Not for the moment, it isn’t. Our Awards For All grant (for which we have been most grateful) has enabled us to produce four issues of Wellingtonia... but, thanks in part to your recent donations, we have enough to pay for a fifth issue.

Due out in October (please see the back page of this issue for details), the bonus Edition will be devoted entirely to aspects of Wellington’s Victorian history. Schools, in particular, should find it useful to their curricula but it will also be aimed at our usual readers, whatever their age and wherever they happen to live.

What happens after October depends entirely on whether or not we manage to obtain a further grant; Awards For All have advised us that they are unable to provide continued funding so we are looking elsewhere. Please keep your fingers crossed or try to find a generous benefactor who can spare a few thousand pounds... and let us know who it is!

Ten the terms of our Awards For All grant, we contracted to produce four issues of Wellingtonia free of charge to both schools and the public. We have.

We also promised to present a series of free-to-attend public talks on subjects related to our area of interest. We did.

We also offered to help schools and individuals. We have.

All told, it’s been a good year. We hope you think so, too.

Produced with financial support from Awards for All
Place names are often changed. Sometimes it’s easy to mistake their meanings and origins. I was once lectured about the origin of ‘Strine Close’. ‘This proves,’ I was told, ‘that there must have been a stream here in olden times’.

Well no, it doesn’t prove that at all. When the area was being developed by Wellington Urban District Council, the Surveyor, Arthur Barton, asked the Chairman of Planning (me) to think up suitable names.

I sat down with a map of Shropshire and chose names of rivers and streams. These were accepted but were not enough, so I produced a list of Shropshire villages. If you live in the Dothill area of Wellington you now know how Strine Close, Clunbury Road etc., were named. Blame me.

Readers may know that the sites of Ercall Junior and Barn Farm Schools are being redeveloped following their demolition for reasons I am unable to understand. The street names I have suggested to the Town Council are as follows: Axon, Keith, the architect who designed Barn Farm Estate; Barton, Colonel Arthur, Surveyor; Rushen, Reuben, Town Clerk, and Buttrey, Cliff, Headmaster of Princes Street School for a very long time. All these are worthy people who contributed to the area. Will they be used? Do you think that they should?

I wrote a little on names in a previous Wellingtonia, when commenting about Allan Frost’s historic map. It’s an interesting line of inquiry and there’s only room for a little of what I know and don’t know. I live in Barnfield Crescent and would like to know if it was named after Richard Barnfield, the Shropshire poet, whose most famous line was, ‘Nothing is more certain than uncertainties’. Of course there may have been a barn in the field – I don’t know.

Victorians often named their houses, a practice that’s dying out (though I have named each house we lived in). Sunycroft is a good example. The Priory was originally the Vicarage; when it was sold it was renamed, though I believe it had nothing to do with Priors. My grandparents’ address was, ‘Slaughden, Wellington, Salop’, though Slaughden was a semi-detached house in Victoria Avenue.

Do you know where 18½ Street Lane was? It was the Union Workhouse on Holyhead Road. Nobody wanted to have The Workhouse on either their birth or death certificate, so this was an alternative. It’s now Wrekin Nursing Home.

Street Lane was a Roman road – probably called Via Londinium by them because it went to London – and Watling Street by the early English, but when Thomas Telford used it for his road to Holyhead its name changed.

The Normans even had the audacity to re-name The Wrekin ‘Mount Gilbert’ after some ‘holy’ hermit of theirs. Naturally it reverted to its proper name when English became the official language again.

A slum area at the back of High Street, Parton Square, was renamed New Square, though everybody still called it Little Ireland. Back Lane is now King Street and Bellevue Road is Constitution Hill. Cart Road has become Bank Road, Dun Cow Lane is Duke Street and Swine Market is Bell Street.

When Arleston was built, many names were needed. The council went for Royal names like Kingsland, Kingsway, Windsor, Charles, Princess, etc.

There is John Broad, after a Town Clerk, Churchill and two vicars, Hayes and Abbey; a reference to the Festival of Britain and the founder of Wellington College.

Pubs sometimes have interesting names like the Oddfellows, after a friendly society, and Bacchus, though everyone I know called that ‘Dicky Parkes’s’. Why on Earth was the Raven renamed Rasputin’s to the annoyance of many? Haygate has nothing to do with dried grass; it’s a gate into the deer enclosure, as is Wickets, a smaller gate: no connection with cricket.

When Councillor Paul Woodhall died in office as Mayor, the Wellington Town Council requested a street to be named after him. Wrekin Council did, but outside the Wellington boundary. They refused to change.

The biggest question of all is the name of the ‘New Town’. Most locals wanted to keep it as Dawley or use the name Wrekin. We might have tolerated its intrusion better. But the Minister concerned decided to exercise his authority and name it after a Scotsman. Telford isn’t a popular name; perhaps it served the developers’ purpose in diverting attention and investment from the existing towns, Wellington, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley.

Never mind, dawn is breaking and Telford & Wrekin Council now talks about Borough Towns. Hurrah!

Names do matter after all.

Street signs need to be accurate. Sadly, the sign for Greenman Close off Mill Bank has lost its historic meaning by the omission of a space between ‘Green’ and ‘Man’. It’s supposed to refer to the former existence of the Green Man pub. Will the Council rectify the mistake?
Much has been made of the Market Charter of the year 1244 granted by King Henry III to Giles of Erdington, lord of our manor. The actual charter is held in the National Archives and the extract relating to Wellington is shown in the centre of the illustration below. As with all legal documents of the time, it is written in Latin and contains many standard abbreviations often found in Medieval documents.

Sylvia Watts, who gave a talk at the conference we hosted in May, has provided this translation of the charter:

**Charter for Giles of Erdington**

He has a wholly similar charter having free warren in all his demesne lands of Shawbury and Besford which is a member, having a market at his manor in Wellington every week on Thursdays and having a fair in the same manor every year to last three days, to wit on the eve and day of Barnabas the Apostle [11th June] etc. Having etc. Wherefore we wish etc. Witnesses: H. de Bohun, Earl of Essex and Hereford, Peter of Genene, Robert Passelewe, John Mannsel, John de Lexintong, Robert de Muceys, William de Cheenay, Richard de Clifford, Geoffrey de Childwic. Given by our hand at Marlborough 29th day of February.

People naturally assume that, because this is the first market charter for the town, a market didn’t exist before 1244. This is completely incorrect.

Giles wanted the charter precisely because Wellington already had a thriving and prosperous market which had been in existence for centuries; most likely it began when people living in farms around the village came to attend services at the original Saxon church.

What could be better than combining a visit to church with a chance to sell surplus produce and make a little extra money?

Giles didn’t simply want to formalise Wellington markets: what would be the point?

No, Giles’s charter gave him the right to levy a toll on animals brought into the town for sale. Yes, the market charter sanctioned direct taxation, whereby the lord of the manor could expect regular payments to fill his coffers, all for a small fee paid to Henry III to legalise the arrangement.

Whereas it is likely that all markets originally took place on and around the village green, in time the location moved southwards into what became Market Place (now Square).

