EDITORIAL

When Allan Frost took the chairmanship of Wellington History Group in November 2007, he promised to spend a year setting up the Group and obtaining a grant to print this magazine. A year later, he promised to spend another year establishing the Group and the magazine. Finally, he spent yet another year consolidating the Group’s activities.

All this, of course, couldn’t have been achieved without invaluable support from our small band of enthusiastic Committee members ... and you, the people who have encouraged us by giving information, seeking our help with your own research, attended our public lectures, supplied articles for our magazines and, crucially, made donations to our funds.

The time has now come for Allan to step down as chairman. His involvement over the last three years has taken an enormous amount of time and effort and he needs to concentrate on writing more of his popular books.

He will, it goes without saying, continue to support us and our aims in a variety of ways but it is now time for someone else to take the reins and steer the Group into the future.

We are sure you will join us in thanking Allan for helping Wellington History Group to achieve so much in such a short amount of time.

Fortunately, well known local historian and speaker Neil Clarke has very kindly agreed to be our chairman for the next twelve months. He has been a member of our Committee since 2008 and introduces himself on page 3.

One thing is certain: no one can ever know everything about the history of our area ... but we can have a lot of fun finding things out. It’s a never-ending quest and this latest issue of Wellingtonia is just another step along the way.

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DON’T FORGET TO VISIT OUR WEB SITE. THE ADDRESS IS AT THE FOOT OF THIS PAGE
When I was a boy history was very boring. It was simply a list of battles and kings and queens. Forgetting any battle, king or date was an offence often resulting in a caning. We learned, ‘William, William, Henry, Stephen, Henry, Richard, John’; enough to keep us out of trouble for a while. The Battle of Bannockburn was fought on 24th June, 1314 but I only remember because I learned it on my birthday, 24th June, while changing age from 13 to 14 and I still don’t know who won. Nor did I ever care.

The next fashion came. Children were expected to have interesting opinions about many aspects of history without any idea what had happened. Their casual thoughts were considered far more important than any hard facts – at least by a few trendy teachers. That was a silly time and only happened in a few schools, though the media fulminated mightily about it. That’s what sells newspapers. Those of us who thought we knew better carried on doing what we thought right.

Then there were the ‘topics’ and ‘projects’, which sensible teachers juggled around until the syllabus had some relevance to real life, and in particular to the lives of those in the class. All attempts to make history sensible were attacked by ‘experts’ with entrenched ideas and often little experience of teaching. Some of us taught for forty years without ever being trendy. ‘Educational Experts’ are often suspected of being failed teachers.

Now, according to my great grandchildren, history at their schools is interesting to them. They don’t learn lists by rote and the way Romans really lived here is more important than who the emperor was. They are fascinated by different ways of life and changing priorities and find history is interesting, not boring or confusing. Hurrah for their teachers! They may never become historians but at least they are learning to understand their environment in terms of time and evolution as well as in space through geography.

Local history is so much more real than the old textbooks because we live with the results of previous happenings. It’s not just Blists Hill, Sunnycroft and Wroxeter; it’s Watling Street/Holyhead Road, The Wrekin and Market Square, not to mention recent changes to places all around us, even brash new Telford.

Local history is the real thing; it’s what we all understand and are interested in. Come to think of it, all history of any kind is local somewhere. Our old Wellington is packed tight with history. That’s why Wellington History Group works so hard to discover and publicise it.

It used to be true that the only thing we learn from history is that mankind learns nothing from it. That’s true of the old-fashioned stuff but there’s now hope. History has an exciting future if it sticks to real subjects we understand, like our own environment. Then we may not keep repeating the old mistakes over again. History may have a bright future.

Details of our monthly free-to-attend public talks from January to June 2011 are given on the back page of this magazine.

In addition to Neil Clarke, Geoff Harrison and Allan Frost, we are pleased to introduce two new speakers.

Wellington Town Councillor Pat Fairclough (who has been heavily involved in the town’s highly successful Annual Literary Festival) will be talking about Wellingtons Around The World, from New Zealand and America to... well, you’ll have to come and find out. Will she have a Wellington for each leg of her journey?

Wendy Palin (our treasurer) will shed light on tracing her Turner ancestors in Wellington. This dashing young fellow was one; do you recognise him?
Neil grew up in Madeley, was educated at Coalbrookdale High School and graduated in Modern History at the University of London (King’s College). Following teaching posts in the Midlands and the South East, he became headteacher at Lakelands School, Ellesmere in 1987. When he retired from the education service, he worked part-time in the county museum service at Acton Scott and Ludlow.

With a life-long interest in the history of this area, Neil has over the years served on the committee of a number of local history groups. His particular interest is the industrial and transport history of the East Shropshire Coalfield, on which he has lectured and written articles over a number of years.

When he returned to Shropshire, Neil and his family lived in Wellington for seven years before moving to Little Wenlock.

Neil sees his year as chairman of the Wellington History Group as one of working with other members of the committee to build on the sterling work of his predecessor in creating a confident future for the group.

Wellington has had a fire brigade of one sort or another for the best part of 200 years.

Although we can’t be sure of its type or effectiveness, we do know an ‘engine’ was kept in the same building as the town lockup in 1840 when the Tithe map was created (above).

According to a brown plaque the Fire Station was relocated in 1883 and the fire engine kept in a building in Walker Street until it became the town’s Urban District Council office. In fact, the belfry where the bell to sound the alarm is seen in the 1930s photo, top right. The sides of the belfrey have since been filled in. For a while in the 1890s, the engine was stored in the yard behind Edgbaston House on the opposite side of the street.

