In recent years, two aspects of local history and heritage protection have given rise to mounting concern.

The first relates to Telford borough council’s poor record, seen as a continuation of measures experienced even before the reign (some would add ‘of terror’) of Telford Development Corporation which saw the demolition of more than a few historic buildings.

Some should have been given the protection which is supposed to be virtually guaranteed under the terms of the Listed Building scheme (such as the former New Street Methodist church frontage, Charlton Arms Hotel, etc.) or of significant local interest (as in Edgbaston House).

A PhD student is currently researching the borough’s attitude to heritage conservation and promotion. All we can say is that borough councillors and certain of its employees, who seem more concerned with money than taking effective measures to preserve what remains of Telford’s heritage, need to rethink their approach to prevent another 40+ years of irreversible damage. The Ironbridge Gorge does not represent the Telford conurbation.

The second refers to local history education in our schools. Yes, we all know teachers are overworked and at the mercy of curriculum changes, but my experience is that not all schools are as committed to passing on professionally obtained local facts (not urban myths or History According To Wikipedia) as they could be, or even interested in learning more about the area’s past. Like most councillors, History teachers are seldom seen at talks given by our or other historical societies in the district.

This is a shame, not least because Telford is able to offer examples relating to most periods in England’s rich urban, political, economic and social history.

Under a new Government funded Heritage Schools programme to ‘bring history alive’, a man from English Heritage has been appointed Local Heritage Education Manager for Telford and The Wrekin for the next year or so. He is intended to develop greater use and awareness of local heritage in twelve partner schools in the area so that pupils can indentify with their immediate local heritage.

Let’s hope he succeeds.
Born on 9th March 1838 at 2 Stratton Street, Bristol and son of Lemuel (an accountant) and Jane Callaway, Charles Callaway was schooled at Bristol and Cheltenham before entering Cheshunt College in 1859 where he studied Theology with the intention of becoming a Congregational church minister.

In addition he took BA (Philosophy) examinations at London University in 1862, and his MA (Philosophy and Political Economy) a year later. (He later obtained further degrees after developing an interest in Geology: First Class Honours in Geology, 1872 and DSc (Geology and Physical Geography) in 1878.)

After departing Cheshunt in 1864 he took up a Pastorate in 1865 at Kirkby Stephen, Westmorland. He remained there until 1868. From October 1869 until mid 1871 he was at Wellington and attended the Independent Congregational chapel in Tan Bank which had opened in 1825.

Upon leaving Wellington, Callaway first went to Bradford and worked as a librarian and museum curator. In 1872 he met the noted American geologist James Hall who invited him to work at the New York State Museum at Albany. This was a well-established institution with a reputation for training and encouragement of several notable American scientists. Callaway was there during 1873-74 and learnt much palaeontology (the study of the life in geologic periods based upon fossil remains). He later specialised in Archaean geology (ancient rocks containing the oldest fossils of life on earth).

On returning to England, he became curator of the Sheffield Public Museum. This was short lived and, after disagreements with one of the Management Committee, he left in 1876. Following treatment at Malvern for a ‘nervous illness’, he returned to Wellington. The rocks of the Malvern Hills are among the oldest in England and Wales and would later be studied by Callaway. The pure water from these rocks was used in the famous ‘Water Cure’ treatment for a variety of disorders, and stress being one of them. (One of the main practitioners was Dr Ralph Barnes Grindrod (1811-1883) who bequeathed his collection of geological specimens to Oxford University.)

On 29 June 1876, Callaway married widow Hannah Maria Clark (nee Keay, born 1832 and daughter of John Keay, a Wellington boot manufacturer). She was a music teacher at Hiatt’s Ladies College, Wellington, where her sister Mrs Elizabeth Hiatt was principal. Callaway taught English, History and Science at the college, which gave him time to further his geological knowledge and research.

In the 1881 census Callaway and his wife Minnie lived at 132 Mill Bank Wellington. They co-habited with six other women. Two were scholars, another two teachers and the others servants. It would seem that there were no children of this union. Minnie died in 1895; her husband survived her for almost twenty years. He remained in Wellington until 1898 and then moved to Cheltenham.

Callaway had by now left the Nonconformist ministry after seceding on doctrinal grounds. He became an outspoken agnostic and supported the Cheltenham Ethical Society. He was also an honorary member of the Rationalist Press Association whose purpose was to publish literature too anti-religious for mainstream publishers.

As a geologist, Callaway was focussed mainly on the ancient rocks of Shropshire, Anglesey, the Malverns, Scotland’s north west Highlands and parts of Ireland. During his residence in Shropshire, he began original research into the area of The Wrekin. He was able to prove that the ancient masses of The Wrekin and Longmynd represented a Pre-Cambrian formation which he named Uriconian after the nearby Roman City.

He next studied Anglesey and concluded that the unfossiliferous metamorphic rocks were probably Pre-Cambrian. In 1880 he went to 1880s Carte de Visite studio photo of Dr Charles Callaway, MA, DSc, FGS and (below) the Murchison Medal.
Scotland and was drawn into the ‘Highlands Controversy’ debate with leading geologists on Pre-Cambrian strata and their relationship with later geological period formations in the north west Highlands. Today he is given rather more credit for this work than at the time, when his assertion that older rocks at the Moine had been forced over younger formations by geomorphic activity was regarded as somewhat revolutionary; until then, it had been taken for granted that younger rocks were always found on top of older.

Callaway was a Fellow of the Geological Society from 1875 to 1906 (why he left then is not known) and awarded the prestigious Murchison Medal in 1906. This was in recognition of his pioneering work on Pre-Cambrian rocks and valuable contribution to the increasing knowledge of Cambrian and Ordovician systems.

Various papers over many years were published in Callaway’s name, one of which was On the Quartzites of Shropshire which appeared in the Geological Society quarterly journal in January 1878 and followed earlier writings on similar subjects.

When Callaway died in Cheltenham, his body was returned to Wellington. After a nonreligious funeral he was buried with his wife in the town cemetery.

The inscriptions on the headstone of Charles and Minnie’s grave reads:

In loving memory of
Charles Callaway MA DSc
Who died September 29th 1915 aged 77 years.
“Truth shall spring out of the earth”

In memory of Hannah Maria (Minnie)
The beloved wife of
Charles Callaway DSc of Sandown, Wellington.
Born July 6th 1832
Died Nov 4th 1895
“Love is strong as death”

Most family historians find themselves in graveyards from time to time and I am no exception. I find them fascinating places and always leave with more questions than answers. Fortunately, the internet allows us access to papers and places that shed light on our queries and, if you read on, I will share one such experience.

In my family tree there is a tenuous link to the Clift family who owned the Excelsior Carriage Works on Tan Bank. I had reason to track down the grave of the first Clift to live in our town, Edward, who came to Wellington from Leominster, Herefordshire, to set up his coach building business (see 1899 advert, right).

Nearby, the memorial to his son, John Wesley Clift and his wife caught my eye; I read it and moved on. After a little meandering I found myself at the rear of JWC’s grave and was surprised to find a lengthy inscription upon it. (The graves are near the chapel; on entering the cemetery from Linden Avenue, walk until you are level with the building; the headstones are in the area ahead and to the right.)

