Unlucky for some, but hopefully not for us: issue 13 of our magazine is packed with historical information which we trust will interest and entertain, and inspire comments like, ‘Well, I never knew that!’

I think that’s what makes the subject so fascinating. When any of us, from professional to semi-professional to amateur to family historians (but not necessarily in any order of preference as we all have something to contribute) delve into areas of the past, we frequently uncover or rediscover aspects of the daily lives led by our ancestors which lead to a raised eyebrow or two.

History, whether political, economic or social, deals with The Past, but it’s a constantly living subject in which each of us can find something new and well worth recording in family albums, learned journals, books and, of course, magazines such as this.

Read on, and enjoy!

Above: 24th August 1912. There can’t be many employers whose loyal staff contribute not only for a Silver Wedding gift but also for a hand-inscribed Testimonial. Arthur Barber, younger son of firm’s founder, auctioneer and property developer John Barber, and the one most unlikely to steer the business into continued success, was a major contributor to Wellington’s prosperity from the 1890s until his death in 1929.

Left and right: The last occasion upon which a reigning queen of Great Britain and (Northern) Ireland celebrated a Diamond Jubilee was 22nd June 1897. Eager to continue tradition, this enormous bonfire was erected on The Wrekin Hill where it attracted, as such commemorative conflagrations inevitably do, a massive crowd.
Over the years, I’ve often been asked whether All Saints parish churchyard was once considerably larger than it is today, and if many mortal remains were disturbed when the cutting for the railway was created in the late 1840s.

The answer to both questions is ‘No’.

In fact, when the medieval church was built during the twelfth century, the burial ground surrounding it was considerably smaller, and expanded over the centuries as the population of the extensive parish expanded and the corresponding need for graves increased.

The full extent of the ‘burying ground’ is best seen in maps drawn up before 1849 (when the passenger railway opened in the centre of town) and, in my experience, the clearest is the hand coloured version of the 1830s map created by John Wood for the first Duke of Sutherland, an extract of which is shown above.

The Burying Ground is coloured pale blue and depicts tree-lined walkways, several paths and a dog’s hind leg boundary on the southern side incorporating the pre-eighteenth century ‘Old Vicarage’ which stood roughly above where the railway track now lies a few metres east of the Church Street railway bridge.

That a few mortal remains (some think as few as two persons) were disinterred and, according to local lore, reburied in a field affectionately nicknamed Boney Bank near Wrockwardine, is largely undisputed, and we can be fairly certain that the concept of a mass exodus of dead souls is nothing more than a myth.

Some confusion has arisen in the last few decades when the ‘Bury Yards’ or ‘Berry Yards’ have been brought into the equation.

Referring again to the above map, the yards were once sited in a rectangular plot straddling a small part of the hockey-stick-shaped lane running roughly west-east and cutting through the letter ‘S’ in ‘Lord Forester’.

A later reference to Bury Yards appears on an 1882 Ordnance Survey map (right) after which the remaining portion of this plot of ground was renamed Victoria Avenue around 1887 as part of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The origin of the name has been seen as confirmation that the church burying ground extended this far or, if it didn’t, then it must be a reference to where bear-bating took place.

Neither of these arguments is supported by any evidence and must be regarded as conjecture or wishful thinking. Bear-bating, for example, tended to be held in market places or in enclosed yards behind public houses, not away from the centre of towns.

The fact that a weighbridge existed in the Bury Yards brings to mind Mrs Gamp’s dust-heap in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit* and strongly suggests that Wellington’s Bury Yards were, for a while, simply the place where the town’s rubbish was deposited, scavenged and (like today) recycled.
NOTICES

ARLESTON MEMORIES AND HISTORY GROUP
Following on from the success of their Norah Wellings event, this group will be holding a PRINCE'S STREET SCHOOL DAY at the Watling Centre (behind the shops in Dawley Road) on Saturday, 27th October, from 11am until 4pm. Bring along photos and school reports, but most of all your memories – including those of places in the area around the school, like the Pop Works, Woodhall’s horses, Wellington Laundry, Victoria Colliery and Nagington’s Dairy.

Oh! Don’t forget to try a Mr. Buttrey’s Star Sum and win a prize for the first correct answer!

Allan Frost hopes to be here selling his popular books until about 1:00pm, and George Evans will hopefully be in attendance to share his memories of teaching at Prince’s Street School.

Call Dave Barnett on 01952 244922 or email him at dlbarnett@btinternet.com for further details of this and other events.

Make sure you come along, and bring your family and friends – show them what a good school was like!

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Our Public Talks To June 2013

Admission is free but donations are invited after each event. All talks take place in the Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre (check at Reception for exact room) and start promptly at 7:30pm.

14 November 2012. Martin Walker
CHARCOAL BURNING

9 January 2013. John Lenton
METHODISM IN THE WELLINGTON AREA

13 February. Neil Clarke
MIDLAND RED AROUND WELLINGTON

13 March. Claire Reeves
SUNNYCROFT: A BREWER, A WIDOW & THREE GENERATIONS OF A LOCAL FAMILY

10 April. Ken Ballantyne
WELLINGTON AND WWII

8 May. Geoff Harrison
WORSHIP ON THE WEALD

12 June. Allan Frost
TRAVEL BY STAGECOACH

Also watch local press for details of other events.

Farewell to Wellington Grammar School

Plans are afoot to arrange a memory-evoking event and a last-chance visit for ‘Old Boys’ to the buildings of the former Wellington Grammar School in Golf Links Lane. See www.tinyit.cc/WGS for details and contact Phil Bryant at grammarschoolevent@hotmail.co.uk to express an interest and obtain updates.

The next issue (14) of Wellingtonia is intended to be available from the day of the next Wellington Midsummer Fayre, which should take place on a Saturday in June 2013. For details of the Midsummer Fayre and all manner of information, visit www.wellingtonunderthewrekin.co.uk

Thank you for your support. We look forward to seeing you at Midsummer Fayre.

Wellington History Group

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President: George Evans.
Chairman: Geoff Harrison.
Treasurer: Wendy Palin.
Wellingtonia Editor: Allan Frost.