The Fire Station subsequently moved to Foundry Lane (seen right in the early 1950s to the left of a young Alwin Bethel whose grandfather was once fire chief). The fire station moved to its present location in Haybridge Road in 1955.

Talking of bells, the story of these bells is told on page 6.

www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com

Photo: Andrew Gordon.
Did you know that there is a reference to an Eyton in a church in France? One Fulk or Fulco Eyton. This was the subject of a conversation with somebody who had just returned from a holiday in Normandy, and had ‘found’ a connection. Fulk, Fulco or Foulkes Eyton was a member of a local family and his actions during the 1400s are documented in English and French history.

Long, long ago the Kings of England claimed land in France, claims which inevitably led to war – remember Agincourt ‘This story shall the good man teach his son; From this day to the ending of the world, But we few, we happy few, we band of brothers.’ – so Shakespeare’s Henry V speaks before the battle.

The Battle of Agincourt (1415) was in the middle of the Hundred Years War. It was not a continuous war, there were long periods of truce and some memorable incidents; the battles Crecy, Agincourt, siege of Harfleur and Joan of Arc, Maid of Orleans but in the end the English armies, including Fulk Eyton, returned home with ‘their tails between their legs’.

Fulk Eyton was too young to have been at Agincourt. But he served under prominent English leaders, including Talbot and Arundel, with whom he had family ties and allegiances in the first half of the fifteenth century. Arundel died of wounds in 1435, and it is likely that Fulk Eyton was in his service at that time, a year later he was serving under Talbot and gained ‘fame’, or ‘notoriety’.

Fulk had some measure of independent command at the attack on Lillebonne. He devised an underhand, sneaky and risky, strategy to capture the castle. He persuaded a French prisoner who was unable to pay his ransom to go back into the castle, acting as nothing had happened. This ‘traitor’ continued to take part in nightly raids against the English, taking back with him ‘prisoners’. In this way Fulk built up a body of English men inside the garrison and then finally the ‘traitor’ took back a large party of English ‘prisoners’ who threw off their pretence, seized the gatehouse and with those inside took control of the castle. The castle at Lillebonne controlled the passage along the River Seine. For this success Fulk was rewarded with a monetary gift (equivalent to £204,759). This needless to say was raised from the unfortunate inhabitants.

However it seems paradoxical that this violent leader could be generous. He caused a window to be installed in the local church; described as one of the most precious windows in the building. The guide book to the church tells (in translation) ‘that Foulques Eyton, the English captain in command of the town of Caudebec from 1435 to 1447 was able to make a gift of a stained glass window above the porch on the north side’. This window is difficult to see, in that the porch extends inside the church and obscures the window over it.

The window is made of four panels; St George, St Catherine, St Michael and the Holy Virgin. These are rich colourful glass and in two places he has his ‘arms’ represented, under the images of St George and the Holy Virgin. In both cases the family motto is also evident ‘je m’y oblige’. This same family motto is represented in the very old glass at St Catherine’s Church.

In St Catherine’s church at Eyton upon the Weald Moors we are rather overpowered by the 1851 colourful east window.
showing St Catherine. Although we cannot see the Caudebec photograph very clearly, in colour and imagery it is very similar; ‘she (St Catherine) carries the martyr’s palm, and her left hand rests on the instruments of her suffering; the wheel and the sword’.

In 1446 Fulk Eyton was charged by the Henry VI, ‘to put and keep in order and good government a great number of men-at-arms and archers who, on the pretext that they do not have wages or pay, are living off our good and loyal subject in our duchy of Normandy, without regulation, committing great and detestable evils …’; clearly bands of marauding soldiers plundering, pillaging and raping.

This would perhaps be a case of the ‘poacher turned gamekeeper’ considering the description of Fulk provided by Thomas Basin. He succeeded, as a bonus on top of his pay and expenses he was awarded the equivalent of £5833.

The war had been suspended by a truce and as a result the English King was to give back to the French the possession of Maine. In 1447, Fulk, by now in the King’s eyes clearly man of action was charged together with Matthew Gough to take charge of all of the King’s land in the area of Maine and deliver them to the French King. Never an easy task to be the go-between when conquered land has to be given up, when the conquerors have established themselves and their families on the land, what possible compensations can be negotiated? Fulk and Gough, neither diplomats, seem to have succeeded.

It was their experience in dealing with potentially dangerous bands of armed, disillusioned and disaffected soldiers which fitted them for their role. It would seem that they procrastinated, used delaying tactics; the French king Charles VII, father-in-law to the English Henry VI, accusing them of ‘subterfuges, pretences and dissimulations’.

Finally Gough and Eyton reluctantly completed their commission and Le Mans was handed over to the French.

In the following years the French began to recover their lost possessions and we hear of Fulk Eyton being in Caen when it surrendered in 1450; he was allowed to leave with all his movable goods, including personal weapons, but had to take ship to England, not to return.

This appears to be the end of Fulk Eyton as a soldier; one would expect him to disappear from the records. Not so.

He has another ‘claim to fame’ – his is the first Shropshire Will written in English to survive; and the terms of that Will are indeed illuminating.

Fulk Eyton died 1454, and his Will doesn’t just distribute his goods, there is a great deal of instruction as to the ‘dirges and masses’ which were to be said for his soul. ‘I will that my bodie be laide within the ground in Tonge, by my godfadre, Sir Fowke de Pembrugge (he had died 1409) … That there be taken my best goods for to say five thousand placeboes and diriges, and five thousand Masses and for every dirige and Masses fourpence’.