Eventually, it is believed, rows of temporary wooden stalls near a pool at the junction of Walker Street and Tan Bank became more permanent structures and, by the late Middle Ages, formed the buildings between Bell, Crown and Duke Streets. At some point, it seems that the selling of various forms of livestock was separated from sales of foodstuffs and other wares.

A market hall was erected in Market Place during the seventeenth century and may have replaced an earlier structure. This hall seems to have been demolished around 1805 as it was causing too much congestion to (horse drawn) vehicles and pedestrians. It was, apparently, a half-timbered structure with arches and an upper floor used for public meetings and manor court.

Thereafter, a new Town Hall was built (possibly in 1842) along Market Street, itself to be superseded in the 1864 when the present Market Hall was built.

In 1841, The Wellington Market Hall Company acquired the right to collect tolls permitted under a later market charter dated 1671.

During the mid 1850s, John Barber regularised the conduct of livestock auctions at his own Smithfield and collected the tolls for the Market Hall Company (for a small commission), an arrangement which continued after the Market Hall Company built a larger Smithfield on the site now occupied by Morrison’s supermarket. Livestock auctions ceased in January 1989.

Nowadays, Wellington Market Company holds markets on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Markets were seldom cancelled or suspended; a rare example is when an outbreak of ‘Cattle Distemper’ in 1751 and 1752 led to the closure of markets until the Wellington Cattle Plague Inspector allowed them to resume.
It’s 1944, war time in England. My parents lived in London and decided that it would be safer for me to be left at Harvey Crescent, the so called ‘Little Russia’ part of the Arleston estate and home of my grandparents.

They were both in their 60s, had reared ten children and had one son at home and were also looking after a granddaughter ... and now me. I am 2 years old, knew little of this being so young, nor that I would remain there for the next 16 years.

The old part of the estate as it was then consisted of Harvey Crescent and Windsor Road, built in the 1930s. The estate expanded over the years and would eventually end over the Dawsley Road and up to Limekiln Lane.

My family had come to the estate from the Black Horse Yard in King Street, as did many who had lived there. Living in Harvey Crescent was a new beginning for them all, and thus remained neighbours. I wonder what they thought of these brand new houses and, perhaps more importantly, the conditions they’d live in previously. I don’t know where the rest of the neighbours came from.

All the houses looked pretty much the same to me. We had three bedrooms, living room with pantry and a big cast iron fire grate complete with oven and hob with the fire burning in the centre. The kitchen (complete with the modern appliances of that time, including an old gas cooker, gas boiler with a hinged lid, tap and a red rubber gas pipe, dolly tub and a mangle) led off to a bathroom. The toilet was outside in an alley adjoining the coal house.

Lighting was by gas lights with mantles that broke at a touch, candles and oil lamps. Coal and wood were used for heating and sometimes cooking. Being so young, I had nothing to compare this way of life to.

The houses in the Harvey Crescent and Windsor Road overlooked a field with an air raid shelter which divided the older part of the estate from the newer, a kind of boundary you could say, so in the summer time the kids off the estate played there. Swings, see-saws and roundabouts were erected in the 1950s by the council: great fun as we waited our turn to have a ride on one of them.

The people on the estate were friendly enough. As time passed, I roamed all over the new parts of the estate where there were flat roofed houses, tin houses (Wimpey houses as we called them), so there was a mixture of different designs.

So what lay on the outskirts of this part of the estate? There was Arleston Lane, including its ‘monkey tree’, that led to the A5 from the Bucks Head to the Queens Head along Bennett’s Bank; opposite that was Summers Yard, the rubbish tip and Ketley Dingle. Behind that was the Allied Iron foundry and a huge sand pit.

All these places were explored by us kids and, yes, we rummaged around and lugged engine parts, tyres, wheels, rolls of silver paper, and wood. Our parents weren’t at all pleased and lectured us on the dangers that lay in these places, and told us off for bringing all this rubbish home. Did we go there again? Of course we did!

When winters were harsh, the tiny iron-framed windows would be frozen on the inside, but life seemed to carry on as normal. Johnson’s ‘Red House’ in High Street wagon would come selling hardware. Mrs Cooper came with the milk, Bob Farmer with his basket of bread, Perry and Brayne with the coal.

The rent man would call and yes occasionally we wouldn’t answer the door (no money). Pennies were saved to feed the gas meter. At night time, through the gaps in the houses opposite, you could see the red hot steel bars skimming across the floor at Haybridge Steel works and the lights of Sankeys factory.
Careers advice was not high on the syllabus at Wellington Grammar School in the 1950s. Most of the pupils who were not destined for university went to Sankeys, Allied Iron, C and W Walkers, the Haybridge Steel Works or the local council or tax offices. None of these excited me.

I was an avid reader of William Connor, who wrote a column under the pen-name, Cassandra, in the Daily Mirror. Week by week I devoured every word he wrote on national issues, politics, personalities and the more important facts of life such as how to keep a bonfire burning for a week or the sound that cabbages make when they growing in the allotment.

I just wanted to write.

In the months that preceded my school leaving in 1957, my parents happened to be having a quiet drink in the Haygate pub in Wellington with a family friend, Fred May. Fred was a compositor on the Shrewsbury Chronicle and on being told that young Mike wanted to be a journalist soon arranged for me to have an interview with the paper’s editor, the fearsome Jack Cater.

Jack was a newspaperman of the old school. When I was being interviewed I unfortunately happened to call him ‘sir’. I was told in no uncertain terms that I could call him ‘Jack’ or ‘Mr Cater’, but not ‘sir’ as I was not in the army.

I must have done enough to prove my credentials because I was taken on as a part-time trainee reporter in the Wellington office, earning £1 a week, plus bike allowance of 2s. 6d.

The Wellington office of the Shrewsbury Chronicle was in New Street, next to the Duke of Wellington pub, almost opposite Sidoli’s Café.

The Wellington staff consisted of me, my immediate superior, Mary Smith and the chief reporter Bill Dumbell. There was also a photographer by the name of Bill Haddock who ran his own business in Tan Bank.

Mary and I shared a pokey little office while Bill had a very impressive room all to himself. The first thing that Bill did was welcome me onto the paper and say that his door was always open should I require assistance.

It was always open because it was made of hardboard and cardboard and every time the front office door was opened and a lorry went down New Street the draught used to blow Bill’s door down. It was that sort of office!

I was given the task of collecting and writing up the Wellington paragraphs which meant that at a certain time on a certain day I would call to see – the Conservative Association, the Labour Party, the local youth clubs, the whist drive organisers, the ministers at all the churches and all the local schools to get details of what they had been doing during the past week.

That was when I first met a young teacher by the name of George Evans whose job it was to keep Wellington informed of the goings on at Prince’s Street School. As time went on George expanded his influence into the realm of cycle training and road safety and then gently eased himself into the world of local government.

On other days of the week I went to Oakengates, Dawley, Ironbridge, Madeley, collecting paragraphs and covering the local council meetings. Our circulation even covered Much Wenlock and Broseley.

Another of my tasks was to call at the local undertakers and get a list of folk who had died. I then had to call round and see the next of kin and write up an obituary. Then I would either wait at the church door on the day of the funeral and get a list of mourners, or call round at the house later. Not a job that a reporter today has to undertake (no pun intended) but it really taught me how to deal with people at perhaps the most difficult time of their lives.