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For thousands of years men have raised memorials to their victories in war and to honour the heroic deeds of their war leaders. From Ancient Egypt to Greece and the Roman Empire, these memorials still remind us of these events. In more modern times, the tradition continued with the construction of the Wellington Arch in London, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

After the First World War, sentiment changed dramatically. It was not only victories and great war leaders that were remembered but, in their hundreds and thousands, all over our country, memorials were set up to remember the ordinary soldiers who had died in that terrible conflict. The general public had been traumatised by the vast loss of life.

Local committees sprang up of their own accord wanting to mark the great sacrifice their men had made. It was not imposed from above, the spirit was very democratic. The heroism of ordinary soldiers was to be remembered, not just the deeds of the great and powerful.

These memorials took several forms. Some followed the example of the Cenotaph ('empty tomb') in London. Some, like the one at Ironbridge, depict an ordinary soldier, at ease with his rifle. A few show soldiers waving as they went off to war and death. Others depict an archangel, often fully armoured, standing over the names of the dead (St. Michael in The Quarry, Shrewsbury).

There can be a strong Christian theme but in many this is totally lacking. The pre-Christian angel of Victory with laurel wreath is based on the ancient Greek statue of the Winged Victory of Samothrace (see photo at top of next column). However, it is rare to find any as obviously pagan as the Valhalla in Regensburg, a huge memorial hall modelled on the Parthenon in Athens.

The pain and sorrow of the tragic loss of life in the First World War was still very fresh in the 1920s. Survivors wanted to remember their loved ones the way they remembered them before their front line service, confident, vibrant and youthful, as they had been when they left to fight. Seldom is the terrible reality of death and suffering displayed as it was experienced on the battlefield.

Only now are raw images of this reality being openly displayed. One of the most moving is the depiction of a 17 year old soldier being shot for cowardice at the National War Memorial at Alrewas (see photo below) and the statue of a weeping mother with her dead soldier son in Berlin.

In Wellington there are six Memorials to the fallen of the Great War:

1. The Lych Gate at All Saints Parish church, as seen in this Unveiling Ceremony booklet.

2. The Cross outside St Patrick’s Church, with plaques.

3. The screen inside Christ Church with associated plaques. It is a
very large structure, forming the rood screen (above), also stretching back into the nave.

4. The Chapel of the original Old Hall School (now a private house), Holyhead Road. Brass plaques record names of the fallen and have been relocated to the chapel at Wrekin College:

5. Wrekin College Chapel:

6. St. Catherine’s Church, Eyton (aside).

There appears to be some doubt about plaques from the Methodist Church in New Street which may still be in store since the former building was demolished in 2003.

It is quite significant that, after a national debate, it was decided to list the names on the war memorial plaques in alphabetical order, not in order of military rank, a small victory for equality.

The plaques of memorial for the Great War at All Saints were unveiled on 6th May 1922 when the Lych Gate was presented to the Urban District Council. Major General Sir Charles Townsend KCB, DSO, MP unveiled the tablets etched with the names of the dead.

General Townsend was elected as MP for the Wrekin in 1919 as an Independent Conservative. During the war, he had led an Indian Army Division to capture Baghdad from the Turks, but failed in this objective. He was captured and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner, comfortably housed by the Sultan in a villa near Istanbul. His Indian troops did not fare so well.

Shortly after the 1922 unveiling ceremony, Sarah Barker wrote the above poem which was published in the Wellington Journal on 13th May 1922.

The poem shows the pride that the local people of Wrekin Town had in the great sacrifice that their sons had made for our future.

Ordinary citizens were remembering their own, locally in their own community, and in their own way.
Tucked away from the bustle of Holyhead Road in Wellington is Sunnycroft. Every year the late Victorian Villa welcomes thousands of National Trust visitors but it still remains an undiscovered secret to many who live in closer proximity. The original house, commissioned by John George Wackrill (below) who owned the Shropshire Brewery in Holyhead Road, was finished in 1880.

The modest house was then extended in 1899 by Mary Jane Slaney, the widow of John Hiatt Slaney, who owned Slaney’s Vaults in Wellington. They lived at The Vineyard until after John’s death when Mary (below) purchased Sunnycroft.

She extended the property to create a new Entrance Hall and Cloakroom, a Billiard Room and Dining Room, with bedrooms above the extended part and made the Villa look like the impressive and unexpectedly large house it does today.

The next owner was Mary Jane Slaney’s brother in law, John Vernon Thomas Lander (‘JVT’) who purchased Sunnycroft in 1912. This marks the start of three generations of the Lander’s living at Sunnycroft and it becoming the family home that so many people appreciate and love today.

JVT Lander was outgoing by nature and was well known in Wellington. He had become a solicitor in 1881 and established a practice in Walker Street.

JVT and his son Jack both held appointments as Shropshire County Coroners and County Registrars. In addition, JVT was Chairman of the Wellington Markets Company. He was also the second president of the old Wellington Farmers Club and, at one time, chairman of The Wrekin Cottage Hospital.

JVT decorated much of Sunnycroft as it is seen now, in particular the Staircase Hall which was very much in the ‘baronial style’ with deer heads, a sword and a bear-skin hearth rug which, as the story goes, he used when playing with his granddaughters by chasing them with it over his head!

JVT employed three live-in staff at Sunnycroft; two maids, Jesse Bird the cook, and Florence Blackmore (Nan) the children’s former nanny, as housekeeper. Despite JVT calling all the boys he
to take his annual holidays in hours at a time in order to play matches! Today, visitors can play tennis on the main lawn, just as the girls and their father would have played tennis and croquet during long summer afternoons.

Joan Lander (right), Offley’s eldest daughter came home from London where she was teaching at the Royal school of Needlework to nurse Offley in his old age, and when he passed away in 1973 she inherited Sunnycroft. Joan continued to take commissions and taught classes from Sunnycroft.

As far as possible after the death of her parents, Joan continued the practices of her father and grandfather’s time, selling seasonal produce and making jams, jellies and chutneys every year, right up until her death in 1997. She lived very frugally but kept up her father’s standards with a strict daily timetable, punctual meal times and tea at 4pm. Visitors came by invitation only, and tradesmen and customers were received at the back door. To this day we have many visitors recall that they would often be left waiting before their exact appointment time arrived and Joan allowed them entry into the house!