I read that Richard Edward Brian Clift was remembered here, having died on active service in South Africa in 1942. Initially I thought that, like many of our pilots, he had been sent to the clear skies of South Africa to learn his trade, but closer inspection of the words told me that he was in the SAAF.

An internet search showed me that he was included on the University of Birmingham Virtual War Memorial and a response from them told me that he had graduated from their School of Mechanical Engineering in 1933. I presumed he had emigrated after this and, checking the passenger lists that are available on Find my Past web site, found a departure date of 23rd November 1934 on the Balmoral Castle headed for South Africa. Now I needed to know what he went out to do. My resource would now be his obituary in the Wellington Journal from 1942 (available in the Community History section of Wellington Library).

This revealed that he was known as Brian and the family had lived at Hillside, Waterloo Road. Coming from a staunch Methodist family he had been sent to Rydal School in North Wales before attaining his degree at Birmingham. After his studies he worked in South Africa for Hoffman’s, a fledgling engineering company in Johannesburg that still exists today. At the outbreak of war he joined their Air Force where he had been an instructor at the Central Flying School. In the autumn of 1942, shortly before his untimely death, he had been promoted to Flight Commander.

The final resting place of Brian is Pietersburg, now re-named Polokwane, which lies roughly halfway between Gauteng (300 km) and the Zimbabwean border (200 km). The ever-powerful internet allows us to search and find the headstone pictured here with ultimate ease. The wording closely matches that on the headstone in our cemetery with the addition of the word ‘Proud’ and an interchange of locations.
Two historic buildings in Wellington have been given new leases of life in the last few months. Good news, you might think but, in one case, you may not be quite so pleased.

The Pheasant

The first is The Pheasant pub (right) in Market Street which, as it happens, is the second pub in the town to have that name (the first lay behind the present market hall and closed in the mid 1830s).

It has been purchased by brewers Everard’s of Leicester and, after tasteful refurbishment, leased to the Ironbridge Brewing Company which also runs the renowned Fighting Cocks pub (also owned by Everard’s) in Oakengates. Everard’s brew ales and supply their own pubs but the firm also, as in the case of The Pheasant and Fighting Cocks, leases other pubs to independent microbrewers like the Ironbridge Brewing Company.

Not only is the fact that an in-town pub has been saved but so is the equally encouraging fact that brewing has returned to Wellington, almost 45 years to the day since the Wrekin Brewery, once located on the opposite side of Market Street from The Pheasant, closed for good.

Even more satisfying is that the ales brewed behind The Pheasant, in the building previously known as the Ptarmigan Suite, are produced by the evocatively-named subsidiary of the Ironbridge Brewery: ‘Wrekin Brewing Company’. The Pheasant reopened on Friday 2nd May and brewing commenced soon after.

Edgbaston House

The survival of this second building, in Walker Street, is not without controversy and has become regarded as an example of how little regard certain Borough council employees and elected councillors have in preserving heritage buildings, inside and out, within the Telford conurbation.

Despite discoveries of unique architectural features coming to light in an historic building survey commissioned by (then) Conservative leaders of the Borough, which revealed several impressive fireplaces, coving, internal lights (corridor windows), balustrades and ceiling beams, almost all have been removed by workmen gutting the inside in preparation for creating a number of bedsit apartments with shared kitchen facilities.

What this means is that the shell of the buildings which comprise Edgbaston House have been allowed to remain standing. Many believe they should have been retained as a public amenity of substantial historic significance and given a new lease of life commensurate with its heritage.

The tallest part of the ‘House’ was originally the Sun Inn, erected in the mid eighteenth century. It was not merely a pub but an early administrative centre for town governance, with solicitors’ offices, magistrates’ clerks, Poor Law Guardians and Town Commissioners, and a place for holding important meetings, dinners and assemblies.

The oldest (easternmost) part of the complex is believed to have originated as two dwellings in a late Medieval terrace; if so, it’s the oldest building in Wellington. It later became the town dispensary, and an arch led into a farmyard, then at the edge of town.

When the Borough acquired the property from Gwynne’s solicitors, it was intended to demolish it as part of the ‘Civic Quarter’ development. After a public outcry, council leaders went through the motions of trying to find a suitable community use, like a much-desired museum.

After fruitless discussions and a lack of commitment, the borough’s Estates & Investments Department supported a planning application by a developer to provide the present apartments. Of course they did: they’d put Edgbaston House up for sale in the first place and, despite a reasoned request, neither they nor the Planning Committee thought it necessary to ask the developer to preserve internal architectural features. Apparently, money is more important than heritage.

August 2013: Dan Thomas and Matt Broadhurst of developers Craven & Ellis remove material from Edgbaston House as part of the refurbishment programme.
NOTICE BOARD

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by Allan Frost
This collection of archive images, many never before published, documents life in Wellington between two World Wars. It reveals how people recovered from the effects of one devastating war before they were obliged to make preparations for coping with another.
It’s another ‘must read’ for everyone interested in the town’s past. Fonthill Media, £12.99.

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Our Public Talks 2014–2015
All talks begin promptly at 7:30 and are held in Wellington Library unless otherwise advised. Admission is free but donations are invited.

Wednesday June 18th
Allan Frost: A Visual Crawl Around Old Pubs

Wednesday July 16th
Pete Jackson: History of Wellington Town Football Club
7:30 at the Buck’s Head Football Ground Learning Centre
Donations after this talk will go to the club’s current charity appeal rather than for History Group funds.

Wednesday October 15th
Literary Festival: Allan Frost
Wellington 1900 - 1919: The Good and The Bad

Wednesday November 19th
Neil Clarke: Railways of East Shropshire

2015

Wednesday January 21st
Toby Neal (Shropshire Star): Wellington in the News

Wednesday February 18th
Dr Tamsin Rowe: The Corbetts

Wednesday March 18th
John Shearmann: The Parish

Wednesday April 15th
Wendy Palin: King’s Shropshire Light Infantry in WWI

Wednesday May 20th
Geoff Harrison: The Great War and Family History

Wednesday June 17th
Allan Frost: Scenes of Old Wellington

Wednesday July 16th
Marc Petty: Phillip Larkin’s Wellington

History Group Contact Details
Please send emails to WHG Secretary: Joy Rebello at joyrebello@hotmail.co.uk
and letters to Wellington History Group,
2 Arrow Road, Shawbirch, Telford, Shropshire, TF5 0LF.

Other officers of the Wellington History Group
committee are:
President: George Evans.
Chairman: Pat Fairclough.
Treasurer: Wendy Palin.
Wellingtonia Editor: Allan Frost.

www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com
M ost people who lived in this area three decades or more ago will have fond memories of Midland Red. The distinctively coloured vehicles based in Wellington provided most, but not all, of the local bus services in East Shropshire for almost 70 years from the late 1920s to the 1990s.

