday 12th November.

Again, from the Shrewsbury Chronicle:

OPENING OF THE SHREWSBURY AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY
The above event took place on Monday last, and was the occasion of very lively interest, not only in this town but at Wellington, Oakengates, Shifnal, Wolverhampton and indeed all along the line.

A very large excursion train was ready at the central station in this town at an early hour in the morning; but owing to the fast-increasing crowds which, between eight and nine o’clock kept flocking to the platform, it was found necessary to add to the train, so that when the moment of departure arrived it extended from the viaduct over the Severn to the bridge at Coton Hill, or about a quarter of a mile in length, and consisted of 38 carriages, propelled by three powerful engines, viz., Salopian, Wrekin and Vulcan.

A good band, provided by Mr. David Lewis of this town, was attached to the train, seated on an open platform in front of the carriages, and contributed much to enliven the trip.

... At exactly 21 minutes to 9 o’clock the train began to move, and reached the Wellington station at 9 minutes past 9. Here a vast concourse of people were collected to witness the sight, who cheered lustily as the monster train swept along.

As we described the principal features of the country along the line as far as Wellington and Oakengates on its partial opening in June last, we will avoid going over the same details again, and spare our readers the perusal of a ‘twice-told tale’.

After a stoppage of 11 minutes at Wellington, to take up more passengers, the train was again in motion and reached Oaken Gates at 25 minutes to 10.

... The next noticeable object on the line was the Tunnel at Oaken Gates, the completion of which has been such a formidable obstacle to the engineers, and has long delayed the opening of the line.

... We should think all doubt on the subject is now removed after the test of such an immense train passing through it safely four times in one day. The tunnel is about 500 yards in length; the time occupied in traversing it was 3 minutes 55 seconds, the train moving at a very slow pace.

... At 20 minutes past 11 o’clock this, the first railway train that ever deposited its living load in the town of Wolverhampton, reached the temporary station.

The railway had not only arrived in Wellington, it also enabled the possibility of reasonably cheap travel to the rest of the country. It was only a matter of time before other lines were added to make Wellington an important junction.

Initially, the Shrewsbury & Birmingham ran six trains a day and stopped at Wellington between 6:40 a.m. and 7:40 p.m. Of these, four were ‘Select’ services carrying First and Second Class passengers only. The remaining two were ‘Mixed’, carrying First, Second, Third and ‘Parliamentary’ Class ticket holders. Two Mixed services also ran on Sundays.

Single fares from Wellington to Shrewsbury cost 1s 10d (First Class) and 1s 4d (Second) on Select journeys, and 11d (Third) and 10d (Parliamentary) for travel on the Mixed service. Journeys to Wolverhampton cost between 4s 6d (First Class) and 1s 7d (Parliamentary).

This article deals with the passenger railway station at Wellington; the story of the Goods Yard, laid out at the (then) western extremity of the town, was an entirely different matter. It became one of the most important facets of Wellington’s broader economy from the 1850s until as late as the early 1970s when it was demolished.
The highlight of the year, if not the decade, was the Royal Visit of Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig-Holstein (full name Francisca Josepha Louise Auguste Marie Christine Helene of Schleswig-Holstein), granddaughter of our Queen Victoria.

The princess spent several days from 21st July as guest of Colonel E.W. Herbert of Orleton Hall. 100 soldiers from the C (Wellington) Company 4th Battalion King’s Shropshire Light Infantry (above) formed a guard of honour outside the railway station.

She was escorted to a dais erected outside the Wrekin Hotel, Market Square, where vast crowds listened as J.W. Littlewood (clerk to Wellington Urban District Council) gave a welcome address to which Her Highness graciously responded.

Her party then proceeded along banner-bedecked streets to Orleton Hall. On the way, she spoke to many retired naval and military veterans. Hundreds of flag waving schoolchildren awaited her arrival at the Hall.

During her stay, Princess Marie Louise opened a bazaar and fete at Orleton Park, the object being to raise the final balance to pay for a new parish hall at Wrockwardine.

A devastating fire destroyed the premises of Messrs. Stone & Son’s furniture works on Linden Avenue.

Wellington Fire Brigade arrived quickly on the scene but could do nothing to prevent total destruction and over £5,000 worth of damage. The Alliance Fire Brigade at Shrewsbury also attended, covering the 11 mile journey in a remarkably fast one hour, to no avail.

The firm subsequently moved to new premises at Crown Works (named after their shop in Crown Street), Orleton Lane, and seems to have continued in business until 1928.
A popular gentleman throughout Shropshire, Herbert Chiverton Meyrick, son of Colonel Sir Thomas C. Meyrick of Apley Castle, died in an ‘indescribably sad and deplorable tragedy’.

Goodness knows what possessed him to do so, but Herbert decided to ‘take his horse to water’, and proceeded to Apley Castle Pool (above), which was some ten or twelve feet deep in the middle. Equally unbelievably, he rode the horse bareback and, in an effort to exert his will on the animal, overcame its reluctance to enter the water.

For a while, it stood knee-deep in the pool, refusing to go any further ... then it ‘gave a plunge and soon got to the middle of the pool.’ It went under several times, swerved, and ‘Mr. Meyrick and the horse parted company’.

Herbert, a keen sportsman and capable swimmer who owned several racehorses, struck out for the bank but seems to have suffered cramp in the extremely cold water (there had been a frost the night before).

Within a few minutes, the groom (who couldn’t swim) raised the alarm; stablemen and footmen rushed to the scene. Pleasure boats were launched and boathooks used to find and recover the body.

By the time the police (led by Superintendent Fulcher) arrived on the scene, it was too late. The horse made its way to the side of the pool and was led away to the stables. Unharmed.
2nd Wellington Cubs (pictured right) have been given copies of our chairman Allan Frost’s novel *Wrekin Wraiths, Rebels and Romans* to encourage them to read and take an interest in history.

Cub Scout Leader Alison Peel told us, ‘2nd Wellington Group has close ties with The Wrekin and we make sure that we have at least one weekend up at our camp site there every year, as well as other events such as barbecues. I’m sure that the Cubs will enjoy reading the book – in fact I know that a couple of them are already a good way through it!’

2nd Wellington Cubs meet at the Scout Hut, Lychgate Walk alongside All Saints parish church, on Tuesday evenings during term-time from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and are aged 8 - 10 and a half. Beavers (ages 6 to 8) meet on Fridays from 5 to 6 p.m. and Scouts (aged 10 and a half to 14) meet on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Girls as well as boys are welcome.

If you have a child who may be interested in joining, or if you’re an adult willing to give up a little of your time to help, please call Alison on 01952 251051.

Whereas the book is already popular with adults (even folk well into their eighties!), it’s also enjoyed by children as young as eight. In fact, it’s been described as an adult adventure for young readers, and a children’s thriller for adults. So, why not give it a try? You might learn something new.

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