Perhaps some penitence for his time in France; he also makes a bequest to the almshouses at Tong College, in return the almsmen are to say De profundis at his grave. Tong College hadn’t long been established by Lady Isabel de Pembrugge, wife of Sir Fowke Pembregge and consisted of five priests and two clerks, caring for thirteen paupers.

Later in the Will Fulk identifies his brother Sir Richard Eyton, priest, as the Warden of the College of Tong, also another brother Nicholas Lord of Eyton upon the WealdMoor, and Sherriff of Shrewsbury.

Fulk makes provision for ‘John de Labowley 40s and to my page Hermon 20s (£525) for thei both came with me out of Normandy’ – it is understood that these were French exiles and came to England when the English were driven out of Caen.

The Will creates a final puzzle about Fulk Eyton. The Earl of Arundel was captured in 1435, wounded and carried to Beauvais where his leg was amputated to save his life, it was unsuccessful; he died 12 June.

Contemporary accounts suggest he was buried at Beauvais, but in this Will it transpires that the bones of Arundel had come into the possession of Fulk Eyton.

Executors of the Will were ordered to ensure that these bones were buried in the family chapel at Arundel, as the earl had wished.

A condition was placed on this that the current Earl of Arundel settle the debt owed to Eyton ‘for the bones of my lord John … that I brought out of France; for the which carriage of bones, and out of the Frenchmen’s hands deliverance, he oweth me 1400 marks’ – about £500,000.

Even after death, he wanted his money, the Earl was laid to rest at Arundel. His tomb was opened more recently and the skeleton found intact, except for the amputated leg!

When, and by what means, Fulk Eyton acquired the bones of the Earl is an intriguing mystery – never satisfactorily explained by historical research.

* * *
The short answer is ‘yes’. And ‘No.’ The ‘No’ ones are connected, but not in the same way as the ‘Yes’ ones. I’ll get the ‘No’ ones out of the way first because they’re easier to explain.

The Bell
Bell Street, formerly Pump Street and partly the location of the town’s pig or ‘swine’ market until the late nineteenth century, takes its name from a pub called The Bell which stood in New Street opposite the entrance to Bell Street and seems to have occupied the plot now trading as Cafe Mariya. Bell Street itself doesn’t seem to have been given its named until around 1868.

The Bell Inn existed before 1828 when it was mentioned in an early town directory, and last appeared in 1871 when Charles Milner was publican. Even as late as the 1840s it also acted as a currier’s shop. Carrying on a separate trade in addition to operating a public house was a common practice. Sadly, we don’t know why it was called The Bell.

Before I mention the bells of All Saints, let’s take a look at the manufacture of bells here.

Bell Making
The last bellhanger working here appears to be William Smith who also traded as a locksmith in New Street in 1861. Quite where he obtained bells to hang isn’t known as the manufacture of bells ceased in Wellington around 1699.

A bell foundry was opened in the late sixteenth century, traded for more than 100 years and supplied bells to over 70 churches in Shropshire and beyond. We know this because bells usually bear an inscription detailing at least the manufacturer’s name or initials, and the year of casting.

However, the foundry doesn’t seem to have supplied bells to All Saints, nor do we know where the foundry lay. Foundry Road is an obvious choice, but whether that road was named after a later brass and/or iron foundry or the bell foundry isn’t known. There is no proof to support speculation that the site of the Charlton Arms hotel may have been a bell foundry.

What we do know is that John Clyberie was our first bell founder. Judging from his surname, it’s probable he came from or near Cleobury Mortimer in South Shropshire.

The first bell he cast is dated 1590. John was succeeded by William Clibury (the spelling of surnames then, as now, can be inconsistent) whose bells are dated from 1605 to 1642. He was followed by Thomas Clibury (first bell dated 1621) who died in 1637, to be followed by another Thomas Clibury whose bells are dated from 1650 until his death in 1673. Henry Clibury was born in 1645 and his bells are dated from 1673 to 1683.

The final owner of the foundry is known as ‘I.B.’, presumably his initials, which are found on the final bells produced at our foundry between 1685 and 1699.

Interestingly, no bells were cast here between 1642 and 1650; it looks as though the English Civil War may have interrupted production.

The Six Bells
The parish church currently has eight bells hanging in its chamber, but this wasn’t always the case.

The former medieval church on the site was demolished in 1789. At that time, it had six bells, a fact which is borne out by the existence of the Six Bells public house which appears to have been well established long before an 1828 directory was printed, and is last mentioned in 1844 when William Thompson was publican.

The property stood adjacent to the railway bridge (now marking the boundary between Market Square and Church Street) on the right hand side of today’s W.H. Smith’s store front. The early 1960s scene below may be one of the last photographs of this ramshackle building, then attached to Richards’ tobacconists and selling Ardath (famous for its series of cigarette cards) and Senior Service cigarettes, according to the advertising signs.

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The Bells of All Saints

That All Saints had bells calling folk to worship long before our bell foundry came into being can’t be disputed. Not because we know how many there were or who cast them and when, but because commissioners were sent to every parish in 1553 to confiscate all bells, ‘treasure’ (church plate) and vestments deemed unnecessary for public worship. Why? Partly because, following on from the dissolution of the monasteries, some items of value had escaped King Henry VIII’s coffers.

The inventory for Wellington, dated 4th May 1553, shows that three bells and two chalices were allowed to remain. It is signed by, among others, Humphrey Lightfoot (vicar), and churchwardens William Steventon of Dothill and William Dodd. Justices of the Peace followed the commissioners around, confirming and certifying the number of bells, chalices, etc., that had been allowed to remain. Wellington’s certificate of 2nd June 1553 confirms ‘iii bellys of oone accorde, ii chalesys of silver with pattens’.

