The History game seems to be more popular now than it ever was when I was at school. Perhaps the fact that increasing numbers of folk are taking an interest in their ancestors – and want to know more about their lives and the places in which they lived – has something to do with it.

This has undoubtedly led to a greater interest being taken in television documentaries (and even ‘docusoaps’), history magazines and, of course, books, especially those with local interest.

But we mustn’t forget the wealth of knowledge revealed in old newspapers and maps, and Wellington Library is a good place to spend a few hours gleaning fascinating details from books, as well as newspapers on microfilm.

The latest additions comprise rare (probably unique) maps relating to Wellington and its surrounding area, including some from the Lord Forester Collection, all of which have been digitised at our request by Shropshire Archives.

These are now available for viewing on one of the library’s computers. Ask a librarian to show you how to access them.

They’re an important addition to the community history section.

If Dothill House wasn’t ‘Dothill House’, what was it? (this extract from 1944 Sale Particulars gives a clue.) See page 12.
The Yeomanry volunteer movement began in response to the French threat to this country at the end of the 18th century, but Yeomanry troops were actually deployed in dealing with outbreaks of domestic civil unrest during the early nineteenth century. How was the Yeomanry organised in this area and who made up its personnel?

From its beginning the officers of the Yeomanry came mostly from the landed gentry, and in this area that meant from the Cluddes, the Eytons, the Leekes, the Foresters and the Charltons. These families also provided the county magistrates, who played a leading role in keeping the peace. Some prominent local industrialists also became officers in the Yeomanry in its early years.

The rank-and-file members were tenant farmers and workers on the landed estates. All members of the Yeomanry were expected to undergo a period of training each year, to attend an annual camp and to parade in full dress uniform. The officers wore a scarlet tunic, turned up with black velvet and gold lace, white sash and breeches, a helmet, and were armed with a sabre and pistols.

With the reorganisation of 1814, the two Wellington troops (jointly commanded by a major since 1798) became part of the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry Regiment, commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel. Within the regiment, each troop was commanded by a captain and below him, in order of rank, were lieutenant and cornet (who carried the colours); and in the ranks usually two sergeants, two trumpeters and about 90 men.

The Cluddes

The most prominent figures in the early years of the Yeomanry in this area were members of the Cludge family and their relatives.

William, son of Edward Pemberton of Wrockwardine, inherited the Orleton estate on the death of his uncle Edward Cludde in 1785, on condition that he changed his name. In the year he was mayor of Shrewsbury, William raised the first voluntary corps in Shropshire, as described by a later Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment:

1795 – On March 6th, a meeting was held at the Pheasant Inn, Wellington, over which Mr Cludde of Orleton was requested to preside, and in a very impressive speech laid down the necessity of every man coming forward to assist in defending a glorious Constitution against the meditated attack of foreign foes...It was resolved that a Corps of 80 men should be enrolled, and Mr Cludde was unanimously chosen to be Captain. It was also decided that the troop should be called ‘The Wrekin Co. of Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry’.

When a second Wellington troop was formed in 1798, William Cludde became Major Commandant of the two combined troops, termed ‘The First Corps of the Shropshire Gentlemen and Yeomanry’; and with the amalgamation of five local troops in the southern half of the county in 1814 he became Lieutenant-Colonel of the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry. This was a position he held until his resignation in 1827, the year before his death.

His role was acknowledged on the inscription on his monument in Wrockwardine Church:

He served his country for many years in the capacities of a magistrate and soldier, in the latter commanding the South Shropshire Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry with distinguished zeal and ability, and in both rendering important benefits to his neighbourhood in times of difficulty and danger.

Other members of the Cludge family and relatives who served in the Yeomanry were William’s son Edward, son-in-law William Lacon Childe and cousin Thomas Pemberton.