Arrival in Wellington
Midland Red, or to give it its proper name, the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company Ltd., was established in November 1904 and began operating in Birmingham in the following year. Competition from Birmingham Corporation’s motor omnibuses and electric tramways meant Midland Red made little headway before the First World War. But gradually routes were developed outside the city and by the 1920s the Company was, to use its slogan, ‘beginning to paint the Midlands red’.

Midland Red had first appeared in Shrewsbury as early as 1916 when it leased premises first in Abbey Foregate, and then Roushill, before moving to a purpose-built two-bay garage in Ditherington in November 1920. Four Tilling-Stevens single-decker vehicles were allocated to this depot, and it was the Shrewsbury garage that provided Midland Red’s first regular service into Wellington in 1922.

They continued to do so until July 1926 when Midland Red’s first garage in Wellington was opened in Mansell Road, rented from the Wellington Transport Co. Ltd. The initial allocation to this garage was three single-decker Tilling-Stevens TS3s from Shrewsbury, and the Shrewsbury depot was still responsible for the maintenance of these buses at the Wellington dormitory garage. But the growing fleet of buses outgrew Mansell Road, which ceased to be the home of Midland Red in Wellington in July 1932.

The new garage in Charlton Street (below, left) was purpose built on behalf of the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Co.; it began with eleven single-decker buses transferred from Mansell Road, but had a capacity of 15. It was designed to accommodate double-deckers, but low railway bridges in the area at places such as Aqueduct, Coalbrookdale and Oakengates prevented their general use.

Expansion
The buses based at the Wellington garage provided a growing number of services from the town. Early photos show Midland Red buses at Ironbridge, Horsehay and Dawley, and these were vehicles built to the company’s own specifications. Midland Red continued to grow throughout the West Midlands and to publicise its services for business and pleasure. But the outbreak of war in 1939 affected the Company’s services, and revised timetables were put into place. There was a gradual increase in the size of the Wellington fleet, more so in the years following the end of the Second World War. By May 1949, 27 buses were allocated to the garage, and a decision was taken to rebuild it.

The new garage opened on the site in September 1953, with a capacity of 50 single-decker buses but housing at first an allocation of 39, including these S9 types (below). At the time, this steel-framed garage was very different from any other on the system and very modern in appearance. The triple entrance/exit and flat brick-built frontage included stone facings and an ornamental column surmounted by a flagpole. Again, although suitable for double-deckers, none were ever allocated to the garage. The number of buses, around the 40 mark, remained more or less stable until the late 1960s and then further development of the land available at the rear provided an extension for up to a total of 75 buses. Following the building of the new garage, the office was moved to premises in Queen Street (above).

Local Railways
In the period following the end of the Great War, railways began to feel the impact of competition from road vehicles. Competition came not only from the carriage of goods by lorries, many of which had been snapped up cheaply from the War Department by entrepreneurs such as Harry Price of Dawley; but also from the carriage of passengers by the burgeoning number of local bus operators like the Midland Red. The railways appear to have tackled this development in two ways. First of all, the years following the creation of the Big Four railway companies in 1923 saw large scale investment in bus companies by the railways, and in April 1930 half the Ordinary shares in the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Co. were purchased by the Great Western Railway and the London Midland & Scottish Railway. Secondly, in the 1930s, the GWR opened a number of halts in this area in an attempt to boost passenger numbers. Examples are:

— on the main line, New Hadley;
— on the Wenlock Branch, Ketley Town, New Dale, Doseley, Green Bank and Farley;
— on the Crewe Branch, Longdon;
---on the Severn Valley line, Cound and Jackfield.
But nothing could stop the march of the bus and, when the wholesale closure of our local branch lines took place between 1952 and 1964, buses were in most cases already providing services on these routes.

**The Shropshire Omnibus Association**
The expansion of Midland Red in the West Midlands in the 1920s led to uneasy relations with, and competition from, other bus operators. However, the Road Traffic Act of 1930 brought regulation to the industry, and operators who obtained licences for services enjoyed the protection of the Traffic Commissioners.

This made it more difficult for independents to poach on the company’s best routes, and similarly the Midland Red could no longer use its superior might to crush the opposition.

Nevertheless, the company continued to expand up to the outbreak of war in 1939 by the purchase of over 150 small businesses and their services.

It’s against this background that the operators of a number of local bus services in this area formed the Shropshire Omnibus Association in 1931. At this time most of the 20 or so members of the Association were one-vehicle operators, and the two main routes they operated were:

—Wellington-Trench-Donnington (with variations at the Donnington end to Muxton Corner, Coal Wharf and Humbers); and

—Wellington-Oakengates-Wrockwardine Wood (with seven variations including Priorslee, St Georges and Lamb Corner).

These were ‘rota operations’, which means the two routes were worked cooperatively by the several private provider companies in the Association, with the particular journeys worked changing usually month to month according to a rota, so that all took their share of the good and not-so-good timings. Apparently, before the Second World War a third rota service ran between Wellington and the Wrekin in summer; and some Association members also operated other services.

The Shropshire Omnibus Association services operated from the Victoria Street bus stop. Individual members of the Association had their own livery, but the Association bought tickets in bulk and published a timetable for the rota routes, which often included members’ other services.

Midland Red continued to cover most of the Shropshire Omnibus Association routes with its own frequent services and from 1950 cooperated with publishing a joint timetable. However, following the designation of ‘Telford New Town’ in the 1960s, big changes were on the horizon. With the growth of the Telford and the resultant changes in traffic flow and shopping patterns, Midland Red acquired the several shares of Cooper’s of Oakengates in 1973, and they had taken over the remaining Association services by 1978. Reorganisation followed, with new circular routes based primarily on the Shopping Centre.

**Original Routes**
Prior to these changes, Midland Red timetables for this area in the 1950s and 60s showed a wide range of services:

**Long Distance & Seaside Services**
- Service C: Birmingham – Llandudno, via Wellington (daily, Whitsun–end of September);

**Express Services**
- X96: Northampton-Birmingham-Shrewsbury, daily via Wellington;
- X97: Leicester-Birmingham-Shrewsbury, via Wellington (Sat. & Sun.).

**Local town services for Wellington and Bridgnorth**
- W40 – W44: Charlton Street/Queen Street/Victoria Street to the Arleston and Orleton estates;
- B90 - 91: Bridgnorth.

**Regular Services**
Midland Red ran a wide range of services in this area radiating from Wellington, which were given the service numbers from 886 upwards (with gaps). Some examples of heavily used daily services were:
- 897: Wellington to Ironbridge, via Dawley and Madeley;
- 904: Wellington to Much Wenlock, via Horshay and Ironbridge;
- 909: Wellington to Kidderminster, via Ironbridge and Bridgnorth;
- 917: Shrewsbury to Edgmond, via Wellington and Newport.

The daily services run on the Oakengates and Donnington routes from Victoria Street were shared with members of the Shropshire Omnibus Association: 894/899/900: Wellington-Oakengates-St Georges-New Yard; 913/914/915: Wellington-Donnington (Coal Wharf/ Garrison/Roundabout).