This does not mean that All Saints had more than three bells prior to 1553, only that it had that number from that year onwards. Until they were replaced in 1713 by the ubiquitous six bells from which the pub over the road took its name. Of those six, the tenor bell had to be recast in 1798 after they had all beenrehung in the present church, erected in 1790. Two additional bells were added in 1890, paid for by public subscription. Details of the eight bells are given in the chart below.

An interesting fact is that the firm employed to produce the recast 1798 bell (Thomas Mears of London) later became Mears and Stainbank and is now the Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd, whose origins began in 1570; it is reckoned to be the oldest company in the world.

The bells were retuned and rehung in an iron frame in 1929. For some years, the bells could also be rung by a carillon (whereby hammers hit the outside of each bell rather than by internal clangers) which, as it could operate quickly, enabled tunes to be rung. The carillon fell into disrepair and hasn’t been used since the 1970s.

For the last eight years or so, the bells have remained silent, except to celebrate weddings, as considerable maintenance work needed to be carried out. Owing to the fact that the bells hang in chambers on two levels about 50 feet above the ringing room and can only be accessed via a narrow vertical ladder passing through three floors, it is not a job to be rushed or tackled lightly. Thanks to a generous grant from Shropshire Historic Churches Trust, this essential work was recently completed and, since 26th September 2010, the uplifting sounds of bells again echo around the town.

Ringing the Changes

Having a wonderful set of bells is one thing. Being able to play them successfully is another. And bellringing, using ropes which dangle from the ceiling of the ringing room need to be pulled and released quickly before grabbing and pulling them again (without burning hands), is another. Bellringing isn’t the same as learning to ring handbells, where an errant sound can be hastily quashed. Bellringing is a completely different discipline.

Alan Fisher is the ‘Tower Captain’ whose job is to train the group of All Saints bellringers. Bell ringing isn’t just a case of taking it in turns to pull on a rope. Like any musical instrument, notes have to be played in different orders according to the melody or tune. As with hymns and other musical compositions, bellringing has its own numbering and naming system.

On 31st January 1981, for example, All Saints rang ‘5040 Grandsire Triple’s in memory of Arthur Pritchard, a bellringer there for 60 years and Shropshire Association Past Master; the peal lasted 2 hours 50 minutes. (A ‘triple’ is a type of tune using seven or eight bells rung in an agreed sequence of changes.)

Furthermore, there are numerous terms to be understood and even the types of tunes rung are given different names: peals, changes, courses, methods, triples, doubles ...

When you hear the bells ringing, listen carefully for note sequences and scales. The only exception is the doom-laden tenor bell tolling at funerals. It’s remarkable that we’re again able to hear the bells just as our ancestors did some 300 years ago.

Oh! I almost forgot. No one involved with bellringing uses the term ‘campanology’, which has been referred to as ‘A pretentious term for bellringing, universally loathed by ringers.’

So now you know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bell</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Diameter</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treble</td>
<td>E Flat</td>
<td>70cms</td>
<td>422Kg</td>
<td>Placed in the church by public subscription 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 2</td>
<td>D Natural</td>
<td>71cms</td>
<td>250Kg</td>
<td>Placed in the church by public subscription 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 3</td>
<td>C Natural</td>
<td>76cms</td>
<td>263Kg</td>
<td>Let us ring for peace and plenty. A.R. 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 4</td>
<td>B Flat</td>
<td>83cms</td>
<td>365Kg</td>
<td>Now peace and good neighbourhood A.R. 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 5</td>
<td>A Flat</td>
<td>88cms</td>
<td>360Kg</td>
<td>Abra. Rudhall of Gloucester Bell Founder 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 6</td>
<td>G Natural</td>
<td>93cms</td>
<td>452Kg</td>
<td>Sir William Forester Kt. And Benefactor A.R. 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 7</td>
<td>F Natural</td>
<td>103cms</td>
<td>591Kg</td>
<td>Prosperity to all our worthy Benefactors A.R. 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>E Flat</td>
<td>117cms</td>
<td>827Kg</td>
<td>May all whom I shall summon to the grave, the blessing of a well spent life receive. Rev John Rock – Vicar W. Emery, T. Riddings – Churchwardens 1798 Thomas Mears of London fecit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is very hard to imagine what it was like in the middle years of the seventeenth century when the Quakers first emerged. A military coup against parliament, civil war, the public execution of the king and the destruction of the church of England had shaken the foundations of English society.

In those days, religion and politics were inexorably interlinked and any group that preached equality and religious freedom would be seen as attacking the hierarchical and authoritarian structures of the established order in church and state.

The Quakers, along with other radical groups, led this challenge for change in both religion and society.

**Early Years**

Their radicalism often led to court appearances and it was one of their trial judges who first called them ‘Quakers’ as he thought they ‘quaked before God’. They generally called themselves ‘the Children of Light’ or just ‘Friends’, the modern title of ‘Religious Society of Friends’ came later.

They dispensed with all formal creeds and articles of faith. There were no priests or formal church service. They thought such ordained men were just ‘hirelings’ and no better (or worse) than any other member of the community.

Churches were dismissed as ‘steeple houses’ and meetings took place where ever convenient often outside or in private houses such as at Swarthmoor Hall (the home of Judge Fell and his wife Margaret) in Cumbria.

Worship was in total silence, entering ‘the depth of the living silence’, as the group waited in stillness for the inward light to reveal an understanding of the divine spirit. Occasionally a member might break the silence and ‘minister’ if they felt they had an important insight to share. Almost uniquely at this time, not only were women allowed to speak but in the spirit of equality even children were allowed a voice.