Does anyone have an answer?
We moved to Admaston in 1930 and I was sent to the boys’ school in Wrockwardine. Changing school is always a bit traumatic and I didn’t know anybody there but the local lads were mostly friendly and I’ve never been one for starting trouble.

However, one boy, for no reason I understood, hit me after school. I went home crying and told my Dad. He said, ‘Hit him back tomorrow’ and showed me how to do that. So next day I went up to Tommy and he tried to hit me again, so I hit him, several times, quite hard. This loosened one of his front teeth and made his nose bleed. We were both caned for fighting. Nobody hit me again, though I think I was usually the ‘odd man out’; Admaston kids were not popular with the Wrockwardine lads.

The school was in The Avenue and was only for boys over seven. Girls and infants (that’s wenches and babbies) went to the school by the church. We had nothing to do with them.

There were two classes, one for the 7 to 11 year olds and one for the big lads up to 14, which was the statutory leaving age. There were two teachers; Tommy Parker looked after the little ‘uns and Billy Mainwaring (pronounced Mannering), the head, taught the big ‘uns. The only other adult ever to visit was the vicar, who helped with the religious education.

Secretaries, helpers, dinner ladies and all the host of ancillary people nowadays found in every school had not been invented.

The syllabus was simple – reading, writing, arithmetic and scripture. Reading was simply the whole class having the same book and taking it in turns to read a paragraph or so. The books were old and well used. As there were several year groups in each class, those not ‘reading round’ were given other books to read.

Writing was a simple matter of copying from the blackboard. It looked like this: A B C D E, etc., the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. We became very good at this style of writing because if we made any mistakes we were caned.

Arithmetic was addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of numbers, then of money – that’s £ s d and farthings; weight – tons, hundredweight, quarters, pounds, ounces; distance – inches, feet, yards, furlongs, miles.

We spent a lot of time learning tables by rote, not only the 2X, 3X, etc., but also the more complicated measurement tables. A particular speciality was the long tots and short tots. There was a number square on the blackboard; we had to add across and put the total, then add down and total, then add the totals down and across, which had to come to the same Grand Total. Or else . . . This was a total waste of time but we became very quick and accurate.

There were long wooden desks with cast iron frames for several boys, with a single long seat that we all sat on. To stand up it had to be raised – but only if everyone stood. If you sat in the middle you couldn’t get out without the others moving. There were ceramic ink pots to dip our pens in, kept topped up by monitors. Breaking a pen nib was a catastrophe.

There was a big map of the world with the British Empire coloured in pink. These were the countries we ‘owned’ such as India, Australia, Canada, Burma, a lot of Africa and so on. We had to know their names and capitals. Some books were about other countries. I remember reading that Greece was like a patchwork quilt, which was not helpful because I’d never seen a patchwork quilt. Nobody explained; asking questions was not encouraged.

We learned the C of E catechism. It begins, ‘What is your name, N or M?’ What the ‘N or M’ meant I never found out and still don’t know. It went on about, ‘The pomp’s and vanities of this sinful world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh’. I’d thought it was pumps and wondered if they were water pumps or running shoes.

‘Don’t ask, you’ll get into trouble,’ I was told. Many years later I learned the meaning of, ‘the sinful lusts of the flesh.’ We all passed our catechism and were confirmed as, ‘a child of God . . .’

Our first ‘foreigner’ turned up – Witislav Ondra as I remember. Wonder where he is? He was Czech and his father was building the ‘Beet Factory’. He was bright and wore long black stockings in winter. We wore woollen shorts all year round with knee length socks. Some of the lads had holes in the backsides. We wore ties, jackets, caps and mackintoshes.

We played rough, boyish games at dinner time after ‘Billy’ had taken out his tuning fork and sung, ‘Be present at our table, Lord’. There was no table; we ate our butties in the playground. I
had to go to the Post Office and drink a glass of boiled milk, standing outside. I hated it but it ‘did me good’.

We charged around the village playing fox and hounds, tin can murkys, tops, marbles, hide and seek and tip cat, especially in the Avenue and Gorsey Bank.

Billy wore a brown plus four suit, stockings, a tie and brown shoes. He smelled of carbolic soap, pipe tobacco and his last meal.

Nobody was allowed to be illiterate or innumerate; that was beaten out of us.

I was alternately bored, terrified or both and learned very little at school but in the evenings I read The Children’s Encyclopaedia edited by Arthur Mee – all ten volumes.

Wellington Boys’ High School, where I continued my education, was a completely new world.

A brief history of Wrockwardine C of E Boys’ School

The school (now a private dwelling) was closely connected to the village’s Church of St. Peter. It was built in 1837 and paid for by Mrs Cludde of Orleton Hall on land donated by her husband Edward.

It had spaces for 103 children but attained averages of only 75 (1851), 65 (1878), 78 (1891) and 63 (1913). To cater for local needs, a twice-a-week night school ran for a period: it had ten pupils in 1877.

Mrs Cludde continued to support the school with generous gifts and also provided a cottage rent free to the master, whose salary was £45 a year; a teacher’s house was erected by 1856.

The school closed in 1940, whereupon ‘seniors’ relocated to the new Wellington Senior Council School at Orleton Park and juniors to the former girls’ and infants school elsewhere in the village.

Nowadays people from near and far visit the Wrekin to sample its delights, whether for a healthy climb, a panoramic view from the top or a picnic on its slopes. The Wrekin, with the swingle boats and donkeys at the Halfway House, was a popular destination for Sunday School outings in my younger days; and, a generation or so previously, the Pointons had provided horse-drawn brakes from Wellington railway station and a refreshment pavilion in the Forest Glen for visitors.

But the trek to the Wrekin had been going on long before that, and we have a delightful account of such an occasion in the year 1783.

In the late eighteenth century, the Ketley ironmaster, Richard Reynolds (pictured), organised annual picnics on the Wrekin for members of his family and their friends.