Midland Red also ran works services (Mon-Fri) and Sunday services to hospitals:
- 886: Dawley to Hadley Castle Works;
- 889/900: Ironbridge and Madeley to Donnington COD;
- 902: Wellington to Shirlett Sanatorium (near Broseley);
- 961: Wellington to Bicton Heath Mental Hospital (later known as Shelton Hospital).

**Privatisation**
In 1969 Midland Red became a subsidiary of the National Bus Company, having been partly nationalised since 1947. It was split into five new companies in 1981, with the Shropshire area coming under Midland Red North, based at Cannock.

Local identity titles were introduced for services at that time – the Shrewsbury area adopted ‘Hotspur’ and the Telford area ‘Tellus’. Midland Red North was privatised in 1988 and was rebranded as ‘Arriva’ in 1997.

Charlton Street and Queen Street lost their bus stands some years before when the main Wellington terminus moved to the revamped Victoria Street bus station; and everything changed with the setting up of the new bus station on the Parade in 2009. The last direct link with Wellington was lost with the transfer of the bus depot from Charlton Street to Stafford Park in 2012.
I was walking around Salisbury Cathedral in the summer and my attention was drawn to a tomb set into the floor that must have been walked over thousands of times without anybody particularly noticing it.

The inscription reads ‘The body of Tho. sonn of Tho. Lambert Gent who was borne May 13 An Do 1683 & dyed Feb 19 the same year.’ Here is evidence that Thomas died in February 1683 yet wasn’t born until May 1683! A conundrum, or is it? Surely there must be a simple explanation. Of course there is. In 1683 Protestant England was still using the Julian calendar, whereas the Catholic countries of Europe were using the Gregorian calendar.

The lives of our ancestors, certainly 500 years ago, were not controlled and directed by time; there was no ‘clocking on and off’ at the beginning and end of your shift; no change of lesson when the ‘bell goes’; no frustration when the bus or train isn’t ‘on time’; and no getting confused when the clocks go back in the autumn or forward in the spring. The only time control which governed your life was the rising and going down of the sun. The day began when it was light enough to work and stopped when the day-light faded.

Similarly, the year was measured by the seasons: no annual holiday, no regular Bank Holidays. The soil was prepared when the crop was matured and ripened.

The only special days of the year were saints’ days and the religious festivals of Christmas and Easter. A villager would know these two festivals but, beyond that, only days designated by the local priest would be significant.

The local church would dictate the passage of time from one year to the next; it was more than likely that individuals would be unaware of their birthday and probably didn’t ‘celebrate’ it anyway. It was common to measure their age by the number of winters they had endured.

The Church and its priests would have some knowledge of the year; after all, they needed to ‘control their flock of parishioners’, and higher church officials had important jobs in the government of the country: they needed some measure of time and had to measure years with some degree of certainty. However, they did not number years as we do but generally recorded the year of a monarch’s rise to the throne and count the years from that date until the next monarch. These are called Regnal Years.

The first Regnal year of a particular monarch would begin on the day of their accession to the throne, not their coronation, and would end when they left the throne by death, being deposed, or abdication. The next monarch’s regnal years would then begin. Each monarch would begin their first regnal year on a different date: a confusing system of counting years which did not die in our country until 1963, ‘In England, and later the United Kingdom, until 1963, each Act of Parliament was defined by its serial number within the session of parliament in which it was enacted, which in turn was denoted by the regnal year or years in which it fell.’

Perhaps we are indeed fortunate in that the Church, Catholic or Protestant, was always present and needed to measure the years with some sort of regularity.

The major ‘movable feast’ of Easter must fall on the Sunday following the first (paschal) full moon following the spring equinox. This was decreed at the Council of Nicea in 325 and, as the paschal full moon determined the date of the Jewish Passover, and Christian belief sets the Resurrection as the Sunday after the Jewish Feast of the Passover, the date for Easter is set. Fixing the date for Easter seems complicated enough but before 1582 the known western world was using the inaccurate Julian calendar.

The Julian calendar, which Julius Caesar adopted in the year 46BC, consisted of a solar year of twelve months. It began on January 1st and leap years were every third year, but the calendar evolved and adapted particularly with the rise of the Christian faith. This calendar was changed through the centuries. It would appear that there was no consensus across the countries and regions as to when the year began; in England the year started on 25th March and ended on 24th March. Then astronomers discovered that there was an error of eleven minutes a day, or three days every four hundred years. This error had been accumulating over the centuries so that every 128 years the calendar was out of sync with the equinoxes and solstices; thus, between the year 325 to 1582, the error amounted to ten days in all, and the ‘fixing’ of Easter became inaccurate. This was especially troubling to the Roman Catholic Church because the date of Easter by the sixteenth century was well on the way to slipping into summer.

Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendar to match the solar year so that Easter would once again fall upon the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the Vernal Equinox.

This ‘Gregorian’ calendar, the calendar used today, was first introduced by Pope Gregory XIII via a Papal Bull in February 1582 to correct the errors of the old Julian calendar. The Gregorian
The calendar was adopted immediately upon the promulgation of Pope Gregory’s decree in the Catholic countries of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Poland, and shortly after in France. During the next year or two most Catholic regions of Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands also accepted this calendar. Protestant nations did so later, at various times.

In Britain the change to the Gregorian calendar was not until 1752. No doubt there were political reasons as well as the religious turmoil to account for the ‘delay’. The whole religious scene was chaotic; Henry VIII was King just prior to the Bull of Pope Gregory, and at Henry’s death England was plunged into religious chaos for many decade afterwards. Then England was ripped apart by its own strife, the Civil War. Hence England was a very troubled land during the 170 years between the Papal Bull and the Act of 1751 (below).

England came into line with the majority of Europe after 1752; we had a common calendar. The changes were made by the 1751 Calendar Act of Parliament ‘for Regulating the Commencement of the Year; and for Correcting the Calendar now in Use’. This came into force in September 1752 when 11 days were omitted from the year; the day after 2nd September 1752 was 14th September 1752. This loss of 11 days was not welcome to the populous: ‘Give us our Eleven Days’ was a popular political slogan of the time.

There was a second change which the Act introduced, as stated in its title which changed the first day of the year. Prior to 1752 in England the year began on 25th March (Lady Day). The Act changed this so that the day after 31st December 1751 was 1st January 1752, New Year’s Day. As a consequence, 1751 was a short year - it ran only from 25 March to 31 December. A ‘pit-fall’ for the unwary family historian.

Thomas Lambert (junior) lived, all but briefly, at the time of the Julian calendar; he had been born in May 1683, after the Civil War and Restoration of Charles II when England still used the Julian calendar with the year beginning in 25 March, and he sadly died the following February, yet still in the same (Julian) year of 1683; not really a case of burial before birth!

Steve Spragg posted a photo of his Clifton Children’s Club badge on the Telford Memories Facebook page. The former cinema is currently in the news because of a campaign to preserve and turn it into a community arts centre with, naturally, a cinema (visit www.theclifton.org).

Steve told us: ‘I belonged to the club. The Clifton used to be packed out every Saturday morning. Usually cartoons were shown and the last item was always a serial; I particularly remember one was Rocket Man.