The equality of all was a fundamental belief, but just as radical was their insistence on complete honesty in their personal and public life, social witness and action to redress injustice, simplicity in dress and behaviour and a commitment to pacifism.

From this remote northern manor house in Cumbria, George Fox and Margaret Fell began the task of organising the various groups of sympathetic seekers into a national movement that in ten years had swept over the whole country and spread its message over the Atlantic to colonial America.

**Persecution**

They suffered considerable persecution, Fox was frequently imprisoned and James Nayler, a prominent Quaker was flogged, branded and pilloried. Whole congregations were put in prison where some died due to the unhealthy conditions, but none were executed for their beliefs.

The Test Act and the Corporation Act effectively excluded them from any public office and their refusal to swear oaths and take the sacraments of the Church of England stopped them from entry to the universities.

**Broseley**

Despite this persecution, Quaker beliefs spread rapidly.

It was in 1672, only twenty years after George Fox started his ministry, that the Quakers established themselves in our area. Elizabeth and Roger Andrew took a mercer’s shop in Broseley and held meetings there. A meeting house was built in the town in 1692 and the burial ground established in 1706.

Money was raised for an enclosing wall, the deed being witnessed by Abraham Darby of Bristol, the first time the family is mentioned in this area.

Subsequently, ten members of the Darby family were buried in the Broseley cemetery, including Abraham (1) who had been given a license for Quaker meetings at Dale House in Coalbrookdale in 1716. Meetings still take place in this house, once a month in the summer.

Times had changed from the early hectic radical years of the English Republic of the 1650s. Persecution and exclusion from professional life forced the Quakers into commerce,
manufacturing, banking and other business activities. A more cautious and introspective approach was adopted rather than the radical evangelisation of the 1652 converts. Many like the Reynolds family became very rich, and married into other rich Quaker families like the Darbys. To marry out would in effect mean leaving the Society. Nationally, important bankers were members including the founders of Barclay’s Bank and Lloyd’s Bank.

**Coalbrookdale**

The first meeting house in Coalbrookdale, near Tea Kettle Row, was built by Abraham Darby (2) in 1741. He was the first to be buried in the adjoining cemetery. In 1808 a new meeting house was built by Richard Reynolds on this site near Dale House (above). However, numbers dwindled to the point where, in 1954, the meeting house was sold and demolished.

**Wellington**

For a time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a meeting at Newdale, near Wellington, when the Coalbrookdale Company was active in the area, but it was closed in 1843. After that it was not until the late 1960s that scattered Quakers in East Shropshire resumed meetings for worship. When the group grew too large to meet in private houses, it met for a time in Prince’s Street school

Quakers were then offered accommodation in a portable building on a site now occupied by Marks and Spencer in Telford Shopping Centre. This was demolished and they finally moved to Meeting Point House (above) in Southwater Square where the Sunday Meeting now takes place in a room on the first floor and the Thursday meeting in the inter denominational chapel. Sunday meetings are also held at Dale House once a month from May to October. Usually 15-20 people out of a total membership of 42 members and attenders join the meeting.

**Survival**

How was it that of all the radical groups which sprang up in the times of the English Republic (Diggers, Fifth Monarchy Men, Ranters, Levellers), the Quakers are the only one which remains? It could be that it managed the difficult task of combining the individual religious and spiritual freedom of the local meeting with the need for central co ordination and support in London (Devonshire House 1666 to 1926, now Friends House, Euston Road).

The very effective structured pattern of meetings at local, area and national level was allied to a unique method of conducting the Society’s affairs through a process of communal discernment which sought to find the ‘sense of the meeting’ rather than mere consensus or majority vote. This pattern and way of conducting the Society’s affairs continues to this day.

In other churches, those in authority often feel they have to define belief and control interpretation, but in Quakerism, any who identify themselves with the Quaker belief that an ‘inner light’ or ‘that of God’ resides in each person and support the Society’s testimonies to peace, equality, justice, honesty, simplicity and social action can feel at home. But at its heart lies the silent Meeting for Worship. External administrative structures do not result in religious conformity. No wonder the authorities in the seventeenth century were terrified of this egalitarian freedom loving society!

During the eighteenth century, like many groups that had suffered exclusion, discrimination and persecution, the Quakers withdrew in on themselves. They managed to keep hold of the core beliefs set out in Fox’s Journal and reinforced by the insights gained in their meetings where issues were ‘held in the Light’ to discern their truth (these insights are now written up in Quaker Faith and Practice). However, the eighteenth century was a period of consolidation and contrasts with the fire and enthusiasm of the early Friends.

**How much of Fox’s radical zeal remains now?**

With increasing toleration, Quakers found their voice again in the great reformers of the nineteenth century (Elizabeth Fry and Joseph Rowntree) The concern for social reform still continues strongly to the present day.

A glance through the weekly magazine The Friend shows the scope of their present interests ... ... a campaign to increase the age for joining the Forces from 16 to 18yrs, articles on sustainability and economic justice, promotion of an exhibition about the horrors of Nagasaki/Hiroshima, prison reform, fate of our war veterans from Iraq and Afganistan, working for peace in Zimbabwe, priesthood of all believers, anti slavery in modern times and the need for integrity at work all feature prominently.

I am sure George Fox and James Nayler would have smiled their approval.

For information about Quakers, phone Barry Stimpson on 01952 586449.
The Quality Advertiser was a free (one penny when sold) monthly publication which began in 1960 and survived for several years. Based in Union Road behind the Wrekin Inn, it featured adverts for local business, household and personal items, with forays into horoscopes, wise sayings and poems supplied by Wellingtonians. These papers shed an interesting light on the town’s social and economic history, as may be judged by the few samples shown on these pages.