Around 1960 the company decided to close the office in New Street and as the staff was just Bill Dumbell and myself, we found ourselves working from home.

A typical day would begin with us meeting outside the post office in Walker Street (because it had a wide window sill) and sorting out all the copy we had typed up at home the night before, and putting it on the 9.20 a.m. train to Shrewsbury, where the parcel would be collected. We then went into the YMCA canteen and ordered two cups of tea while we sorted out who would be doing what for the rest of the day. It could be magistrates court, paragraph work, council meetings, water board, etc. Unfortunately the YMCA secretary didn’t take kindly to two itinerant journalists hijacking one of his tables for a couple of hours and we would be thrown out. We would meet up again in front of the post office to pack up our news parcel for the 3.20 p.m. train and then, after another cup of tea if the YMCA secretary was busy, make our way home to type up copy ready for the next day.

This went on for quite a while until a national newspaper strike saw Bill move to pastures new in Worcester and Mike Greatholder, an indentured trainee reporter, being called over to work at the Shrewsbury Chronicle head office at Castle Foregate, Shrewsbury.

But that’s another story.
Wartime rationing descended upon Wellington and the rest of Britain towards the end of 1939, a month or so after I was born, and continued, on and off, for the next 15 years, by which time it had become the accepted way of life.

The first casualty of the urgent need to conserve supplies was petrol. Food rationing followed in January 1940. It was not the first time the British people had been asked to endure shortages. There had been rationing in 1916, when German U-boats launched a relentless Great War campaign to sink merchant ships carrying essential supplies to the U.K.

As World War II unfolded, Britain realised it was again vulnerable to attack upon its merchant shipping, sharpened by the fact that the country imported 70 per cent of its food supply – no less than 55 million tons per year, including half the meat requirements, 70% cheese and sugar, 80% fruit, and about 90% of cereals and fats. A return to rationing was obvious.

Anyone over the age of 65 will remember ration books, containing coupons. Each family was issued with a book, and was required to register with a local shopkeeper of their choice for the strictly controlled purchase of food. Ration books were not a payment voucher – they were a means of ensuring no family obtained a greater amount than their coupons allowed. Once used up for the week, you had to wait until next week before you could buy more sweets, cheese, meat, butter, eggs, bacon, milk, lard, tea, jam, sugar...

Many other commodities were rationed, including clothing, but fish and chips, fruit, vegetables and bread escaped the black cloak of Ministry of Food wartime regulations. Wellington was no better or worse off than anywhere else in Britain. Unrationed though they were, fruit and vegetables were often in short supply, as was flour, especially white flour – often leading to an under-supply of white bread (many’s first choice) and an over-supply of brown.

From memory, our family registered for grocery purchases with Mr Giles’s tiny shop opposite the Chad Valley toy factory in High Street. He served in the shop, Mrs Giles dealt with matters in the family dwelling at the rear. They were constantly busy, thanks to their extensive flock of registered customers and the need to weigh and wrap almost everything. Mr Giles seemed unable to cease quick-stepping sideways up and down behind the front counter, weighing, bagging, packing and yakking, as grocers commonly did in those days.

Surprisingly, as a boy growing up with rationing, I never went hungry and, apparently, people were healthier than they had been in times of greater plenty – they ate less meat/fat/sugar, and yet rations per person still amounted to 3000 calories a day, more than enough to maintain a healthy body mass (it is said that only when consuming under 1750 calories daily will the average person lose weight).

Special provisions allowed for fussy eaters (like me). I don’t know why, but, as a child, I could never stomach any form of meat, so I was awarded an extra cheese ration. Imagine my mother’s angst when I also spurned the cheese; no wonder I was hospitalised, aged three, for several weeks with anaemia. A favourite uncle gladly accepted our gift of the extra cheese, and eventually I recovered.

Horse power made a comeback as a result of rationing. The Government urged traders to deliver goods horse-drawn where possible, to conserve petrol. Ours and our neighbours’ bread was, for a time, delivered by a bright red horse-drawn cab (the local Co-Op), which ensured a bonus supply of garden manure ... by scooping it up from the street.

Acting as dung beetles had its upside: householders were urged to grow their own fruit and vegetables, and most did so, with others keeping chickens as well. The high wire netting chicken pen was a common sight in many back gardens.

Another rationing ritual (which possibly did not catch on nearly as well as vegetable growing) were British Restaurants, run by the local authorities. Oddly enough (very oddly) food served in any restaurant, private or State-run, went unrationed. If you had the wherewithal, you could eat out all the time although, even at the Ritz, no meal was allowed to be priced at more than five shillings. British Restaurants were a Ministry of Food gesture to provide a modicum of social and nutritional relief in hard times, but the meals offered, understandably, tended in most cases to lean heavily towards the ordinary, plus there were restrictions on the number of courses allowed, which themselves were limited in content and presentation.

I recall Wellington’s Robin Hood British Restaurant housed in what reminded me of an ex-army Nissen hut on the patch of ground facing the bus and railway station end of Victoria Avenue. We visited once. Nevertheless, and generally speaking, British Restaurants had their supporters, if not fanatics. A good, filling, basic feed of three courses might be had there for ninepence.

Not that fancy food was essential to survival. Many were the times I returned home after primary school wanting a bite to eat and all I could find in the pantry was bread, dark yellow wartime margarine, and HP sauce. Carve off a slice or two, toast it, spread it with margarine (not too thickly) and swim it in HP sauce – it filled you up.

You can of course still get HP sauce, even here in Australia, so the other day, in writing this article, I tried out my old snack. I have to admit that after eating it this time I felt forced to lie down for about an hour with the curtains drawn.

* * *

Wellingtonia: Issue 4, Summer 2009
This is mainly aimed at anyone researching local history. I often grumble that too much attention is given to documents and published history (not that they’re unimportant) and not enough notice is accorded to the landscape where events happen. After all, history writers (including myself) are human; we can and do make mistakes. Also some historical documents (not mine I hope) are biased, exaggerated, misconceived or even outright lies. As they say, ‘Lies, damned lies, statistics and what you find on the Internet’.

Asking the right questions improves your chances of finding the best answers. Perhaps the best of all questions is, ‘Why?’ That is a question often asked by children; we should never grow out of it. Deflating experts is great fun.

So, what, exactly, do I mean by geomorphology? The Concise Oxford Dictionary says, ‘Study of the physical features of the Earth’s surface and their relation to its geological structure’. The Penguin Dictionary of Geography says something quite similar but adds, ‘...sometimes regarded as synonymous with the older term, Physiography.’

My own definition is simpler and probably more useful; ‘Looking at the landscape and wondering why it isn’t flat’.

Yes, I know the Earth is curved and that Thomas Telford reckoned it was 8 inches to a mile; also that there was always water in his canals, level all the way. But it looks flat to us little humans unless there’s a good reason why it’s not.

Most of the humps and hollows in our landscape around The Wrekin, including the little mountain itself, are caused by geology. If you want to read more about the geological evolution of this area, Geology of Shropshire (second edition) by Peter Toghill is not only a good geology book; it is also very readable for a layman.