In August 1783 the party included John Wilkinson, the Broseley ironmaster, and his daughter Mary; Samuel More, Secretary of the Society of Arts, who was staying with Wilkinson at his Broseley home; and Theophilus Holbrooke, curate at Moreton Say and soon to be the husband of Mary Wilkinson.

Samuel More kept a journal of his travels round the country, and on this occasion he recorded that the various participants arrived at the top of the Wrekin on foot or on horseback, and ‘sat down to the cold collation which was spread on the green turf and regaled ourselves heartily with it’.

A tour of the summit followed, and Richard Reynolds and Samuel More then demonstrated an easy way to save some of the mile-long walk back to the waiting carriages by sliding down the steep mossy slopes on their backsides!

The emotional effect a visit to the Wrekin had on Richard Reynolds is clearly shown in his colourful description of an earlier annual picnic:

“We went upon the Wrekin sooner than usual this year, that my children might partake of the pleasure. The weather was pleasant, though rather windy. From the top of that hill the prospect is so rich, so extensive, so various, that, considered as a landscape only, it beggars all description; and yet I cannot forbear mentioning the tufted trees in the adjoining woods, upon which, occasioned perhaps by the uncommonness of the scene, I always look down with a particular pleasure, as well as survey those more distant, which are interspersed among the corn and meadows, contrasted with the new-ploughed fallow grounds and pastures with cattle; the towns and villages, gentlemen’s seats, farm houses enrich and diversify the prospect, whilst the various companies of harvest men in the different farms within view enliven the scene. Nor are the rivers that glitter among the laughing meadows, or the stupendous mountains which, though distant, appear awfully dreary [i.e. threatening, on their own] without their effect considered part of the landscape only.’

To Richard Reynolds the Wrekin was a special place, and he wanted to share his enthusiasm for it with those who were invited to join his annual picnics, friends and family alike.

It sounds as if those who participated in the year 1783 had a jolly good time!
In the last issue of Wellingtonia, we published two personal accounts of the British Union of Fascists (BUF, alias Blackshirts) meeting in Market Square on Saturday May 20th 1939 and a very brief biography of the movement’s leader, Sir Oswald Mosley.

What the papers said in 1939

There was extensive coverage in the Wellington Journal about the riot on 20th May and the previous BUF meeting in the Square on 1st April. There were two articles in the BUF newspaper Action on 27th May and 24th June. The Wellington Journal also reported on a Special Meeting of the Urban District Council on 9th June.

The First BUF Meeting in the Square, March 1939

There is very little information about this, except that the Chief Constable said it passed off fairly quietly ‘with a certain amount of disturbance’. It was not reported in the press.

The Second BUF Meeting on 1st April 1939

Blackshirts get “Warm Welcome” at Wellington  

Speaker Removed from Platform  
A car drew up in the Square shortly before 8.00pm and an improvised platform was placed in the customary position. A youthful speaker expounded the views of the British Union and everything went well for some time.

He was given a very good hearing but when he switched over to more delicate questions the crowd got fidgety.

It was good humoured interjections to start with but with mention of the rise of Germany under Herr Hitler he met opposition. Heated arguments followed and the crowd pressed nearer the speaker and he was dislodged from his platform.

The car was on two wheels and the police cleared the way for the visitors to leave. A member of the audience appealed to the crowd to give the orators a safe departure.

In the next minute the crowd had cleared.

The Third BUF Meeting on 20th May 1939: The Riot!

Here is the report from the Fascist weekly newspaper Action for 27th May giving the BUF viewpoint.

It is interesting to note that the opening speaker at the meeting was named as H. Hobson Cooke, who may have addressed the 1st April meeting. There was no mention of Sir Oswald:

Red Violence at Wellington

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

This campaign of violence reached its climax last Saturday, when the mob brutally attacked the thirty local supporters of the British Union who surrounded the platform.

Although hopelessly outnumbered, British Union supporters fought back valiantly and drove back the mob. In all the Reds attacked six times, yet not once were they able to achieve their objective of breaking through to the speaker’s car.

Every form of violence was used. Missiles were hurled from the crowd and sticks, screwdrivers and bars were used in various sorts.

It is to the credit of the British Union supporters present that the meeting was kept going for some considerable time.

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

H Hobson Cooke who opened the meeting was among those injured. This is the third successive occasion on which he has been assaulted in this town. Two of the casualties had to be taken to hospital where one was detained for an X-ray on the jaw, where a fracture was suspected.

Another meeting is being arranged shortly.

The Wellington Journal printed the following account on 27th May 1939. It is quite long, so the main highlights have been extracted.

Croud pelt Blackshirts, ugly scenes at Wellington, Police have hectic time

Scenes perhaps unprecedented in the history of Wellington took place in The Square on Saturday.

The Blackshirts who comprised both males and females marched from Park Street into The Square carrying the Union Jack and their own banner.

The police formed a human ring round the Blackshirts.

One section of the crowd was shouting, ringing hand bells and blowing whistles whilst the other part attempted to sing Rule Britannia.

The crowd surged forward and real trouble commenced; pandemonium as dozens of eggs, tomatoes, oranges and cabbages went hurtling through the air. Blows were freely exchanged.

Major Golden [Chief Constable of Shropshire] spoke to the Blackshirts who made an attempt to sing the National Anthem.

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Major Golden [Chief Constable of Shropshire] spoke to the Blackshirts who made an attempt to sing the National Anthem.

The Police formed an outlet for the Blackshirts to leave by way of Duke Street at the entrance of which a final rush was made by a certain section of the crowd. An attempt was made to seize the Blackshirt Banner and many blows were struck.

The Blackshirts were ushered down Walker Street onto Wrekin Road with a large crowd in the rear. The police formed a line across the highway and the crowd which had followed then dispersed.
On 9th June the Journal printed a further article about a special meeting of Wellington Urban District Council seeking to ban further fascist processions with an application to the Secretary of State. A very detailed letter from Major Golden on what had happened at the riot on May 20th was received. Here is a summary of the main points of the letter:

He confirmed there had been three meetings of the BUF at monthly intervals in The Square, each on a Saturday evening, and at the first there had been a certain amount of disturbance.