‘Near the end of the every episode, it looked like some catastrophic disaster was going to happen to him and you had to wait until the next Saturday to see what happened. Of course nothing really did; the hero survived ... but loyal children had turned out to the cinema once again! That’s really all I can remember. I was about ten years old at the time (I’m now 58) so it was a long time ago.’

In the early seventies Wendy Palin went to a similar showing at Oakengates Town Hall. Besides films, there was road safety with Pierre the Clown and a birthday slot where you were invited onto the stage if your birthday was that week.

This was before TV schedulers realised it could have an audience of children on Saturday mornings. Multi-coloured Swap Shop, the first Saturday show aimed at youngsters, first aired in October 1976.
Having found reference to a gibbet somewhere in the vicinity of The Horseshoe Inn at Uckington, I have continued to search for the facts of the crime, the punishment dealt out and a more precise location for the elusive gibbet.

I felt I had to find definitive answers to the discrepancies that had appeared in the various versions of the story. I had two murder victims, William Matthews (who had been buried in Wellington churchyard somewhere near where the Lych Gate now stands) and Walter Whitcombe, something of an unknown entity.

How they met their end was unknown except that it was at the hands of Robert and William Bolas, the former giving rise to a story that has been repeated world-wide for almost three hundred years (see Wellingtonia issue 15).

Surfing the internet allows us to find and access articles that would, in all likelihood, remain undiscovered without its power. I found a newspaper article in the Leicester Mercury from December 29th, 1883, which referred to the History of Shrewsbury, Volume I, by Owen & Blakeway, published in 1824. On page 581, this entry is found:

“1723. Sept. 4th. Robert & William Bolas were executed for the murder of William Matthews and Walter Whitcombe at Beslow, June 19th. They were hung in chains on the south side of the London-road, a little beyond the 7th mile-stone, where the writer of this remembers the gibbet in 1775.”

Travelling from Shrewsbury towards Wellington, the gibbet was on the right hand side of the road; seven miles takes us more or less to the tree-lined lane that leads to Uppington. Going beyond there in 1723, the London road followed a different course to its present path, heading to the right of the current route and up Overley Hill. The gibbet framework must have stood somewhere here, well away from dwellings but in full view of travellers along the road.

The scene of the crime is named as Beslow, in the parish of Wroxeter, a cluster of houses just south west of the Horseshoes and inaccessible today. Using Google Earth allows us a bird’s eye view of the location as it appears now. John Rocque’s map (below) shows how it was in 1752 with the seventh mile indicated on the map. The large, half-timbered farmhouse was pulled down within living memory. The barn, site of the crime, stood until about 1830 and showed marks of the fray on the beams.

From Parish records, our second murder victim Walter Whitcombe was buried as a pauper in Uppington graveyard on June 21st, leaving wife, Mary and daughter Martha not quite a year old. Some accounts state that he was guarding his own wheat, but burial as a pauper brings that into question.

The Uppington Registers also list the life events of the Bolas Family. Robert Bolas, Yeoman and Churchwarden and his wife Catherine had a son Robert on 30th May, 1675.

In 1723, the men would have been tried at Shrewsbury by the Oxford Assizes, a travelling court. Records for this, if they still existed, would be held at the National Archive at Kew.

Calling up the Crown and Gaol Book for 1723 produced the record (top of next page) that reads

“For ye murder of Wm Mathews the said Robert Bolas Striking him with a hedging Bill on ye head face neck shoulders breast stomach & sides to giving him severall mortall wounds of which he instantly died the 20th June last at Wroxeter and the said Wm. Bolas being then present and assisting therein.

On the Coroner’s Inquest for the same Murder.”
A similar entry for Walter Whitcombe cited wounds to the ‘head face throat and back’, again causing instant death. (See image for samples of hedging bills.)

The inconsistent date seems to indicate that the crime took place late on the night of the 19th June or early on the 20th.

I hoped to find the Coroners’ Inquest but, with limited time, I was only able to photograph a number of recognisances or bonds, most written in Latin with English below, ordering the men listed here to attend the next Assizes to give evidence against Robert and Wm Bolas. One is shown below mentions Thomas Lee and Edward Miles while other examples include the following: John Spencer of Cross Houses, Weaver, Andrew Ffox of Eyton (on Severn, I suggest), John Dyos, Thomas Eyton, Edward Welling, Peter Lambert, Robert Clarke, James Eashen and John Court.

Possibly unaware of the number of men called to witness against him, accounts tell that Robert thought his trial would result in an acquittal and that he would dance in his chains and say, ‘I would that these troublesome times were over, as I want to go home and get my barley.’ This also became a Shropshire saying recorded at the time.

By Sept 4th, all Robert’s hopes came to nothing when he and William were hanged in Shrewsbury and afterwards gibbeted near Uppington.

The next question arises from a comment in three of the secondary sources. The newspaper report of 1883, Charles Harper’s Holyhead Road and Emma Boore in Wrekin Sketches all say that ‘William Matthew’s tombstone stood in the portion of the churchyard that was some time ago taken for the purposes of the railway’ at Wellington.

Can we prove this?

Only time and more research will tell.
I’ve got granddad’s medals and some memorabilia from the First World War, but I don’t know about his war record, can you help?

Many of us will be faced with a similar question, particularly as the Great War will be the focus of much reminiscing over the next year or so. We want to know what our grandfathers or great-grandfathers did in the Great War.

My wife’s grandfather served in the Great War. We know this because he sent a postcard to her father, a young boy of six at the time. But this is all, apart from one photograph of him in uniform. There are no Service Records existing of what he did. Over half of the Service Records of soldiers of the Great War were destroyed in the second Great Conflict, the so called ‘burnt records’.

If your relative was a soldier in the Great War and his records are not part of those ‘burnt’ in the Second War, you could be very successful. If it happens that your relative was an officer, the records still exist in their fullness. I’m fortunate in that two of my mother’s brothers both served, one an officer, the other a soldier, and in both cases their Service Records still exist. Those of the officer can only be accessed at the National Archives at Kew but those of the soldier are ‘on-line’, albeit via a subscription, as well as at the National Archives.

Searching for Granddad Perry’s record was easy – we knew his age and address and fortunately his records existed. A simple search brought up two pages, and how illuminating! His Attestation Papers (‘Signing on’, bottom left) showed that he volunteered for the Royal Engineers on the 9th March 1915. Preliminary searches had already confirmed his date and place of birth, marriage and present address, so I was certain that this was the soldier. Granddad Perry, even though the age of 44 years and four months on the Form didn’t exactly correspond with his date of birth.

But there were problems arising from the second page of records – he was ‘discharged as ‘unlikely to become an efficient soldier being overage’, even quoting King’s Regulations! Importantly, this was dated 15th April 1915, just one month after his enrollment.

Samuel Perry served from March 1915 to April 1915, a very short period of time, yet it left us with the problem of the medals. Original medals issued during the Great War were inscribed around the edge with the name of the recipient, and this clearly identified S Perry.