Many smaller changes in level ground, however, are man-made and this article is mainly about these. In The Wrekin Forest there are many small flat clearings, marked on the local Orienteers’ maps as ‘platforms’. Why? Scratch around and you will soon see traces of ancient scorched wood. They’re charcoal burning sites or, as the locals used to say, ‘cockarths’ or coke hearths. Don’t take my word, go and see.

A possible town pond may have been discovered by noticing the slopes in Charlton Street, examining the drift geology map and spotting clay layers in trenches dug in the road for service pipes. I know of no documents but the physical evidence seems to indicate this. It may have a bearing on Wellington’s early industry and suggests a connection to the linen or hemp trade.

Old mines and quarries on the Ercall and in Birch Coppice, Short Wood, Black Hayes, Limekiln Wood and Maddocks Hill tell their story of exploitation for minerals just as much as newer quarries do.

These historic sites have a fascinating story to tell as Neil Clarke and his colleagues in The Industrial Heritage Research Group in their two publications, The Industrial Heritage of the Rural Parishes Around The Wrekin, Parts One and Two have revealed. The mounds, pools and hollows will continue their evidence of palaeogeographic landscapes provided they are not destroyed by the threatened opencast mining.

All Saints church may be on a man-made mound. Look at it from all angles, preferably ignoring for this purpose the much later railway cutting. It is possible to infer that the mound pre-dates the present 1790 church and also the older church that was built just in front of it. Both Laurens Otter in Wellington, A Town with a Past and also the Victoria County History of Shropshire, Volume XI infer that there may have been some sort of ceremonial mound there in pre-Christian times, although there is no documentary evidence to support this.

Similarly it is interesting to look at roads and wonder why they aren’t straight. Neil Clarke has clearly been doing this with the Roman Watling Street and Telford’s Holyhead Road (not always the same road).

Documentation isn’t always correct; was our town really Walitone as it says in Domesday? An ‘Internet Encyclopaedia’ said once that Wellington was on the Welsh border. Telford Development Corporation said Telford was built on pit mounds (not a mistake, a deliberate falsehood). Shropshire Tourism said Wellington had a street market (it’s not been in the street for over a century). Wrekin Council’s maps marked our local Mosque with a cross (how crass is that?).

So when researching history, remember to take the landscape into consideration as well as the documentation. Wonder why the terrain isn’t flat. Writers (including me) make mistakes.

The Short Woods to the east beyond Steeraway Farm, 1964.
Aft[er the War, Britain was effectively bankrupt. An American loan, given under quite harsh conditions, was all that prevented an immediate financial collapse. The country had to maximise the export of manufactured goods and limit imports to build up the U.K.'s financial position. There was one big problem. The Cabinet Defence Committee in January 1946 put it very bluntly, 'We are one million men short of the minimum needed to revive our export trade. Our situation is a very gloomy one'.

400,000 German prisoners of war (PoWs) were still kept in the U.K. in 1946, working in agriculture, engineering and road building but the Government was under great pressure to send them home. Pressure came from the prisoners themselves who rightly claimed the war was long over and there was no legal justification to extend their period of imprisonment. The Trade Unions and some left wing M.P.s were also unhappy.

They felt PoWs were being used as cheap labour, their vulnerable status being exploited and civilian wage rates undermined. By the end of 1946, it was decided that Germans should be sent home. They left in ever increasing numbers.

The Government had to face the dilemma of how to plug this widening gap in the labour force. The scheme they thought up was called ‘European Voluntary Workers’ (EVW). 100,000 men and women were to be recruited from the continent to work in specific industries in the U.K.

The first groups arrived in 1947. They were to be accommodated in old military camps including those previously occupied by the PoWs. In our area, large EVW camps existed at Apley Park (on the site of today’s Blessed Robert Johnson school), Sherrifhales PoW camp and ‘O’ Camp Donnington. The main documentation centre for newly arrived workers was at Childs Ercall. A large PoW camp at Halfpenny Green accommodated over 1,000 men and women.

Margareta Reiss was born in the Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia). She was expelled in 1945 because she was ethnically German and, after the war, the Czechs wanted to reclaim this area for themselves.

With no money, a stateless refugee, she was sent through six displaced person’s (DP) camps before arriving in Bavaria, unemployed and with no future. It was then she saw an advertisement on the wall of the Unemployment Office: SUDETEN WOMEN WANTED FOR WORK IN ENGLAND. Although only 17 years old, she decided to apply; three months later she found herself at Courtauld’s factory in Wolverhampton. She was housed at Halfpenny Green European Voluntary Workers Camp (EVW), near the airport. She married a local man and lives in Dawley.

A similar exercise was mounted by our Government in the Baltic states. They organised a campaign to recruit single women to work in TB hospitals and in domestic service. The reception committee that met the boat got a shock. They expected poor depressed refugees. Instead, well dressed and well educated, beautiful blond women in expensive fur coats, came confidently down the gangplank to start their new lives here. Many did not stay single for long.

All EVWs had to agree to work in a specific occupation, chosen by the authorities, for a period of three years, after which they could do any job they wished and remain in the U.K. if they so desired. They had to be young, fit and single. If any of the women became pregnant, they were returned home.

Nikola Novkovic was a soldier in the Royal Yugoslav Army. He was forced to leave his country when Tito and the Communists took over. He spent two years in DP camps in Italy and Germany before being accepted on the EVW programme. He was told before he came he would be able to work in forestry in which he had some experience. Arriving at the West Ratting camp in Cambridge, all his group were told they were being sent to the coal mines. When they refused, all were lined up by the road and told lorries would come to take them back to the German DP camps. A four hour stand off occurred before the authorities allowed them back into the camp for a meal and eventual transfer to forestry work in the north of Scotland. Later he was sent to MoD Donnington, living in ‘O’ camp (now Barclay Lodge ).

Also based at ‘O’ Camp was Ciro Jakovljevic, a soldier from the Royal Yugoslav Army. He was taken prisoner by the Germans and after release in 1945 went through the German DP Camps before coming to England as an EVW. He worked in agriculture in Lincolnshire before his transfer to Donnington.

Emile Mondrey was from Romania. At the end of the war, he was captured by the Russians and
put in a PoW camp. He managed
to escape to Hungary but was
again imprisoned. Finally he
decided to escape to the west by
swimming across the river
Danube.

As an engineer and linguist, he
was welcomed on the EVW
scheme and was the first of many
to gain employment at Sankeys,
becoming a foreman and expert on
rolling machines. He lived in the
Apley EVW camp. He and his
Dutch wife Elizabeth moved later
to a black and white fronted house
on Weekin Road.

This became the unofficial
social centre for the Wellington
EVWs, always a friendly welcome
and the best coffee in town. Emile
was universally liked and his
death just a few years ago was
mourned by all who knew him.

Nobody now much remembers
the EVWs. There is a small plaque
in the Serbian Social Centre in
Donnington commemorating their
contribution to our economy
during those days of austerity.

A collection of headstones in St
Matthew’s Church carved in the
Serbian language testifies to their
presence here. In all 100,000
people came to the UK under this
scheme from a Europe split and
destroyed by war. Many were
stateless or very fearful to return
to the authoritarian regimes of the
east. A large proportion stayed
after their three years were up and
became UK citizens. Many never
got back to their homeland.