His report on the second meeting repeats the details previously published in the Journal on 8th April:

20TH MAY, THE THIRD MEETING
The Riot.
A procession of FORTY members of the British Union marched from The Lawns, 400 yards to the Square. It was orderly and gave rise to no trouble until entering the Square...they were strongly resented by the audience and were met with cries jeers and a few missiles.

Disorder and free fighting ensued. After some 35 minutes, the situation deteriorated further and a suggestion was made to the leader of the British Union that the meeting should be terminated. He agreed and asked for safe escort for the women and the loud speaker car. Under circumstances of considerable difficulty, the members of the BUF, together with their car and other property were safely escorted away from the scene of the meeting.

The Chief Constable continued, saying that the procession and meeting were ‘extremely provocative’ and ‘strongly resented’ by the people of Wellington. He said a serious situation could arise in future and recommended an approach to the Secretary of State banning any such procession held by the BUF for a period of three months under section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936.

Only processions could be banned under the Act. It was not possible to ban meetings.

A FOURTH BUF meeting was planned for June 25th or July 30th. Wellington Urban District Council felt it should not be held in The Square or even on Council land at the junction of Regent Street and Watling Street (adjacent to the football stadium) but rather on a circle of land at Bennett’s Bank. There is no press report confirming that this meeting took place.

Report 24th June 1939
WELLINGTON COUNCIL WANTS BAN ON BRITISH UNION MARCHES
This article published by Action reports the Chief Constables letter, highlighting his comment that it was the crowd that made the trouble and to ban the procession and not the meeting was very strange as all the trouble took place in the meeting. The article ends:

It is not known if the Home Secretary has agreed to a ban on processions in Wellington, which is particularly ridiculous since all the trouble on the previous occasion took place at the meeting and not during the march.

In any case a meeting will be held on July 30th and MICHAEL GOULDING will complete the speech which the hooligans interrupted on May 20th. Neither Red Violence nor Blue Obstruction by the local council will deprive the British Union of its political rights.

It is interesting that none of these contemporary reports says that Sir Oswald Mosley spoke at any of the three meetings. The only names mentioned are those of the BUF speakers: Mr. Hobson Cooke, who was hospitalised with his injuries on the 20th May, and Mr. Michael Goulding, who was due to speak at the planned fourth meeting.

The speaker at the second meeting on 1st April was described in the Journal as ‘youthful’—clearly not Sir Oswald. If anybody has memories of these events, please contact us.

The concluding article on the Blackshirts in Wellington will appear in the next issue of Wellingtonia.

Extracts from Action reproduced from Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.
A diesel train pulling into Wellington station recently had to brake violently because ‘train spotters’ were running on the lines.

This latest act of foolhardiness has resulted in the railway authorities banning all spotters from the station. The behaviour of the boys could no longer be tolerated.

There were also instances where boys had been seen sitting on the edge of the platform as expresses had gone through.

Posters had been mutilated and every poster on the station had had to be changed in the last three weeks.

As many as 40 so-called spotters were on the station at any particular time and up to all kinds of mischief.

Unfortunately genuine spotters would also have to suffer the ban. But apparently boys genuinely interested in the hobby usually went to Crewe or Stafford during the holidays where they could see many more engines.

Barbecue on the Wrekin
An event was held at Wrekin Cottage, half way up The Wrekin, in aid of St. Jude’s House Working Boys’ Hostel.

The principal organiser was Wolverhampton probation officer, Mr. John Robinson. The House is run in liaison with the Church of England Temperance Society.

Apart from the barbecue there were donkey rides and vehicle rides to the summit.

The event also served as opening night for the Cottage. This has been newly decorated with a bar, piazza, sun-shaded tables and a refreshment porch. In addition to the contemporary features, it also has some traditional qualities, the building dating back to Charles II.

The Cottage is ideal for parties and club functions. People can have a good time ‘and laugh as loudly as they like in an atmosphere of informality at what is a unique innovation in the field of social rendezvous in the county’.

In spite of inexcusably insulting Wellington and folk using the facilities at the town library during the (fortunately) less-than-three-year period he was librarian here during the Second World War, poet Philip Larkin was invited to formally open the glass-and-concrete extension adjacent to the original Edwardian building.

Pictured above are Cliff Buttery, Cllr. S.C. Parker, Cllr. C.F. Cordingley, Larkin and respected librarian Laurie Marsh. The extension (below) cost £22,600.

Larkin’s later reputation as a poet of some note has done nothing to dissipate feelings of resentment still harboured by those who felt the lash of his tongue all those years ago.

The first national rail stoppage since the 1926 General Strike turned out to be anything but chaotic in Shropshire.

Alternative communications were well in hand and the strike went down as being ‘orderly, quiet and well mannered’.

The Post Office commended the public for only sending essential mail, and the Council chartered 20 buses to get children to school. The strike went off without incident at Wellington.

Rosa the Donkey was donated to Vineyard Children’s Home to the delight of its 70 child residents. Here, Home Superintendent C.F. Jones helps a four-year-old lad to feed Rosa.

The donkey was a gift from Mr and Mrs Marner, Woodlands Farm, Ironbridge.

The 70 children at the Vineyard Home, Wellington, have had a
near £2000 open air swimming pool (above) provided for them by their ‘uncles’ – as they are affectionately called – of the sergeants’ mess at RAF Cosford. This is the latest action of the ‘uncles’ who, since 1954, have provided all kinds of comforts for the children.

Now completed, the 30ft by 15ft pool will come into use towards the end of next spring and all that remains to be done is the testing of the filtration plant.

Mr Jones, Superintendent of the Home, told a Journal reporter this week that the pool would meet a tremendous need and no longer would they have to improvise by fitting a hosepipe to the greenhouse tap!

‘We shall never be out of the sergeants’ debt for all that they have done for the children. Since they first entertained the children at Christmas 1954, it has been their practice to provide each child with a birthday present and Christmas has not been overlooked either. A child can say what he would like - within reason of course – and the sergeants invariably meet the request. On one occasion a child asked for a rabbit hutch and he was given one – almost as big as a house’ he added.

Mr Jones went on to say that pantomime and circus tickets and holiday pocket money were provided and this year they would be going to Cosford for Bonfire Night and the evening would conclude with all the children being entertained to supper.