Re-reading the Records, I noticed on the Attestation Form that Samuel had served in an
earlier period. He was a ‘time expired’ soldier of the South Staffordshire Regiment. It was at this point the family remembered that there were stories of his earlier service and perhaps he served in the Boer War. This was another avenue to search – some Military Records exist for the time before the Great War.

This search revealed twenty pages of Service Pension Records for this same Samuel Perry. It would appear that, as a single man, he joined the South Staffordshire Regiment at Lichfield on the 23rd October 1887, aged 18 years and four months, on a Short Service enrollment.

A further page provides a description of this 18 year old man.

These pages of Records are rewarding in that they show he served initially in Lichfield, then moved to Devonport (4th January 1888) and, on 25th September 1889, was sent to the Curragh in Ireland.

The majority of these records relate to his medical history; it is recorded that in January 1890 he had an accident which damaged his left shoulder so that in March 1890 he was discharged. There were no medals for his three years service, no travelling beyond the Irish Sea. He was ‘invalided out of the Army’.

This summary of his service with the South Staffordshire Regiment was only a few pages out of the all those available, and it was as I read on the real story unfolded.

Samuel, having enrolled in the Royal Engineers in March 1915 and discharged in April 1915 as ‘being too old to make an efficient soldier’, turned to his old Regiment and volunteered for service with the South Staffs. in May 1915 and was welcomed back into their ranks. It is interesting that, one month earlier aged 44 years, he had been rejected by the Royal Engineers, yet now, giving his age as 48, he is accepted. Ageing four years in one month appears to have been the key to his acceptance!

As an ‘old’ soldier Samuel was not given a ‘cushy number’ on the ‘home front’ but was sent to serve his country in France; ‘Embarked BEF’ in 1917.

As was common during the Great War, soldiers were transferred from one unit to another where there was a need, and this happened to Samuel. His record shows he served with a number of units, often changing his Regimental Number from the South Staffordshire Regiment, his original unit, and including the Royal Engineers. So much for their rejection! This movement from unit to unit is more easily seen on the Medal Roll (bottom right).

These medals were awarded to Samuel Perry of Wellington: the British War Medal (awarded to anyone who had served in uniform, particularly overseas but sometimes for service in the UK) and the Victory Medal (awarded to those who served in a theatre of war outside of the UK after January 1916). This latter was not awarded alone but only to those who had another service medal. These two formed part of a trio, irreverently referred to as ‘Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred’. Missing from Samuel’s medals is the 1914-15 Star issued for service to those who served in 1914 and 1915.

The story of his service in the 1880s and particularly his attempt to join up in March 1915, being rejected in April 1915 and his subsequent four years service from May 1915 to February 1919 certainly justifies some reward, but the jury is still out as to whether his persistence was the act of a hero wanting to serve his country, or an old man trying to regain his youth.

I am indebted to Dorothy Vickers (nee Perry), daughter of the late Bill Perry from The Old Bike Shop, Park Street, Wellington, who provided the initial enquiry, and personal materials and memories.
I’ve long been fascinated by a large, cast iron, monument to the Corbett family that lies in the grounds of All Saints church.

The monument is somewhat dilapidated now, but at one time would have stood as testimony to the wealth and prosperity of this family. Curiosity aroused, I decided to see what I could unearth about the family.

The inscription on the primary face of the monument is to commemorate the life of Samuel Corbett of this town, his wife Elizabeth and his son George Wycherley Corbett.

Samuel Corbett was born in 1819, the youngest son of Richard Corbett, a labourer, of New Street, Wellington. However, by the time of Samuel’s marriage in 1840, his father is recorded as a brick maker.

Evidence from the 1840 tithe map of Wellington, shows that Richard owned the ‘Duke of York’ public house in New Street, where I believe the family lived, seven properties in the yard to the rear (Corbett’s Yard) and a further five properties in Water Lane (bottom of Wrekin Road), the large garden of one he used as his brickyard.

Unlike his older brothers, Samuel didn’t follow his father into the family business but trained as a blacksmith and whitesmith, possibly apprenticed to George Wycherley of Back Lane (now King Street), whose daughter Elizabeth he married in 1840.

The marriage took place in Little Wenlock instead of the local church, probably because Elizabeth was already seven months pregnant at the time.

In 1841 Samuel was listed as a whitesmith, living at Prospect Row, Back Lane, with his wife Elizabeth and young son, William, and by 1851 he appears to have expanded his business and had taken on another blacksmith, recorded in his household as a servant.

From sales particulars held at Shropshire Archives we can ascertain that shortly after this, in 1853, Samuel had acquired a property in Park Street, Wellington, and it looks as if he took the opportunity at this point, to purchase adjoining land, with the intention of expanding his business (see 1853 plan and 1882 map below).

Slater’s 1859 Directory lists Samuel as a blacksmith, iron founder, whitesmith and beer retailer of Park Street. Ken Corbett, a direct descendant of Samuel, reminisced that when the property in Park Street was re-decorated, a large sign for the Travellers Rest public house was found on the plasterwork, evidence to it having been used for that purpose. By 1861 Samuel was employing eighteen men and five boys and in addition to the foundry in Park Street, he also had an ironmongery business in Church Street, Wellington, an outlet for the sale of his goods. Both businesses continued to flourish, and by the time of Samuel’s death in 1885 he left a personal estate of £4,488, the equivalent of £397,800 today, based on historic standard of living, but in terms of status and power worth far more.

After Samuel’s death the business continued to be run by two of his sons William and George, Thomas had already set up his own business in Shrewsbury (see www.madeinisshrewsbury.co.uk for a biography of Thomas Corbett), Walter was in business as a printer, and Samuel Jnr., blinded from childhood, was a professor of music (See Songs of the Wrekin in Wellingtonia issue 5).

By the 1890s, the company was among the country’s best-known manufacturers of agricultural machinery, winning numerous accolades at prize field trials throughout the country.

In 1892 the company won first prize at the Royal Show at Plymouth for their grinding mill, an achievement capitalized on in their future advertising.

William Corbett died in 1904 leaving an estate valued in the region of £12,757 and George in 1916 leaving personal effects to the value of £31,356, further indication of the success of the business.

SAMUEL CORBETT, BLACKSMITH  Judy Meeson

Advert for S. Corbett & Sons, 1906.
Cheque produced for S. Corbett & Son.
Albert Samuel Corbett, son of William Corbett became the principal of S. Corbett & Son and the company continued to trade as a private family business until its incorporation as a limited company in 1951. The business continued to operate from Park Street until 1974. (See http://youtu.be/4xIY_1JEVig for images of Samuel Corbett’s exhibits at agricultural show in the early 1950s.)

At its height, the business employed in the region of forty to fifty men and during the war, when it became difficult to find male labour, they employed women.

There were considerable demands upon the company at this time to produce more machinery as food production was paramount.

After the war they won a contract to produce one thousand grinding mills for the United Nations Rehabilitation Organization, in a period of eight months, which cost in the region of fifty to sixty pounds each, and were sent all over the world.

Although the business continued to operate from the premises in Park Street, the family moved to more prestigious addresses to reflect their rising affluence. Albert Samuel’s first property was in Albert Road, he then moved the family to Highfield House in Wrekin Road.