What were these European
Voluntary Workers really? Were
they simply economic migrants
here to do a job and then return
home or political refugees fleeing
from persecution or racial hatred,
wanting to settle as permanent
residents in England?

The government never really
came to terms with this dilemma,
which still lives with us in our
present immigration policies.
After the last war there was a very serious national housing shortage. A lot of property in urban areas had been bombed and the construction of new houses was given low priority against other vital war work. With the return of millions of servicemen and the arrival of over a million prisoners of war, displaced persons, European voluntary workers and Polish exiles, the pressure on the remaining housing stock was immense. Even those who had given five years’ active service in the forces were given no priority.

George Lewis volunteered for the Forces when war broke out. He thought it best to choose where to go rather than just get drafted. His choice was the Royal Army Medical Corps and as a male nurse he went all over the world, from the retreat from France in 1940 to the final surrender of the Japanese in 1945. He served in France, Egypt, South Africa, India and the Far East.

He came home in January 1946 and managed to find some rooms with Mrs Westbury on New Church Road but when his new wife, Olive, became pregnant with their first child Keith, they were asked to leave as the upstairs flat was not suitable for a family. They were about to become homeless.

George saw an article in the Express & Star (January 1949) about a family who had moved into the old prisoner of war camp at Cludley, just off the A5 near Wellington. He and his brother, Norman, put his double bed, which had been stored with his mother at Bennetts Bank, across two pedal cycles and set off to claim a hut as a squatter. Norman was already a squatter on the better quality Arleston Camp so he knew the ropes.

It had not been easy to get the bed as they had to save special coupons from the Government before they were allowed to buy any furniture. They all bore a utility mark.

When they got to Cludley, there was a guard on the gate so they slipped through a gap in the fence and found an empty hut. The doors had been removed and the side windows taken out to deter squatters but George soon made it habitable for his wife and baby son. It was to be their home for the next eighteen months. They had another son, Roy, and, although both the boys were born at Wrekin Hospital, their early years were spent on the camp.

There were about eight huts on the site. They had previously housed Italian and German prisoners of war, who worked on the land and at the Ercall Quarry.

Each hut had accommodated about 30 prisoners; now the Lewis family had one all to themselves. The huts had no gas, no electricity or running water but the advantage was that there was no rent to pay. One enterprising resident found out how to connect the camp to the mains but this ploy was soon discovered and the power was permanently turned off.

There were some outdoor taps for water, the toilets were just a bucket with a seat on the top. The huts were heated by a central coke burning stove but were always cold as the roof was made of corrugated iron which failed to insulate properly.

Despite all this, George soon divided the hut into a living room, a bedroom and a kitchen. He also got a chemical toilet installed. Where the door had been, he hung an old blanket to keep the wind out. They had an old tea urn in which they stored five gallons of paraffin for the two primus stoves used for cooking. The tea urn had a tap at the bottom making it easier to access the paraffin.

The rest of the furniture was not easy to get as they had run out of coupons. Like many, a sympathetic supplier managed to find some chairs, a table and a sideboard, ‘under the counter and at a price’!

It seems that the squatter camp was soon accepted by the authorities. The guards vanished. The public health inspector came round to check, the postman delivered the mail and Gough the coal merchant delivered coke for the stove. Just like everyone else, George went off to work each morning (at Corbett’s Agricultural Machinery) and returned to his hut each evening.

All the residents got on well and, despite the minimal security of a curtain for a door, there was no crime. His neighbours were the White family and the Turners.

HOMES FIT FOR HEROES?

Phil Fairclough

Olive Lewis during the War.
Also on the camp lived the Edgertons and the Conleys. One of George’s neighbours was only four years old. George says it was a very happy time with lots of freedom and remembers the great fun they all had building the annual bonfire. There may have been a certain stigma attached to living as a squatter but many decent people were forced to live in old military camps during this period of great housing shortage.

Some camps were highly organised, usually by ex-members of the Forces, with duty rosters, formal representatives to the local council and a recognised authority structure. Cluddley was not like this. It was small and very relaxed. An unsuccessful attempt was made to squat at Apley Castle Camp (on the site of the present Blessed Johnson College) but the military strengthened the guards as they wanted it to house European Voluntary Workers.

The squatters, however, managed to take over camps at Arleston, ‘L’ camp at Donnington, Mile End at Oswestry, and High Ercall.

It was only with a massive effort to bring in the new prefabs and council houses that the housing shortage was solved and George and his fellow squatters could move out into decent accommodation.

He still lives in the house he was allocated by Wellington Urban District Council in 1951.

I was dismayed when, at a public meeting to discuss repaving plans for Wellington town centre, a vote was taken to decide what constituted The Green. Some thought it All Saints parish churchyard; others, correctly, said it was the small triangular piece of land outside NatWest Bank.

The churchyard, despite being levelled and grassed over as part of Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation celebrations, is a graveyard. I still feel uncomfortable when secular events take place on its hallowed ground, but reconcile myself that, in Medieval times, churchyards were the centre of many social activities. Perhaps it’s a neo-Victorian upbringing that makes me feel so uncomfortable.

The fact is that The Green is the oldest identifiable historic plot of ground in the town. As such, it should be revered as being the only definite starting point we have when tracing developments in Wellington’s long past.

Our ancestors knew that. It was important for the site, although encroached on by peripheral buildings, to be preserved. What a shame, then, that our own Urban District Council decided, I believe during the 1950s, that it was a suitable place for ... a car park. How irreverent can you get?

Even more so, apparently. When designs were submitted for repaving plans a couple of years ago, disregard was taken one step further when someone decided The Green should be disposed of altogether by the restructuring of Church Street to create a wide sweep of the road into Queen Street.

No! This is what happens when no-one bothers to check the town’s heritage. There is no excuse for this; there are enough publications and knowledgeable people able to give advice, but lack of knowledge by (some of) the powers that be can result in drastic proposals being made and irreversible actions being taken.

Our ancient heritage has been progressively and, at times, insidiously chipped away over the years. What little remains needs to be preserved so that future generations can understand important stages in our town’s development.
Sofia’s Cafe, New Street

Popular Sofia’s Cafe is run by Harmoinder Singh and his family who came from the Punjab in India in 1950. They chose to settle here because of the opportunities for work as well as it being a pleasant place to live. In spite of prevailing economic conditions, they are sure there will always be a demand for a well-run cafe such as theirs in Wellington, especially as our Market brings many shoppers into the town.

Sofia’s, as some of us recall, was previously called Sidoli’s Cafe; the name changed when the Singh’s acquired the business in 2004, following the retirement of Ugo Bassini. Ugo’s grandfather, Tranquillo Sidoli, had migrated from Italy in the early 1900s to work at his sister’s shop in Princess Street, Shrewsbury.

Sometime between 1913 and 1916 he decided to acquire the Shakespeare Vaults, then a Temperance restaurant, complete with stabling at the rear. Tranquillo bought the property from Margaret Keay, whose family owned many buildings in the town. In time, it became justifiably renowned for its cream cakes and delicious ice cream (sold around the town from horse drawn and, later, motorised vans).