He said they were also indebted to the boy entrants at RAF Cosford and, at their recent harvest festival service, boy entrant Chaudhury of ‘D’ flight No 3 squadron, had collected £5 10s for the home. ‘In all we have received about £70 from the entrants – our ‘nephews’ as we call them.’

The ‘uncles’ are also raising money for another home, the Sunshine Home at Overley Hall near Wellington. Here, too, every child has a birthday present and the Home has received a garden house.

NOVEMBER

LOOK-OUT CLUB COUNTS

The Look-out club of Prince’s Street Junior School, as part of Road Safety, counted how many motorists turned incorrectly into Regent Street when travelling from the Buck’s Head pub westwards along along Watling Street.

‘I’ll show my kiddies that adults are not as clever as they think they are’ said teacher George Evans, leader of the club.

WINIFRED ATTWELL OPENS BAZAAR

Miss Winifred Attwell, the popular pianist, opened the Christmas Bazaar of the Horder Centre Helpers for Arthritics held at Belmont Hall, Wellington.

Miss Attwell delighted the young children when she played Jingle Bells accompanied by the children’s voices. Miss Attwell was presented with a bouquet.

DECEMBER

DERBYSHIRE IN SHROPSHIRE

‘Miss Nugent’ (right, later Emily Bishop), played by actress Eileen Derbyshire in ITV’s 1960 soap opera Coronation Street, opened Wellington cancer campaign at a bazaar held at the Morris Hall.

She declined a fee.

Coronation Street is located in the fictional town of Weatherfield in Lancashire. A street plan is provided here to assist followers.
Although the earliest banks in this country date from the late 17th century, it was not until a century later that one appeared in Shropshire – one of the earliest being that of Eyton, Reynolds & Bishop in Shrewsbury in 1792.

The partners in this bank were Thomas Eyton, owner of the Eyton estate and Receiver-General (i.e. the Crown’s tax collector) of Shropshire; William Reynolds, of Bank House Ketley, a member of the Coalbrookdale ironmaking partnership and a leading promoter of canals in east Shropshires; and John Bishop, a Shrewsbury businessman.

The three were joined a year later by John Wilkinson, acknowledged by Thomas Telford as ‘King of the Ironmasters’, who operated ironworks in Shropshire at Willey (near Broseley), and Sneds Hill and Hollinswood (near Oakengates).

In 1805, two of these partners, Eyton and Wilkinson, together with Joseph Reynolds, established the first bank to be opened in Wellington. Joseph Reynolds of Ketley Hall, the half-brother of recently deceased William Reynolds, was an ironmaster with works at Ketley and Madeley Wood. John Wilkinson, who had opened a new ironworks at Hadley in 1804, died three years after the Wellington bank opened.

Established to offer assistance to local industrialists, the Wellington bank, like other unregulated banks, had to negotiate the troubled waters of financial crisis in its early years.

The first of these came at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. There were something like 32 bank failures in the country in 1815, and locally the scandal surrounding Thomas Eyton’s suicide in January 1816 (described in Wellingtonia issue 11) almost ruined the banks he was associated with in Shrewsbury and Wellington.

Both rode out the storm, but the Eyton family lost its foothold at Wellington, the bank becoming Reynolds, Charlton and Shakeshaft – Joseph Reynolds of the original partnership, William Charlton of Apley Castle and William Shakeshaft, a Wellington businessman.

By 1822 the Wellington bank was known as Reynolds, Charlton & Harries, with premises in the Market Place.

A business crisis in this country in 1825, that saw the failure of some 60 banks, led to an Act of Parliament which permitted the establishment of co-partnerships with any number of shareholders and a right of note issue outside London.

As a result, many private banks were absorbed by these joint-stock banks, creating larger and larger concerns. In 1836 the Reynolds, Charlton & Co. bank in Wellington amalgamated with three other east Shropshire banks to form the joint stock Shropshire Banking Co.

These were Horton & Hill (established 1791) of Newport; Darby & Co. (established 1810) of Coalbrookdale; and Biddle, Mountford, Pidcock & Cope (established 1824) of Shifnal. The Wellington branch of the Shropshire Bank was in Church Street and its manager was George Alexander Martin. (The premises were the tall building behind the lamp post in the photo below.)

The Shropshire Bank was closely connected to the local coal and iron industries and its fortune varied with their performance.

It also suffered a series of serious internal frauds, culminating in 1854 in the loss of £200,000 from the funds of the Wellington branch caused by speculation by the bank’s manager. However, it recovered from this setback and by 1870, when its head office was in Horsefair, Shifnal, it had branches at Dawley, Ironbridge, Newport, Oakengates and Wellington.

The Shropshire Banking Co. was taken over by Lloyds Banking Co. in 1874.

The Wellington branch remained in Church Street until the merger of Lloyds with the Trustees Savings Bank in 1995, soon after which it moved to its present site in Walker Street. There had been a Savings Bank in Walker Street since 1835. The original TSB (below, as seen in 1960) opened in September 1951.
The restoration of The Raven Inn’s historic name after several years has been greeted with relief by many who don’t approve of tinkering with long established traditions—not least the daughters of Eddie and Ada Sykes who recently presented the present manager with a framed memorial.

Joan and Margaret Sykes (whose surnames have since changed through marriage) spent more than a few years in the pubs tenanted by their father who is still remembered with affection by former patrons.


A carpenter/joiner by trade, he was working for building firm Fletcher’s at Shrewsbury when, in 1954, he decided on a change of career – and became a publican.

His first hostelry was the Foresters Arms at Hadley, where he ran annual Harvest Festival celebrations. Between 1957 and 1967, he took the tenancy at The Raven Inn at Wellington where his woodworking skills enabled him to convert a room into an attractive and successful Steak Bar (right, with Terry the Chef).

Bearing in mind that Eddie and Ada had introduced the (then revolutionary) idea of selling cheese and onion cobs alongside beer, the notion of a Steak Bar filled a gap that hitherto no one had realised existed.