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After a brief spell in Wolverhampton, the family returned to live at ‘Burleigh’ in Vineyard Road and later moved to ‘The Brooklands’, previously the home of Sir Charles Henry MP.

The ironmongery business in Church Street, Wellington (below) appears to have passed to Samuel’s eldest son William, upon Samuel’s death, and became known as W. Corbett & Son. Upon William’s death in 1904 the business continued to be run by his son Howard Corbett, who had already been acting as manager of the business. By 1909 the business had expanded, and renamed W. Corbett & Co, was not only operating the ironmongery business in Church Street but also owned premises in Alexandra Road for the manufacture of galvanised tanks, sheep racks, pig troughs and many articles for agricultural use.

In the 1930s the business acquired new premises nearby in Hollies Road and became known as W. Corbett & Co. (Wellington) Ltd. This company continued to operate from these premises until 2000 when it moved to Halesfield in Telford. The Corbett family ceased to be involved with the business in 2005.

Do you have any photographs relating to the Corbetts? I’m in close contact with the family and they are particularly interested in obtaining copies of photographs relating to the Iron Works in Park Street and any of William and Samuel Corbett and their families.
Wrockwardine Hundred

Wrockwardine? they asked, when I suggested there should be an article about it in Wellingtonia. ‘It’s not in Wellington.’ ‘Ah,’ I replied, ‘but Wellington used to be in Wrockwardine, according to the Domesday Book.’ That’s how I come to be writing about Wrockwardine in Wellingtonia.

When the Normans and their allies conquered England they ordered an audit of what they had just acquired, nicknamed the Domesday Book. It was written in the Latin of the churches and the French of the conquerors with lots of abbreviations. Shires were changed to counties but the hundreds, into which the shires were divided, remained and Wellington is shown as in the hundred of Wrockwardine.

Laurens Otter, in his book Wellington, a Town with a Past suggested that when the first English came here they established Wrockwardine as a military headquarters, the ‘wardine’ of The Wrekin, with Wellington as its religious centre, ‘The Temple in the grove’ and Orleton as the residence of the Earl. Nobody, so far as I know, has proved him wrong, though there are some (including me) who are dubious.

Much of the information that follows is taken from an excellent version of the Domesday Book edited by John Morris and published by Phillimore. It not only translates the original into plain modern English but also explains its meaning.

Wrockwardine hundred had a similar area to the old Wrekin District, now called the Borough of Telford and Wrekin or more succinctly the county of The Wrekin. The Wrockwardine Hundred included; Albrightlee, Atcham, Berwick, Beslow, Bratton, Brockton, Buttery, Charlton, Chatsall, Cherington, Chetwynd, Cross Hills, Crudgington, Dawley, Eaton Constantine, Edgmond, Childs Ercall, High Ercall, Eyton on Severn, Eyton on the Weald Moors, Hadley, Haughton, Hinstock, Horton, Howle, Isombridge, Kynnarsley, Lawley, Leegomery, Leighton, Lilleshall, Longdon upon Tern, Longford, Longner, Peplow, Poynton, Preston upon the Weald Moors, Puleston, Rodington, Sambrook, Shawbury, Stoke on Tern, Sutton upon Tern, Tibberton, Uckington, Uffington, Uppington, Waters Upton, Upton Magna, Wellington, Wreford, Woodcote, Wrockwardine, Wroxeter and Little Witheford.

So how did all these places come to be in the Hundred of Wrockwardine? And how did little Wrockwardine come to be the chief place of the district?

Shropshire was then known as Scropeceshire. Most of it had been given to the new Earl of Shrewsbury (Scropesberie) by William the Conqueror (aka William the Bastard) who then ‘owned’ the whole country. The Earl, Roger Montgomery, had been vital to William in the Battle of Hastings, when an exhausted English army was defeated and King Harold killed.

Manors like Wrockwardine and Wellington had been owned by the Mercian English lords; now they changed hands. King Edward (the Confessor) had been lord of Wrockwardine but now Earl Roger held it apart from the church, which had its own land. There were 13 villagers, 4 smallholders a priest and a rider; they had 12 ploughs, 8 ploughmen, a mill and woodland. Before 1066 it paid £6 13s 8d tax but now it paid £12 10s tax.

Wellington had been owned by Edwin; there were 12 villagers and 8 smallholders with 9 ploughs (and another 9 possible), a mill (probably at Walcot) and 2 fisheries. Before 1066 it was taxed at £20 but now only worth £18.

So, even then Wellington had a slightly larger population (the figures are for families, not people) and was worth more. Why was Wrockwardine more important?
It was only by chance that I found out about Edith Picton-Turbervill and that she had been the first and, so far, only female member of Parliament for the area.

I was curious to find out more about her. Why did a crowd of three thousand miners and their families spontaneously burst into song in Market Square when they heard she was to be their Member of Parliament in 1929?

When I delved into Edith Picton-Turbervill’s past, I discovered some of the reasons she was so well liked despite her privileged background. As my admiration and knowledge about her grew, so did my anger that she had been forgotten. But, as a writer, I realised that words and writing would be one of the best ways of restoring and resurrecting her into history.

I purchased some of her books and read her autobiography Life is Good.

She was born in 1872 into a large family. Her father had inherited Ewenny, formerly a Norman priory near Bridgend in South Wales, which had land and profitable coal mines. She was sent to the Royal School in Bath with her twin sister Beatrice and had an education but didn’t want to remain at home until she married.

She had a religious ‘epiphany’ and persuaded her father to allow her to be a missionary with the Young Womens’ Christian Association. During her training, she was exposed to the poverty in the slums of the East End of London but, undeterred, she went off to India to set up hostels for women and girls.

She became disillusioned with the work in India and felt that the truly needy were not being attended to. On her return to the UK she was asked to become Vice President of the YWCA and campaigned for funds to support women munitions’ workers in the First World War, helping to set up canteens for them, as well as creating hostels in France.

After the war she met many others who were becoming involved with the fledgling Labour Party and was asked to join it and stand as an MP. She agreed and was adopted by The Wrekin constituency where she canvassed and helped at the miners’ soup kitchens during the General Strike of 1926. She became well known and appeared at all sorts of functions.

She never forsook her religion or strong feelings that women should be at the centre of the Anglican Church. She wrote books and pamphlets campaigning for women to be priests and was the first woman to preach a sermon at a statutory service (in Lincolnshire).

Although her political life was cut short by the Stock Market Crash and divisions caused by the National Government, Edith continued to work and campaign for the working class, the poor and for women.

She travelled extensively. She visited Russia in the Thirties and met Kemal Ataturk of Turkey. She was President of the National Council of Women Citizens. She even appeared on television in the Sixties.

My research revealed what an interesting and important contribution Edith Picton-Turbervill made to Women’s History, and what an extraordinary woman she was. She forged an independent life and career, and devoted herself to trying to improve the lives of those less fortunate. She must have been very determined and strong. The family chapel has a plaque with the words ‘a sometime Member of Parliament’ – how dismissive and sad! She had so much energy and achieved so much. She was a trailblazer and an example to us all.