If you have any other issues, photographs or information about this illustrious publication, please get in touch.
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Sunday, December 4th 
TONY CURTIS 
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MICKEY ROONEY 
“FRANCIS IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE” 
Monday, Dec. 5th FOR THREE DAYS 
ROBERT WAGNER, NATALIE WOOD 
“ALL THE FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS” 
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FULL SUPPORTING PROGRAME 
Thursday Dec. 6th FOR THREE DAYS 
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AT Old Peoples’ Hut, Belmont
ON DECEMBER 10TH AT 2.30 P.M.

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www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com
Have you ever wondered why English Heritage sites aren’t littered with masonry fallen from ancient buildings? Most of what visitors to EH properties see has been tidied up and made safe. Sometimes, all that is left visible of an ancient monument is a pile of stones. So, where have all the loose bits gone? Surely they can have been buried or sold off as hardcore for roads?

No. More often than not, these seemingly uninspiring remnants of our cultural past have been collected, catalogued, cleaned and closeted away from the public eye, not just to preserve them but also prevent further damage which could occur if left in situ. Often, pieces can’t be returned or restored to their original locations because it’s physically impossible to do so, for example where a building, or parts of a building, no longer exist.

English Heritage has several ‘repositories’ scattered around the United Kingdom, each of which contains artefacts from a wide area. There is one at Atcham. Normally closed to the general public, a small party from our Committee were shown around one of several enormous (and very cold!) warehouses by Dr. Sara Lunt (below, centre).

High racking in the building is full of treasures. Monetarily, most are worth next to nothing, but culturally they form an invaluable collection.

From the small shreds of pottery to chunky Roman columns, to Medieval keys, spurs, floor tiles and everyday items which have yet to be identified ... it’s all here.

In addition to fascinating objects salvaged from Whitley Court, Kenilworth Castle and many other well-known sites, our corner of Shropshire hasn’t been overlooked. Haughmond Abbey (above, top) and Lilleshall Abbey (above), however, aren’t anywhere so well represented as Wroxeter Roman City.

The number of archaeological finds from Wroxeter is astounding, as is their range, and documentary records of excavations have to be stored in a special storage facility within the warehouse itself to minimise the possibility of normal atmospheric damage. However, some of the most impressive stonework comes from Much Wenlock Priory, some of which is shown opposite.

Now you know why sites can be very tidy. Why not visit them? Better still, show support by joining English Heritage!
Above: An ‘industrial size’ grain mill from Wroxeter, operated by handles fixed to the stone at both ends. Above right: Small finds are stored in numerous boxes.

Rest of this page shows parts of the late twelfth century lavabo from Much Wenlock Priory. A ‘lavabo’ was the name given to both the wash-house and the large construction within it which was where canons and other did their ablutions. A sketch of what the lavabo looked like is shown bottom right. The base still exists at the Priory, although one of the panels (bottom left) has been replaced with a replica and the original stored at Atcham. This particular panel shows Christ calling disciples Peter and Andrew on the Sea of Galilee, with James and John at the rear of the sculpture in a smaller boat. Another precious panel (right) depicts disciples Thomas and Andrew. Other surviving pieces originally formed the rim and side of the large central basin (below). Water was fed (probably by gravity) into the uppermost basin which, in turn, fed the large central basin underneath via small gargoyle-like piped mouthpieces. The same procedure enabled water to pour into the lowest trough via 16 smaller heads (right). Plugholes allowed drainage for cleaning and repairs, and the whole Wenlock limestone structure was polished to look like marble. It is still possible to see fossils in the stonework.
One of the half dozen or so train services that helped make Wellington an important railway centre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that between the town and Coalport. The ‘Coalport Dodger’, as it was affectionately known, not only carried people between the small stations along the line, but also brought passengers to Wellington to shop in the town and its market, or to catch connecting trains to more distant parts.

The 8-mile branch line to Coalport left the Wellington–Stafford line (operating since June 1849) at Hadley Junction and was opened for goods traffic in September 1860 and for passenger trains the following June. It had been conceived by the London & North Western Railway Co. as a replacement for the ailing Shropshire Canal and, like the canal, it served the coal, iron and clay-based industries along its route.

Over the years, many local works – including Blockley’s brickworks at New Hadley, the Lilleshall Co’s furnaces at Priorslee, Randlay brickworks, the Old Park Co’s mines and ironworks at Malinslee and Stirchley, the Madeley Wood Co’s brickworks at Blists Hill and Coalport China Works – were served by sidings off the Coalport branch.

But for the people who lived in the towns and villages along the line, it was the ‘Dodger’ that was more important to their daily lives.

When the line opened, there were three trains in each direction between Wellington and Coalport, Mondays to Saturdays. This gradually increased, peaking at six after the Second World War; but for the last year of operation there were only four trains in each direction, with one extra on Thursdays and two extra on Saturdays.

Although it is now almost 60 years since it last ran, there are many people who still have vivid memories of travelling on the ‘Dodger’. Amongst them are those who took the afternoon train to Coalport and walked down to Swinney to picnic and bathe in the river; those who caught the early morning train to Oakengates to get to the Walker Technical College on Hartshill; and a newly enlisted soldier who travelled to Wellington and changed to a Paddington train on his way to his London Barracks. For others, living alongside the line, the usually punctual ‘Dodger’ provided a reminder of the time of day.

The last ‘Dodger’ ran on Saturday, 31 May 1952, to be replaced by a bus service that had to follow a tortuous course to link the settlements along the route of the railway. A daily goods service (which was very sparsely used) and a few excursion trains continued to travel over the branch, but the line was finally closed to all traffic – between Coalport and Stirchley in 1960, and between Stirchley and Hadley Junction in 1964.