Upon requesting a move to a different location, Eddie and Ada ran The Monkmoor at Shrewsbury (1967–1969) and finally The Caledonian (‘The Cally’) at Oakengates (1969–1980). It was here that the concept of a Steak Bar went one stage further with the railway-themed Platform One restaurant and meeting room (below).

Eddie and Ada subsequently retired to The Woodlands, Ironbridge.

Eddie’s public houses were tied to William Butler & Company’s Wolverhampton-based Springfield Brewery; they were all taken over by rival brewers Mitchells & Butlers in 1960. Interesting, both the Foresters Arms and The Raven were two of the pubs in the list of tied houses belonging to the Shropshire Brewery on Holyhead Road when it was acquired by William Butler & Company in 1912.

Because Butler’s only wanted the tied houses and not the Shropshire Brewery itself, they sold it in 1913 with the stipulation that no beer be brewed on the premises.

Who on earth would buy a non-brewing brewery? Someone who wanted the premises purely for use as a bottling plant, most notably to bottle beers and ales made by national brewing firms (like Guinness and Worthington) and fizzy drinks produced by his own works as well as other manufacturers.

The unlikely purchaser was, of course, O.D. Murphy—a man whose name would become synonymous with the Wrekin Brewery, the Pop Works and Wine & Spirit distribution to pubs throughout Shropshire.
Apley Castle: An Amenity for All
Geoff Harrison

An interpretation of the stated aims of the Friends of Apley Woods ‘to restore and celebrate the rich and intriguing heritage of Apley Castle and to protect, foster and develop Apley Woods as a very special and valuable amenity for the whole community to enjoy and appreciate’.

It is only very recently the public have been allowed into the very private grounds of a ‘landed estate’; for many centuries it was private land, the sole privilege of members of one family, the Charlton family; from Robert de Cherlton about 1290, to 1955 with the Meyrick family, Thomas Charlton having changed his name to Meyrick by Royal Licence in 1858.

Wander round these woodlands and you will detect ‘bits’ of the past, extensive views, wide tree-lined walks (below) opening to rural vistas, one to the (now fishing) lake in the distance. The lake, incidentally is relatively new, being the result of excavating the last Apley Castle in the 1790s.

Looking more closely, you may notice under your feet remnants of brick-work or drains (bottom right) which indicate the ground level of the Hall demolished in 1955. Some folk still remember the ‘old hall’.

Living in such a privileged estate didn’t always insulate the family from the tragic realities of life – it is common knowledge that in 1909 the family of Sir John Meyrick were devastated by a tragic accident: the drowning of Herbert Chiverton Meyrick while forcing his reluctant horse into the lake (see Wellingtonia issue 3 for details). A family so distraught that it is reported that the blinds on the windows looking toward the lake were to be kept drawn so no more need they look over the lake. This story is told on one of the present information panels in the Woods.

This was not the only tragedy which had befallen the Charlton family. The English Civil War, between Royalist supporters of King Charles I and Parliamentary forces of Oliver Cromwell set neighbour against neighbour, son against father and brother against brother.

Francis Charlton, married to Mary Hill, succeeded to the Apley Castle estate in 1620; it was he who completed the castellation of his father’s mansion begun in 1567. This mansion was the second. The first, crenellated by king’s licence of 1327, probably stood on a site a short distance away.

Francis and Mary had three children: Mary (baptised at All Saints, Wellington 10th July 1631), Margaret (baptised All Saints 18th September 1636) and son Francis (baptised All Saints on the 16th May 1639 — it was noted in the Parish Register ‘Son & heir of Francis Charlton Esq. of Apley & Mary his wife’). Francis (father) was not to live much longer; apparently he was ‘old and grey’ when he married Mary.

The death of Francis, recorded in the Parish Records of All Saints 2nd December 1642, a few months after the first Civil War battle at Edgehill, left his wife Mary with three young children in a very difficult situation. Francis had had ‘leanings’ towards the Royalist cause; his brother Robert was certainly a supporter of the parliamentary cause: a classic case of Civil War setting brother against brother. The young child Francis, aged 3, on the death of his father, was heir to the estate and Robert wanted ‘custody’ of the young child together with Mary and Margaret. One can imagine that it was not just ‘brotherly concern’ that motivated this desire. After all, if Francis were to die, Robert would inherit the estates of his already deceased brother Francis. Widowed Mary resisted and sent the children away for a while. During this absence she married Thomas Hanmer. It was perhaps not so much a ‘matter of the heart’ but rather the need for the support of a man in such troubled times. Thomas was also supportive of the Royalist cause. This period of family history was recorded by Mary’s future son-in-law, Richard Baxter.

Robert ‘maintained a long and costly suit about the guardianship of the heir . . . but the wise and good mother Mary, durst not trust her only son in the hands of one that was his next heir; and she thought that nature gave her a greater interest in him than an uncle had. But . . . Robert being for Parliament, had the advantage of strength, which put her to seek relief at Oxford from the king, and afterwards to marry one Mr. Hanmer, who was for the king.’

The story of Apley Castle in this troubled time is beset by deceit and intrigue. The Royal garrison provided for the defence of the castle and took advantage of
its strength and plundered their charge to the extent that Thomas Hanmer went to Shrewsbury to complain to a higher Royal authority. Here his petition was interpreted as treason and he ended up in prison: ‘Instead of obtaining redress he was arrested, committed to prison and accused of high treason, and remained a prisoner till Rupert succeeded to the command of Shropshire’ so recorded Rev. John Webb. However, Thomas Hanmer’s release from prison was conditional: that he defend his house, putting the ‘public service’ before ‘private consideration’. In other words, he was to defend Apley Castle against Parliamentary forces at his own expense.

Thomas armed his tenants and servants to defend the Castle but Parliamentary forces attacked. Despite a ‘gallant fight’, Apley was overwhelmed.

This tragedy was witnessed by Mary and her young children. In the words of Richard Baxter, ‘it (the castle) was besieged by the parliament’s soldiers, and stormed and taken; where the mother (Mary – Francis’s widow, now Mrs Hanmer) and the children were, and saw part of their building burnt, and some lie dead before their eyes, all of them threatened . . .’