Edward Cludde (1783-1840), who succeeded his father at Orleton in 1828, had become an officer in the second Wellington troop in 1803, and the celebration of his 21st birthday at a Yeomanry gathering was recorded in the following newspaper report:

May 2nd 1804. On Thursday, being the 21st birthday of Major [sic] Cludde, great celebrations took place at Orleton, Wellington. The Wellington Volunteers had a grand field day and after marching into town fired three volleys. Afterwards the Corps was entertained to dinner by their Commander Colonel [sic] Eyton.

William Lacon Childe of Wrockwardine had married William Cludde’s daughter, Harriet, in 1807 and two years later took over from Thomas Eyton as captain of the second Wellington troop. He continued as captain in the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry until his resignation in 1826, soon after succeeding his father at Kinlet Hall (near Cleobury Mortimer).

Thomas Pemberton of Wrockwardine Hall, William Cludde’s cousin, served as lieutenant in the first Wellington troop from 1795 to 1798.

Other Gentry

Thomas Eyton, whose residence was ‘The Mansion’ in the Crescent Road area of Wellington, formed the second Wellington troop in 1798 and remained its captain.
until his resignation in 1809. Following his disgrace and suicide in 1816 [see Wellingtonia issue 11], his son moved back to Eyton Hall and played no part in the Yeomanry; but his grandson, Thomas Campbell Eyton became cornet (1830), then lieutenant (1838) in the South Salopian Yeomanry Cavalry until his resignation in 1859.

**Thomas Leeke** of Longford Hall became a lieutenant in the second Wellington troop in 1822. His uncle, Egerton Leeke, who had been a captain in the same troop in 1803, lived at the family’s original home at ‘The Vineyard’, Wellington. Thomas’s son, Ralph Merrick Leeke, became captain of the new Newport & Shifnal troop in 1834.

**John George Weld-Forster**, whose family seat had been Dothill Park until the move to Willey Park in the mid-18th century following marriage, became 2nd Baron Forster in 1828. He had been a lieutenant in the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry in 1825 and captain the following year. He remained in the Yeomanry until his resignation in 1859.

**St John William Chiverton Charlton**, who succeeded to the Apley Castle estate in 1838, was an officer in the Dragoon Guards before becoming a lieutenant in the South Salopian Yeomanry Cavalry in 1859 and captain two years later, a position he held until his death in 1864.

His uncle, Philip Charlton of Wytheford Hall, had been a cornet (1822) in the Shrewsbury Yeomanry Cavalry and lieutenant (1835) in the South Salopian Yeomanry Cavalry.

**Industrialists**

**Richard Emery** of Burcot House, Wellington nailmaker and lessee of the Steeraway limeworks, was promoted within the officer ranks of the first Wellington troop – cornet in 1795, lieutenant in 1798 and captain in 1804. He continued as captain in the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry until 1828, the year before his death.

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**Henry Williams** *(above, photo courtesy of Paul Luter)*, local canal engineer and ironmaster, was a lieutenant in the second Wellington troop in 1798. A partner in the Ketley and Lawley ironworks, he lived at Ketley Hall from 1818 until his death in 1842.

**William Anstice** of Madeley Wood Hall inherited a share in the Madeley Wood Company from his uncle, William Reynolds, in 1803, the same year that he became a captain in the second Wellington troop.

**Thomas Jukes Collier**, a Wellington wine merchant with interests in the coal and iron trade in the Wombridge area, became lieutenant in the first Wellington troop in 1804. He was later in business in Newport.

**Joseph Reynolds**, half-brother of William, was a partner in Wellington’s first bank in 1805 and manager of Ketley ironworks until 1816. He became a cornet in the South Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry in 1822, resigning when it underwent amalgamation in 1828.

- - -

With the setting up of police forces across the whole country by the middle of the nineteenth century, the need to ‘call out the Yeomanry’ no longer existed. The last time that the two Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry regiments were called out was in 1842, to deal with suspected Chartist agitation. The regiments were amalgamated to form one county regiment in 1872.
Joseph Henry ‘Harry’ Hampton (1885-1963), famous footballer and England International, was born in Wellington. He was the fourth child of five in Henry and Selina Hampton’s family, which lived in Bury Yards in 1891. His father was a wood sawyer. By 1901 only Harry and his brother George were still living at home when the family had moved to 16 and 17 Glebe Street.