Tranquillo didn’t just provide drinks, meals and snacks; he was one of the first folk to show silent films in a Shrewsbury pub as well as in the cafe in Wellington at a time when trips to the cinema were not too common. He was the first to import Espresso machines into the U.K., in the 1920s.

The business was continued by Tranquillo’s descendants Frank and Angelina Bassini (1936), then Ugo, Remo and Angeline Bassini (1968) and finally Ugo and his wife Rosanna. Until the 1940s, when wartime restrictions came into force, opening hours were from 7 a.m. until midnight.

The property was, in 1840, a ‘spirit shop’ run by David Heans but the name Shakespearean Wine Vaults is first recorded in 1844 as a tavern run by William Keay. In all likelihood it was a gin palace, where bright gas lamps, sparkling brass fittings and light-bouncing mirrors attracted (mainly male) customers; this was at a time when Wellington’s streets were unlit, and miserable husbands sitting in dreary homes every night could be a dismal experience for the whole family. Sometimes known as Keay’s Vaults or The Shakespeare, the business appears to have had a typically high turnover of publicans. Trade directories show Thomas Jones (1851), Richard Hall (1856, who may also have been a house decorator), Richard Cotterill (1863), Thomas Birks (1868), Thomas Jones (1870); he may have been the first to provide food as well as alcohol as he’s described as a licensed victuallers), his widow Jane Jones (1891), Stanley Duckers (1899), John George Slaney Duckers (1900), Mrs A.E. Rae (1901) and J. Hussey (‘Old Shakespeare Restaurant’, 1913).

And now the business still offering refreshment in this old building is Sofia’s Cafe.

Why not support our local economy and a small, family run business by popping in for a drink or snack?

You may become a regular!
Do you remember the Grand Theatre, ‘The Cosiest Cinema in Town’, in Tan Bank? I was a frequent visitor to its much sought after darkened rear seats during the 1960s, although I can’t always recall the films I ostensibly went to see, if you get my drift.

Costas Vanezi is a director of Medlink Enterprises which owns the Venus Function Suite, Whispers wine bar and Pussycats Night Club, whose doors opened to the public in September 2005.

This joint enterprise, as well as being a dance venue for the younger generation, also caters for private functions and is a meeting place for groups of 30 to 600 folk. It is a great asset to Wellington.

Costas migrated from Larnaca, Cyprus, in 1971 and, after ten years in Birmingham, came to the Telford area because he anticipated business opportunities.

To begin with, Medlink Enterprises acquired The Silver Fish chip shop, also in Tan Bank, and bought the Grand Theatre site after the building had been destroyed by a devastating fire when it was used as a showroom for a furniture business.

In 1840, the extensive site was a ‘Rectorial Glebe’, where John Espley had a small crofter’s cottage fronting Tan Bank. By 1900, a large corrugated iron hut had appeared, home to the American Roller Skating Rink.

It became the Rink Picture Palace in 1911 and was renamed Wellington Hippodrome (1912), then Picturedrome (1913) and finally Grand Theatre (1914), which was rebuilt in 1936 and put an end to rainfall on the old tin roof drowning out the sound.

As well as showing films, the Grand also staged concert and theatrical performances, most notably by the highly acclaimed Wellington Orchestral & Operatic Society during the 1930s.

The Grand closed in 1975: its owner, Mr W.I. Wright, had died at a time when cinemas were losing their popularity. It was sold to the Granada chain and converted into a Bingo club, which later passed to Zetters Leisure Enterprises before it became the furniture store ... and burnt down.

Costas has revived the site’s reputation for providing a venue for valued public entertainment.
Forester is an occupational name, its bearers in this case having been hereditary wardens of the Wellington Haye, part of the Forest of Mount Gilbert which once covered the area around The Wrekin Hill.

A ‘haye’ was originally an enclosure for deer and its name is perpetuated in the local names of Haygate and Haybridge. The forestership of Wellington Haye was a royal appointment and the warden’s fee was a grant of a half virgate of land (about 30 acres) in the Haye.

The first recorded member of the Forester family was Hugh, in the late twelfth century. The forestership descended mostly from father to son and by the late fifteenth century was held by Edward Forester.

It was this Edward, described as ‘of Watling Street’, who probably built the first part of the Old Hall (below, as seen in 1961), the timber structure of two storeys that runs parallel with Watling Street, in about 1480. The family’s wealth and importance was greatly added to by Edward’s successors.

His grandson, John, a member of Henry VIII’s court, was, perhaps owing to poor health, granted the unusual privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence and, by the time of his death in 1591, had acquired by marriage property at Upton Magna and Arleston.

Around 1620, John’s grandson, Francis Forester, built a new wing onto the Old Hall - the Jacobean wing with its gabled end toward the roadway; and in 1623 acquired the manor of Little Wenlock from Sir John Hayward.

Francis’s son, also named Francis, was probably the last head of the family to live at the Old Hall, for his son, yet another Francis, moved to Dothill House (above, believed to be as it appeared in the early 1900s).

The Foresters acquired Dothill (together with the manor of Wellington) from the Steventon family. The Steventons, originally from Preston upon the Weald Moors, had come into possession of the Dothill estate in 1431 when William Steventon married Alice, daughter and heiress of Robert Horton of Dothill.

In the early seventeenth century, a descendant of this marriage, also named William, enlarged the late medieval house at Dothill, creating a five-bayed range together with formal gardens.

He was succeeded in 1647 by his grandson, Richard Steventon, whose widowed mother married Francis Forester (III). It was the child of this second marriage, William Forester, who inherited Dothill in 1659, following the death of his unmarried half-brother, Richard Steventon.

William Forester took a keen interest in politics. He was a supporter of the Glorious Revolution, being made a Knight of the Bath by a grateful William III in 1689, and he represented the Borough of Wenlock in Parliament for many years.

Sir William’s immediate successors increased the family’s wealth by marriage: his son, also named William, married Catherine, heiress of William Brooke of Clerkenwell, and his grandson, Brooke Forester, married Elizabeth, heiress of George Weld of Willey, in 1734.
Brooke left Dothill to live at Willey Old Hall, but returned to Dothill following the death of his father in 1758. In fact, Brooke was the last head of the Forester family to live at Dothill, and he died there in 1774.

Brooke Forester’s son, George, the famous hunting squire, was born at Willey Old Hall in 1738 and lived there all his life. He remained a bachelor and, on his death in 1811, Willey and all his other estates, including Watling Street, Dothill, Wellington and Little Wenlock, passed to his cousin, Cecil Forester. It was Cecil who had the grandly Neoclassical new hall built (1813-20) and who was created 1st Baron Forester of Willey in 1821.

What became of the two former Forester family residences in the Wellington area? Little is known of the Old Hall on Watling Street in the years following the death of Francis Forester (II) in 1665; but in the early nineteenth century it was leased to Joseph Cranage, who opened a school there in 1845. This continued to be run by his family until 1926, when Ralph Hickman purchased the freehold from Lord Forester. Alterations and additions more than doubled the size of the original house, and a preparatory school continued there until its recent removal to the Wrekin College site.