1964 also saw the end of passenger trains on the Wellington-Stafford line.
The Mount is currently the subject of a planning application. Its new owner recognises that it is a Grade II Listed Building and wishes to preserve as many original features as possible, remove the less sympathetic additions and convert the former gardens into small dwelling plots.

The former junior school and Highfield House, both in Wrekin Road, are also subject to planning applications which seem to have similar intentions to those of The Mount. Understandably, the Borough Council feels it makes sound business sense to dispose of substantial properties it no longer needs and reinvest the proceeds into the town’s new Civic Quarter buildings.

The Mount, or Mount House as it was known when built in the early nineteenth century, was home to Mrs Lettice Ridding (or Riding) during the 1830s. (At this time, this stretch of Wrekin Road was called Water Lane, as shown on the map, right.) During the 1840s and ‘50s, Elizabeth Taylor, described as a ‘fundholder’, lived here. By the 1880s, the house was known simply as ‘The Mount’.

Between 1900 and 1926, houses for rent were built on part of the grounds facing Wrekin Road; interestingly, it is the same concept being proposed by modern planners.

In 1926, the whole Mount estate was sold off together with the houses on the estate (see plan bottom left). By 1928, it had become a children’s home run by Shropshire County Council. (The original children’s home had been accommodated at the workhouse in 1914 and moved to Brooklyn House on Watling Street two years later. A second children’s home opened at The Vineyard in 1947.)

Latterly, The Mount has been used as a Children & Young People, Children & Families centre by Telford & Wrekin Council.

If you have any additional historical information to do with The Mount, or old photos of this building as well as of Wrekin Road Junior school and Highfields House, please contact Allan Frost.
For many years the town of Wellington was administered by its own Urban District Council, which took over from the Commissioners in 1894; the Civil Parish was divided between Wellington Urban and Wellington Rural District Councils. These were abolished in 1974 when the Wrekin District Council was formed. That too disappeared in 1998 when The Wrekin District was removed from Shropshire and became the county of The Wrekin. The appropriate law is an Order titled ‘the Shropshire (District of The Wrekin) (Structural Change) Order 1996’, which came into force on 1st April 1998.

The Urban area was roughly what we now think of as the town and the Rural Council dealt with the villages around, though Hadley and Ketley cannot be described as rural areas and were, for most of the time, heavily industrialised. The RDC also had Parish Councils which met separately, taking responsibility for some functions and making recommendations to the RDC on others.

The UDC had many responsibilities, including public housing, slum clearance, parks, allotment gardens, roads, parking, water supply, sewerage and sewage disposal, public lavatories, road safety, street cleaning and lighting, refuse collection and disposal, public health, swimming baths and trading standards.

Overall town planning was a County Council function, as was education, police and the Fire Brigade though the UDC made frequent recommendations about their own patch. In fact the UDC had many more duties than the present Telford and Wrekin Borough Council as some have been delegated to bodies like the Severn Trent Water Board, The UDC thought of itself as being responsible for pretty well everything that went on in the town and was often forward-looking, seeking ways of improving trade, housing, leisure and living standards. Councillors, however, kept a keen eye on expenditure.

There were 15 councillors; five being elected each year, all for the whole town until wards were introduced in the 1960s. Many were independent and those belonging to political parties promptly forgot their party allegiances after the election, concentrating on what they as individuals thought was best for the town and never meeting as a caucus. I was asked to ‘put up’ for the council in 1954 and very reluctantly did so after a promise that no-one would ever tell me how I must vote on any subject.

Election day came and I found, to my surprise, that it was quite exciting. To begin with I had not particularly bothered whether I was elected or not and looked forward to losing and getting on with life as before; as the day came nearer there was a little frisson of excitement. Is this common to councillors today? Eventually there was the count and I found myself, as in the two next elections, bottom of the five elected. As usual only around 30% voted.

We met in Walker Street and I found the others friendly and supportive, asking what...
committees I wanted to be on. They were a dedicated group of (mainly) independents with (mostly) Conservative leanings. There was no hint of party meetings; it was ‘every man for himself’. At my first Council meeting I established my credentials as one of the ‘awkward squad’ when the reservoir was reported 30 feet down and I asked how far it was up.

From there on there was a seemingly endless ritual of evening meetings and my little son learned to say, ‘Daddy ‘genda’ as the big envelopes clunked through the letterbox. The council took up most of my ‘free’ time for nine years. Why do it? I wondered. I wanted to influence the development of Wellington and perhaps, to a very small extent I did but not as much as I would have liked.

We had no party meetings. An annual pre-council informal meeting decided who should be on which committee and who should be chairman and vice-chairman of the council. This was agreed on the principle that each councillor should take his turn provided he has at least three years experience. Parties, gender and age were nothing to do with it.

There were some interesting characters on the council; brewers, undertakers, accountants, industrialists, civil servants, shopkeepers, wholesalers, and assorted retirees. The speed record for a full meeting, including the usual forty pages of committee reports was 12 minutes. Spending £250,000 on a sewage disposal plant took 2 minutes but deciding to buy the rent collector a new bike took half an hour. An argument about how to deal with the debts of a recently ‘retired’ clerk was defused by, ‘I thought we were supposed to be Christians’.

The most expensive items were council houses, of which we owned 2,000 by the end of my stint. It was a hugely expansive time, as Arleston, North Road, Hollies Road estates and so on were developed and private firms like Fletchers were building too. This was the post-war housing boom.