Harry became a wood turner and married Kate Mary Hannaford in June 1906 at West Bromwich. By 1911 Harry had becomes a professional footballer, living at 32 Anderson Road, Erdington, Birmingham with Kate and daughter Beattie and a servant.

He started his footballing career with a number of local clubs, including Shifnal Juniors, Hadley and Lilleshall Iron Works before making his debut for Wellington Town on 19th September 1903 (away to Walsall in a Birmingham League match, which Wellington lost 1-3).

During the 1903-04 season, he made 24 appearances and scored 16 goals (although some records for scorers are missing for then). He transferred on a professional contract to Aston Villa for the large sum of £120 in April 1904.

The 1904-5 season at Aston Villa was a great success: the club finished fourth in the first division and reached the FA Cup final at Crystal Palace where, in front of a crowd of 101,117, Harry scored both goals in a 2-0 win over Newcastle United.

Nicknamed ‘Happy Harry’ and ‘The Wellington Whirlwind’, Harry had a great goal scoring record at Aston Villa and to this day he still remains the top scorer of all time with 242 goals in 372 matches. He also played in the 1913 FA Cup final for Villa when Sunderland was beaten 1-0 in front of a crowd of 121,919.

Harry was a ‘physical’ centre forward but in this match he had to play in defence after the Villa goalkeeper went off injured and there were no substitutes in those days. There were some strong tackles and Harry and another player were suspended afterwards for an ‘unspecified incident’.

His tremendous goal-scoring record at Villa was as follows:

- 1904-05 28 matches 22 goals helping Aston Villa win the FA Cup
- 1905-06 35 matches 20 goals
- 1906-07 30 matches 21 goals
- 1907-08 30 matches 19 goals
- 1908-09 31 matches 9 goals
- 1909-10 35 matches 29 goals helping Aston Villa win the championship

- 1910-11 35 matches 21 goals
- 1911-12 36 matches 28 goals
- 1912-13 38 matches 30 goals helping Aston Villa win the FA Cup
- 1913-14 35 matches 24 goals
- 1914-15 32 matches 19 goals

Despite his goal tally, Harry was overlooked for international matches, perhaps due to his physical style of play. However, on 17th March 1913, he was selected to play for England against Wales. England won 4-3 with Harry scoring one of the goals.

In April 1913 he scored the winning goal when England beat Scotland 1-0. He played a further two internationals, giving him a record of 4 international caps for England and scoring 2 goals. The war interrupted his international career but he did play in the ‘unofficial military international’ against Scotland in May 1916 at Goodison Park in front of 22,000 when England beat Scotland 4-3 with Harry again scoring.

Enlisting for the Great War in 1915, Harry served in the Somme and suffered from the effects of mustard gas poisoning which damaged his lungs. He was never the same player after the war. His goal tally was:

- 1918-19 3 matches 5 goals
- 1919-20 7 matches 0 goals

The Who’s Who of Aston Villa book describes Harry Hampton as ‘afraid of no-one, his strong, forceful, determined play was appreciated by plenty of fans. He was the idol of the Villa Park faithful fans, Hampton was robust in the extreme. He often barged the goalkeeper’. On one occasion he was able to barge the famous 22 stone goalkeeper William Foulke over the goal-line. (Foulke was born in Dawley but played for Sheffield United and Chelsea).

On February 25th 1920 he received a free transfer and signed for Birmingham City FC in the second division where again he was a success. He played for two years there, scoring 31 goals in 57 matches. In September 1922 he transferred to Newport County where he played only 14 matches, scoring two goals.

He returned to Wellington Town January 1924, playing 5 matches and scoring five goals before retiring as a player. Records confirm that Harry played 29 times for Wellington Town scoring ‘at least’ 21 goals.