With his son George established at Willey, Brooke Forester spent his later years at Dothill House with his second wife and their daughter, Harriet. Presumably they continued to live there after his death in 1774, but eventually, as with the Old Hall, Dothill was occupied by tenants. Extensions and alterations to the property, begun by Brooke in the 1760s, continued during the nineteenth century.

Following the sale of the estate in 1918, most of Dothill was purchased first by Ernest Groom and then by H.F. Hodgson, who sold 197 acres to Wellington Urban District Council in 1956. Dothill House was demolished in about 1960, by then a sad reflection of its former glory.

**Photo Feature**

We would like to find out more about the subjects of these photos. If you can help, please get in touch ...

... and do you need help with identifying people, places and events in your own old town photos? We may be able to help.

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In this A.E. Bloomer photograph, John Bromley & Sons seem to be sinking another artesian well. But where? And when? Can you name the people?

Probably taken between 1900 and 1904 by Dyson & Wood, photographers at 2 New Church Road. Mr Dyson also appears to have been publican at the Red Lion Inn (possibly next door) at 82 High Street. The picture seems to show the cast of a drama or pageant ... but what is it, where did they perform, and who are they?
When the editor, Allan Frost, asked me to write an article about the history of Wellington Amateurs Football Club, I said to him, ‘No problem, how many words?’ He said ‘Around 850 will do nicely.’

That presents a problem for me. How do you cover 59 years of history in such a short amount of words? So, I must rely on my journalistic training and economy of words. Here goes ...

In 1949 the Old Wellingtonian, a publication for ex-students of Wellington Grammar School, records a request from a group of ex-students to form a football team to play in the Wellington & District Football League. The request was granted and the school football pitch made available.

So, in the season 1950-51, the Wellington Old Boys played their first game of football. You might ask why the Wellington Old Boys has anything to do with Wellington Amateurs – well, quite simply, the Old Boys started recruiting extra players from outside the ranks of the school and incurred the wrath of the headmaster, who immediately forbade them from using the school’s facilities. In an equally rueful response the ‘boys’ ditched the Wellington Old Boys from their club constitution and renamed themselves Wellington Amateurs!

Since the first game the club has played continuously for nearly 59 years! That is some record for an amateur club. Most clubs start up with a burst of enthusiasm and run out of steam after a few years or, in the case of some clubs, they continue for longer but the end result is usually the same – just a few club members keeping things going for as long as they can and eventually giving up the ghost.

Wellington Amateurs owes its success to people who devoted such a large part of their lives to promoting the beautiful game. The problem is that, on a wet February afternoon on a council facility, knee deep in mud or hardened by frost, the game just doesn’t seem quite so beautiful.

Nevertheless, despite all the impending disasters that undo other clubs and conspire to cause their downfall, the Ams have managed to keep going. They played most of their early football at the O.D. Murphy facilities in Orleton Lane, once they were asked to leave the Grammar School. From there they moved to Bowring Recreation Park and eventually to Grainger Road in Leegomery, when the County League insisted on ‘better’ facilities.

For the past five years the Ams have been at their new home at School Grove in Oakengates. At long last, after years of trying, they have managed to secure a long lease on a ground, and with the co-operation of the T&WC LEA, they are developing its facilities. This has also enabled the club to form a junior section: the aim is to have junior teams playing at every conceivable age group.

Wellington Amateurs has become a community club, and if you are not quite sure what that means, club members are embracing their new community in Oakengates and offering football to a larger mass of people, thereby encouraging more volunteers to get involved with the running of the club.

I suppose the biggest common factor in the 59 year history of Wellington Amateurs is myself. I played as a centre forward for the club from 1962 to 1974 and once I retired I became a committee member and have been with the club 47 years.

But there have been many people who have played for Wellington Amateurs over the years and many more who have served as committee members. Names like John Allford and Keith Merrington (now sadly both dead), Geoff Richards and Paul Taylor – all four have held important roles at the club and have been very much part of its success and longevity.

The club has had its successes on the field of play too. After playing football in the Wellington & District League for 31 years and winning several cups and league championships, the club were promoted to the Shropshire County League in 1981.

They immediately completed the ‘double’ in the First Division and were promoted to the Premier Division. They went on to win the Premier Division in 1983 and 1991 plus other local cups like the Commander Ethelstone Cup.
Three years ago the club was promoted to the West Midland Regional League and won the Second Division title at the first attempt. They went on to win First Division at the first time of asking, ensuring three promotions in three years. Now they have the task of tackling the West Mid Premier Division.

So, 59 years on and approaching another milestone in the club’s history, Wellington Amateurs is having one of the most successful periods in its history. Floodlights are on the horizon and the club hope to build their own social club.

Wellington Amateurs are a success story. They have achieved something that all other local clubs have failed to achieve. They have survived into their sixtieth year and they have built a club that is part of its community, both Wellington and Oakengates.

It would be easy to trail out a list of achievements in this article, and Wellington Amateurs have won their fair share of trophies, but what singles them out from all other clubs is that they have survived for so long when others have fallen by the wayside.

Wellington Amateurs have become a local institution – many ex-players look out for their results every Saturday, and Saturdays would not be the same without the Ams!

June 15th, 2009 saw the new bus station officially opened. Its arrival is a major step forward in creating a transport hub for Wellington, where crossover access between railway and bus services will be easier. There’s still more work to be done.

I was invited to the official ribbon-cutting affair. Quite a few words were spoken in praise of the project but it wasn’t until after the ceremony that a few folk sidled up to me and asked ‘What’s the site’s history?’ and ‘Can you think of a historic name for it?’

In a nutshell, about half of the overall area on its western side belonged, until the 1930s or so, to the Bull’s Head and Duke of Wellington hotels, both of which fronted New Street.

The Bull’s Head Yard was, until shortly after the arrival of rail services in 1849, used by Royal Mail coaches delivering and collecting mail as a changeover staging post for fresh horses. The narrow alley leading from New Street to the bus station led into the yard and is a throwback to the days when it was a private right of way which, until recent times, was blocked off for one day each year to preserve its status.

Between the Bull’s Head Yard and where the railway booking office is now was the town bowling green and a small pool. The pool was conduited and the green relocated to the new Charlton Arms inn around 1860.

However, the stable yard behind the Duke of Wellington was extensive, to say the least. It was capable of accommodating over 150 horses, plus all the carriages which accompanied them (as well as the occasional circus elephant or two). It was also noted for its horse-and-carriage hire services, used by visitors to travel to The Wrekin Hill and historic sites like Lilleshall and Haughmond Abbeys and the Roman ruins at Uriconium.

The rest of the bus station land has had a variety of uses: John Barber’s first Smithfield (1855 to 1868) encroached on the plot. There was also an orchard and several gardens, but nothing as important as the stable yards ...

View of the new bus station looking west and (right) an 1879 plan of the Duke of Wellington Inn stable yard. The eastern edge of the yard roughly followed the line of the zebra crossing in the centre of the photograph and extended almost as far as the wall above the railway station where a narrow lane separated the two and gave public access to steps leading down to the railway booking office.
Colour, that wonderful gift of nature! It attracts our eye wherever we see it: on our high streets, in shop windows ... everywhere. But do we look beyond the bright impression of that colour to the image it portrays?