In 1961 I found myself elected Chairman and first citizen of my town. At my first council meeting Cllr. Ernie Griffiths challenged my ruling and I had to tell him to sit down and be quiet as he was ‘out of order’. With the chair came an ex officio appointment as magistrate and that was interesting. The first thing I was advised was to be quiet and learn. I learned that though some spoke the truth, nobody spoke the whole truth and some spoke anything but the truth; also that I was unsuited to the job.

We (Naomi my wife, Reuben Rushen the clerk and I) decided there should be a civic reception, which became a dinner. It’s satisfying that the Town Council revived it in 1988, after the fourteen years Wellington was without its own council. To make sure everyone wanted to come we made it difficult to get a ticket and charged a high price. Profits went to charities.

Recently there have been proposals to once more change the system, this time to a ‘unitary’ authority incorporating both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils.

Will that actually happen?
**December**

**ENTERPRISE AT WELLINGTON**

‘Wellington might have been a great railway centre and taken the position now occupied by Crewe’ was a comment made by the sages of the town. The passenger station as it appeared a hundred years ago is shown below.

True or not, there is no denying the enterprise of local tradesmen backed by the progressive local governing authority and the exceptional opportunities for Christmas shopping.

Shops had been extended and developed, with new industries coming to the town. The shops mentioned in the columns are tremendously varied – food, gifts, clothes, cycles, hardware, shoes, confectionery, jewellery, game, cards, saddlers and agricultural implements.

[To see the extent of detail relating to Christmas shopping and the types and presentation of goods in the town reported in the Wellington Journal at around this time, see Bygone Christmases by Allan Frost. The book reveals the history, customs and traditions of Christmas throughout the ages.]

**BELLES (NO WHISTLES, PLEASE)**

The short story, The Belle of the Wrekin by Chetwynd Hamilton, was published in the Wellington Journal.

**WELLINGTON POST OFFICE**

Although there was no increase in cards and letters, a greater number of parcels had to be delivered.

Postmen were on duty all day [Christmas Eve], and at the end of the day were treated to a substantial supper laid on by the Postmaster.

He praised the men for their hard work and a favourable report was being sent to Head Office.

**CHRISTMAS AT WELLINGTON WORKHOUSE**

The Christmas dinner of roast beef and plum pudding was served at Wellington Workhouse on Monday. The large dining hall was gaily decorated for the occasion by Mr. and Mrs. Frost, Mrs. Thomas and Mr. R. Langley, while the children’s hall had been tastefully decorated by Miss Frost and Miss Jevon.

Beer was served to the men and women, and coffee to others who preferred it. Speeches were delivered by the Guardians; and after the usual cheers had been given at the request of the master, tobacco, snuff, tea, sugar, oranges, sweets and toys were distributed at intervals. Christmas letters were presented to the inmates.

On Christmas Day, the Wellington Town Band attended, and played several selections.

[A year earlier, this comment appeared in the Wellington Journal in the report of the 1909 Workhouse Christmas dinner: ‘women were allowed such quantities of gin as would not make them too demonstrative in their appreciation of it’]

**WELLINGTON PARISH CHURCH**

Bright ceremonial, appropriate discourses beautiful music and hearty thanksgiving were dominant features of Sunday’s celebration of the great festival.

In accord with custom, the edifice has undergone tasteful adornment. Notwithstanding the seasonal limitations, and
abundance of decorative material had been forwarded, including choice contributions of bloom, and plant, and shrub, by means of which and beautifully-designed text and device, the august event was pleasingly symbolised, and hearts and minds attuned to the importance and grandeur of the occasion.

[Christmas Day worship took place at 7 a.m. (Holy Communion); 8 a.m.; ‘morning prayer’ later in the morning and an evening service followed by a carol service led by organist and choir master Malcolm Allison.]

Exceptionally, two General Elections were held in 1910. The indecisive results of the January election led to a deadlock between Conservatives and Liberals. The December rerun (wherein Australian-born Liberal Sir Charles Solomon Henry won the Wellington seat), which resulted in it being the last election where the Liberals won the highest number of seats in the House of Commons required Liberal Prime Minister Hubert Henry Asquith to form a coalition with the Irish Nationals. The crowd outside the Wrekin Hotel in Market Square await the results of one of these elections.

Hiatt’s Ladies’ College on King Street.

The 1910 date stone (above) from the town Baths will be incorporated into the Wellington’s new Civic Quarter.
DUE OUT EARLY 2011
IN AND AROUND TELFORD
100 YEARS AGO

by Allan Frost

If folk were able to travel back in time to visit towns and villages in and around the modern Telford conurbation, these are the scenes they’d see a hundred years ago.

Although photographs were then taken in black and white, age has made many adopt a sepia tint. However, most of the images in this astounding and intriguing collection, produced mainly between the 1890s and 1917, were made all the more attractive by studio artists hand painting them to produce colourful miniature works of art to delight postcard buyers of that period... and today’s readers. This really is a most unusual collection.

Watch local press for details of when this book will be released by Amberley Publishing. Only £14.99.

The Wellington Annual Literary Festival, which took place throughout October 2010, benefitted from more events with an historical theme than usual. Whereas many welcomed the appearance of Nell Gwyn (looking remarkably well for her age – she must be at least 360 years old) those with a less (shall we say) glamorous appearance also held their audience’s attention when speaking under the banner of Wellington History Group. Phil Fairclough (left) has become something of an authority on the privations and politics of Post-War Britain, whereas Cllr Kuldip Singh Sahota (right) gave a very personal account of how his family came to Britain from the Punjab, India, and their subsequent trials, tribulations and successes.

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