One may imagine a picture of this young woman, children clutching at her skirt, the noise and violence of battle, smoke drifting across the scene as her home burned, the mutilated bodies of her servants and tenants lying all around, and constantly threatened by the presence of rough soldiers, her future uncertain. Even the strongest person would be frightened and unsure of which way to turn. Fortunately battles don’t last forever and this wasn’t huge, more of a skirmish yet still very horrifying.

The Civil War divided families. Hurts went deep, forgiveness was not easy and many generations were to pass before bitterness was to be soothed. The Charlton family suffered at this time, along with other families of rank but there is a personal hurt, a very personal tragedy of seeing one’s servants, tenants and friends lying dead before you, and your house burning behind you. So it was for Mary, widow of Francis Charlton, on that day in March 1644.

Now set aside for their relaxation, members of the public can wander freely around the pleasant woodlands of Apley Castle . . . but we should not forget the blood soaked into the soil of those distant days.

After having successfully entertained and educated us with the Keen Foxhunter and Keen Shot, The Keen Countryman’s Miscellany, the latest book by Orleton Hall’s Peter Holt, will undoubtedly appeal to a wide readership.

The quality of the research is impressive, and the author’s training as a competent journalist is evident in the easy style of writing. Even the presentation of the wonderful range of information revealed between its hardback covers is curiously appropriate, as is the thoughtfully-provided ribbon bookmark.

But what’s it all about? It’s a clever collection of historical and practical information concerning All Things Rural (I was going to say ‘Rustic’, but that might give the wrong impression). It’s all here, from biographies of famous farmers to country lore and practical advice on . . . well, suffice it to say it’s packed full of tasty morsels you can dip into whenever you have a few (or more than a few) moments to spare.

Entertaining and enjoyable, informative and intriguing . . . it’s an ideal gift for anyone — including yourself!

The Keen Countryman’s Miscellany, isbn 978 1 84689 120 5, is published by Quiller. £16.95.
Always popular with family historians and doting parents at the time (a sentiment not always shared by his subjects), W. Cooper Edmonds captures the family-like spirit of the Old hall School on Holyhead Road in this 1912 school photo. Naturally, everyone appears clean and spotless for the occasion.

Above: October 1912—‘intrepid aviator’ Gustav Hamel gave monoplane flights in the grounds of Orleton Hall. It appears that his was the first aeroplane to land and take-off in the Wellington area.

Gustav had been born in Germany in 1889; he and his immigrant family had become British citizens in 1910 yet newspapers persisted in ‘tainting’ him as still being German.

Undeterred, and with a passion for flying these new-fangled contraptions, Gustav toured the English countryside giving flights to those who dared take the risk. He also took part in (and won) air races. Despite his young age, he was a highly experienced flyer, which makes his untimely death somewhat inexplicable. Having just purchased a new aircraft, he disappeared over the English Channel in May 1914 on his way back from Paris after buying a new Paris in a new 80 hp Morane-Saulnier monoplane.

Wellington High School for Boys opened in September 1912, utilising separate sections of the building already occupied by the Girls’ High School which had opened four years earlier. It was common knowledge that Miss E.B. Ross, headmistress of the Girls’ school, did not see eye to eye with Mr H.W. Male, headmaster of the Boys’ school.

Attempts at strict segregation between the two schools, in spite of the locked gate separating playgrounds and similarly locked doors in the main hall and upstairs balcony, were not entirely successful.

This grainy photo of the school, with its newly-painted sign to the right, appeared in the Wellington Journal. Although classed as a ‘County’ school, fees were levied to contribute towards the cost of learning materials, such as text books.
Wellington Nomads ‘Half-Holiday’ football team (right) whose players in October 1912 comprised Birch, Taylor, A. Clayton, Robinson, Jones, Cotton, Taylor (junior), T. Cooke, Reeves, Kendrick and C. Davies.

Formed after a meeting in October 1911 of the Half Holiday Club (whose regular meeting place was the Station Hotel on town half-day shop-closing afternoons which, at the time, were on Fridays), the Club created a football team whose home ground would be at the Red Lion Hotel, Holyhead Road (by kind permission of the proprietor Mr Simpson).

The team played for a couple of years (and appears to have won a trophy) before disbanding, possibly as a direct result of the human demands of the Great War.

Picture postcards become highly popular in the two decades before 1912 and became even more so when previously monochrome images were given hand painted studio ‘colourisation’ treatment at the skilful hands of thousands of ‘colourers’.

Francis Frith’s nationally-distributed postcards (as in The Wrekin Pathway below) came under increasing pressure from locally-produced offerings (like that of The Wrekin from Buckatree Hall, bottom right, issued by Wildings of Shrewsbury).

Wellington Nomads team, seen here outside the Red Lion Hotel, with club officials and trainers, one of whom clutches a jug and pint mug presumably for pick-me-up purposes. The team played in a few friendly games from September 1912 onwards until joining the Jackfield Football League in August 1914.

In March 1962, members of New Street Methodist Youth Club paid a weekend visit to Limefield Methodist Youth Club at Bury in Lancashire, where they were accommodated in members’ homes.

At Wellington, a reciprocal visit took place at what was the church’s October Youth Weekend which usually incorporated a ramble or visit to a landmark and a Saturday night ‘social’, followed by special services on the Sunday.

Seen above (from the left) are Ken Poulter, Judy Starkey, Graham Shepherd, Dave Davies, Valerie Edyvean, ‘Pip’ Martin, Anne Edson and Andrew Horrocks.

The exchange, which ran for several years and resulted in two marriages, was the brainchild of Rev Peter de Visme who had become minister at Wellington in 1959, having previously been minister at the Bury church.

It’s a good job History is concerned with the past and not about forecasting the future. In 1876, the Chief Engineer of the British Post Office, Sir William Preece, predicted: ‘The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys.’

Right: Bowring Recreation Ground’s Bowling Club (founded in 1950) held its annual dinner and awards presentation in November 1962 at the Forest Glen pavilion.

Pictured here (from left to right) are Cllr. George Evans, Jim Husband, Derek Wild, Fred Jones, ?, Charlie Seabury, Ted Silvester, Jan Bancer, Walter Cotton, Bill Collier, John Stanworth, Ray Teece, Tom Rollason and Doug Tipping.