I decided to honour and celebrate her by trying to bring her to life as a person. I wrote the first part of ‘A Head Above Others’ as a diary and in the second part transcribed words from her own book Christ and Woman’s Power (published in 1919).

I have put her on Wikipedia and think it is time the town of Wellington should also remember her somehow and be proud of what she did.

A Head Above Others
fictionalised memoir of Edith Picton–Turbervill O.B.E.
Perigord Press
Paperback available from Amazon for £7.99 and also as an ebook.

CORSET DEMO

CORSET DEMONSTRATION
MONDAY NEXT, SEPTEMBER 28TH TO SATURDAY OCTOBER 3RD INCLUSIVE
MISS GRACE HUTCHINSON,
The Great Authority on deep breathing and expert in Corsets, who has given advice free to Ladies in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and all the largest Provincial Towns in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, will be present at the showrooms of Messrs. J.L. & E.T. MORGAN, WELLINGTON, when Ladies may consult her as to the kind of Corsets most suitable to them, without any obligation on their part to buy.

A Free Invitation is here given to all Ladies interested to view the Enormous Variety and to Consult Miss Hutchinson. Our stock has been largely augmented, and all are welcome to this Corset Exhibition.

We trust our Customers will avail themselves of the unique opportunity now offered.
WELLINGTON JOURNAL advert, 1908.
This momentous year began with the above cartoon, showing a witch casting a spell to reduce the size of an over-large camel named ‘Rates’ so that it could pass through a narrow Public Opinion crevice, otherwise known as the Needle’s Eye on The Wrekin Hill.

The cartoon signified the extremely unlikely chance that Shropshire County Council would ever reduce the high rates charged to the county’s residents. In the event, all forms of taxation would impose an even greater burden with the onset of the First World War, whereupon the camel’s rates, which later did increase, would seem relatively insignificant.

There was almost nothing to indicate that 1914 would be any different to previous recent years. Yes, the arms race with Germany continued to cause concern, yet in the context of the day it said more about each participating country’s sense of insecurity than feelings of aggression. Germany had a massive army because it felt threatened by France and Russia, who in turn increased the size of their standing armies and even introduced conscription to boost numbers. The British Government wasn’t (apparently) too concerned and sat back, comforted that the English Channel gave adequate protection against these nervous foreigners; and who needed the expense of conscription anyway?

The ‘race’, which, among a range of measures, included the production of bigger ships (‘Dreadnoughts’) with bigger guns capable of shooting bigger shells at targets much further away and more accurately than hitherto. No one in their right minds really felt that war was just around the corner, so life continued as normal (apart from levels of taxation which had been steadily increasing since about 1870).

At a local level, the Wellington branch of the Shropshire Yeomanry continued to train, as did boys from the Officers’ Training Corps at Wellington (later renamed ‘Wrekin’) College, whose band led parades (as above in Church Street after a service at All Saints parish church) through the streets to Market Square, where occasional drills to musical accompaniment took place, much to the enjoyment of onlookers.

By the end of July, tensions reached breaking point, and a combination of Nationalism and Imperialism led to some stupid decisions ... and war.

Below, townsfolk assembled in Market Square on August 4th,
awaiting the announcement delivered by telegram that Britain was now at war with Germany.

Within days, mounted soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment arrived in Wellington (previous page, bottom), and used the Market Hall in Market Street as a temporary barracks while their horses were billeted on the field immediately north of the High School (now New College) buildings in King Street.

This led to the weekly general market having to be relocated for just one day to The Green and part way along Church Street ... the former location of the town’s market which had last met there some fifty years earlier at which time it moved to the market hall itself. The photo top right was taken on that historic day.

Once the Cheshire Regiment had departed to continue its journey to the Western Front, long convoys of vehicles descended on the town.

They had been commandeered from businesses throughout the country by the British War Office; those in this photo (right) taken on the railway bridge in King Street came from Bury in Lancashire and, like the Cheshire Regiment, were on their way to war.

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**THE GREAT WAR IN WELLINGTON**

*BY ALLAN FROST*

Many books and articles have been written about the origins and battlefields of the Great War as well as tales of soldiers’ lives during the conflict. This book is unique in that it shows the impact of the war on Wellington itself, how it coped and played its part.


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Wellington Town Football Club staged a special match in 1914 when a team of former Town players who now played for ‘first class clubs’ elsewhere in the country was scheduled to play against a team of players who currently played for Wellington and Shrewsbury Town.

Former Wellington Town players (and their present teams in brackets) as seen above are top, left to right: Gordon Jones (Shrewsbury), Lloyd Davies (Northampton), A. Causer (Glossop), G. Harris (Coventry), J. Freeman (Llanelly). Bottom: R. Firth (Notts Forest), H. Hampton (Aston Villa), W. Littlewood (Aston Villa), W. Ball (Birmingham), G. Hampton (Glossop), F. Banks (Notts Forest).

This special team played the Wellington/Shrewsbury combined team which comprised Hedgecox (Wellington), Crump (Shrewsbury), Slater (Wellington), W. Jones (Shrewsbury), Nevison (Wellington), Harvey, Rogers and Joyce (Shrewsbury), Burden, Deacon and Davies (Wellington).
PHOTOCALL

0th January 2014 saw the official handing over of three Victorian maps of Wellington. The maps, comprising an 1853 version of the 1840 Tithe map (above) a late 1830s hand coloured street map and an 1850s map showing all the townships in the (then) Wellington parish were generously and kindly donated to Wellington History Group by Lanyon Bowdler solicitors whose head office is at Shrewsbury.

After negotiation with officials at Telford council, we secured permission for the maps to be hung in two secure meeting rooms for perusal by members of the public when the rooms are not in use. Please ask a member of library staff to arrange access.

The maps are wonderful sources of information for family researchers as well as anyone interested in the history of the town. For example, a magnificent amount of information can be obtained when the tithe map is used in conjunction with its ‘Apportionment’ (a listing showing ownership and occupancy of all properties) and the 1841 Census.

Also, the parish map shows which townships and villages fell within the Wellington parish, thus giving pointers to where information regarding people, businesses and streets for those settlements can be found.

We are in the process of producing a detailed background to the maps together with them in computer-viewable format, plus an abridged version of the Wellington tithe apportionment so that you can peruse and make use of them at home. All this will be made available on a DVD.

It’s taking some time, but we’re confident the wait will be well worth while!

Michael Gwynne sent our editor this photo of Wellington Half-Holiday Football Club, 1907-8 season. The club played when shops had ‘early closing’ on a weekday afternoon, hence the name.


Bob Coalbran submitted this photo to our editor and asked for any information connected to it or the ‘Old Swans’ whose members are pictured outside the Forest Glen Pavilion at the foot of The Wrekin Hill.

We have been told that the Old Swans in question refers to a social club at the Swan Hotel on Watling Street and the photo may date to the 1920s or 1930s, if not earlier.

Do you recognise any of the men and do you know anything about the Old Swans? If so, please get in touch with us.