Coloured glass is all around us – in the windows of some domestic homes, in our civic buildings and in our churches and cathedrals. We have all at one time or another seen coloured windows – did we really look at them or did we just ‘get an impression’? The church of St. Catherine’s at Eyton upon the Weald Moors is an example of a small building but it displays a wide variety of coloured glass; well worthy of comment.

Just walk inside and facing you is a gloriously colourful window, described in the words of the time as ‘fine window in the chancel of Eyton Church’. This was placed here about 1850, and is the work of David Evans of Shrewsbury. One cannot see it without seeing the story of St. Catherine, holding the martyr’s palm in one hand and a sword in the other, standing in front of her broken wheel, on which she was martyred; the origin of the Catherine Wheel firework.

In the central window of the North Wall there are some ‘bits’ of glass – perhaps not so coloured but should not be overlooked. These are early glass fragments from the church which stood on this site before the present one. It is difficult to date these but it is generally accepted that they date from before 1500. They show St. Christopher, St. Catherine, a mill wheel (guess the connection) and the motto of the Eyton Family.

Coloured glass, in the six windows, three on each side of the church, are losing their power to attract by their colour. They are worn. It has been assumed that these were ‘painted’ by French refugees or prisoners at the time of Napoleonic Wars, indeed there is correspondence which gives substance to the story.

But is this really possible? ‘Windows painted by a French artist staying at Eyton as a refugee’ and again ‘The beautiful centres of the windows ... were painted by a fugitive from abroad political, who stayed at Eyton.’

The centre of these windows deserves close examination. The centre medallions record the arms of a male Eyton and his spouse; the union of an Eyton male with a wife of another landed family. Each of these arms is surrounded by a common design of figures and scrolls. Or rather, five of these are but the sixth is surrounded by ‘bits and pieces’ of that design.

This would suggest that they were not church windows painted ‘in situ’ – they have been moved from somewhere else! More significantly, looking at the surrounds, they are not the sort of images one expects in a church: they show ‘Bacchic orgies’!

Very recent research has suggested that they are of style, techniques and colours common between 1570 and 1630. From an ‘expert’: ‘Having made something of a study of armorial glass, I am reasonably confident … is typical of a kind of oval armorial panel in enamelled and silver-stained glass made roughly between 1570 and 1630’.

But the church was only built in 1743! Where were they before?
The answer is most probably in the old Manor House of the Eyton Family, assumed to have stood next to the church.

The proportions of the medallions are distorted, taller than one might expect, probably to fit narrower openings than the ones they are in today. Similar designed coloured glass armorial marriage links were installed in the new Eyton Hall of 1830, possibly a repetition of what had been in the earlier Hall; indulging in the display of their pedigree.

Who would have thought that, in the colourful windows of a small rural church, ignored by many, there would be such a slice of history in its most obvious features.

Coloured glass of three distinct periods spanning the centuries – small portions from the fifteenth century; large armorial centred windows, six of them from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that huge East Window of the nineteenth century.

* * *

Geoff Harrison’s new book, A Family – A Manor – A Church is now available. It reveals the fascinating history of Eyton upon the Weald Moors and the impact of the Eyton family.

If you’d like a copy, please send a cheque for £7.99 made payable to Geoff Harrison at 46 Station Road, Admaston, Telford, Shropshire, TF5 0AW, telephone 01952 247946. The price includes free postage to U.K. addresses.

**John Thomas Carrane**

John Thomas Carrane was just one of a number of solicitors who found our town a good place in which to run a business during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

In the Civic Society book Latest Memories of Old Wellington, the late Audrey Smith (formerly Wheatley) says, ‘He was a short, tubby little man and had a habit of playing about with his gold chain, which he seemed very proud of.’

John was born in or near New Street (possibly Chapel Lane) in 1851. His father John was a dealer in old clothes, while his mother Ann was described as a hawker.

Despite such lowly beginnings, John appears to have become articled to one of Wellington’s solicitors and branched out upon qualifying around 1880, with an office in St. John Street. As his business developed, he moved into better properties in Mill Bank (1881) and Walker Street (1885), and occupied rooms (where he also lived) at Tyrone House in Church Street in 1888. (It was at number 24, which was later renumbered 45 Church Street.)

Because the number of his clients had grown, John formed a brief partnership with a Mr H.G.U. Elliott around 1905; it only lasted a few years, and John was again working on his own by 1913.

However, he took a Mr Shawcross on as a partner shortly afterwards; unfortunately, Shawcross died in 1916, leaving John on his own again. According to family sources, he retired but recommenced the business in order to see Henry Hugh Lanyon through his five years of articles.

Apparently, Henry was born in 1899 and his father married widow Shawcross a few months after Mr Shawcross died, so John would have known who Henry was and offered him a job. Henry, a Royal Engineer during the Great War, had had to leave the army because of poor eyesight.

The partnership which ensued, Carrane & Lanyon, traded under that name until about 1938 (although John had died in 1926) and subsequently went through several merges and takeovers; the current name of the business that John founded is Lanyon Bowdler, whose offices are a few yards away from Tyrone House at 49 Church Street, which some folk may remember as being Dr. Pooler’s surgery during the 1950s.

John Thomas Carrane was a committed Roman Catholic who did much to support philanthropic activities both at St. Patrick’s church and school (then on Mill Bank).

After his coffin had spent the night before his funeral lying inside the church, his body was laid to rest in the town cemetery off Linden Avenue.
**Wellington History Group** hosted a well-attended History Day organised by Wrekin Local Studies Forum in the parish hall of All Saints church on 16th May.

In the morning, Sylvia Watts (above, right) gave a talk on Wellington Before 1700 and Lance Smith (left) spoke about The Wellington Poor Law Union. After lunch, George Evans and Allan Frost took groups around the town, pointing out various features and explaining aspects of the town’s history before returning to the hall for three short presentations on the lives and contributions to society of Hesba Stretton, William Withering and John Barber before the audience voted which of these was Wellington’s Most Notable Person. (Withering won).

As a little extra to mark the end of our January to June 2009 indoor public talks, George Evans and Allan Frost each led two guided historic walks-and-talks around Wellington, giving their intrepid followers a chance to discover a little more about our town’s past by looking at things in context. Thanks to everyone who gave us donations.

**October 2009 Talks  
... and Wellingtonia Issue Five**

We shall be giving two talks as part of the Wellington Annual Literary Festival. According to current plans, both talks will take place in the Hayward Arts Centre at New College, King Street, Wellington, and start at 7:00 p.m. Admission is free.

On **Tuesday 27th October**, **Allan Frost** will talk about and launch his new book **The Great War in Wellington** (at £5.99 per copy) and also release the FREE Special Victorian Bonus Edition of **Wellingtonia** (issue Five) which, depending on us being able to obtain further funding, may be the last magazine we are able to produce.

The magazine will also be available following the second talk on **Wednesday 28th October** when **Phil Fairclough** will speak about **Post World War II Foreign Settlers**.

Issue Five of **Wellingtonia** will be available in our usual library, shop and newsagent outlets from Thursday 29th October, 2009.

Make sure you get your copy to find out more about Wellington and our programme of talks for the season January to June 2010. By the time issue Five is published, we should be able to say whether you can expect to see more issues of **Wellingtonia** during 2010.

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