He then took coaching positions with Preston North End in 1925 and Birmingham City in January 1926. After completely retiring from football, he moved to Rhyl where he ran the Carlton café and died, age 77, in 1963.

Sadly, there is no memorial in Wellington to this great footballer ... but he is still remembered at Aston Villa.

[With thanks to Maurice Barker, official historian to AFC Telford United, for his help.]
NOTICE BOARD

WELLINGTON PUBS APPEAL
Allan Frost is writing a book on Wellington’s Pubs and Hotels. Please get in touch with him if you have any historical information, price lists or other paper memorabilia such as photos of pub scenes and events – inside and out – like sports from darts and dominoes to boxing and football.
His contact details are email: a.frost1@btinternet.com  
phone: 01952 299699;  
address: 1 Buttermere Drive,  
Priorslee, Telford, TF2 9RE.  
All items sent will be returned ... Every little helps!

HELP US – PLEASE!
We know from experience that folk like you have old photos, event programmes, town directories and even school, club and society magazines and newsletters hidden away in the darkest recesses of their homes. We also know that, unless copies are taken now, there’s a danger that they will be thrown away or destroyed ... and lost forever. Please help us preserve whatever piece of Wellington’s history you happen to have by letting us borrow it (or them) for a few days so that we can take copies. Rest assured, your originals will be returned to you unharmed. Our secretary (details below) awaits your call or email ...

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www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com
We’re blessed in this area and around the country with historic churches of all shapes and sizes which I’m sure many of us enjoy. But how many of us wander round the churchyard and cemeteries? Not me. Or not until I completed an assignment for my Masters to analyse the decay of a stone monument in All Saints parish church in Wellington.

The one I chose to investigate was the Dickson family monument located behind the church. It is one of the few remaining large scale monuments in the churchyard after a clear up was done in the 1950s when it was converted into a Garden of Rest and handed over to the Urban District Council. During this conversion, headstones were moved and re-erected around the perimeter and ‘where possible’ notice was served on the owners of the larger vaults and monuments. This was common practice across the country due to changing attitudes after the Great War that dismissed the previous approach of celebrating death and building ostentatious monuments and commemorations. Consequently, churchyards have been ‘tidied up’ in recent years, reflecting a modernist rejection of Victorian aesthetics and an embracing of an American influenced lawn design.

John Dickson was a distinguished member of the Victorian community of Wellington, a railway contractor and local businessman as well as being a close friend of Alfred Darby I. His company ‘John Dickson & Co.’ owned the Shropshire Works and employed 150 men according to the 1851 census. He built several railway lines around Shropshire, the Midlands and later Wales, often using his own money, consequentially being declared bankrupt twice in his career. Dickson died at the age of 73 and was living in Mumbles, South Wales at the time. There is no inscription of his death on the monument but he appears on the parish burial records of 1892 as does his wife in 1895, so it is sensible to assume that they were both buried alongside their children and other family members who are named on the monument.

Its current condition is fairly poor, although most of the decoration survives. The base in particular is in a bad state, with several bits of stone missing and what appears to be a section from a railway track sticking out at either end. It would be nice to think that this is a ‘nod’ to Dickson’s link with the railway industry, but it’s more likely to have been inserted due to the close proximity of the station and used to help support the monument.

From indents in the base stone, it appears to have once had railings which were popular through the 1800s. Metal still remains in the recesses which may have been removed for scrap recycling during WWII.

Conservation-wise, along with obvious signs of old age – discolouration, peeling paint, lichens and moss – there are also some serious structural issues. There is a complete loss of mortar in the joints, huge pieces of stone are broken or missing, roots seem to be growing through the gaps and the base stones are uneven. There could be a combination of reasons, including the general decay of the stone, and ingress of water that has weakened some stones, causing them to crumble and de-stabilise the base, as would dismantling it on numerous occasions to allow bodies to be inserted into the vault below.

There are no steps or other visible method of getting into the vault, and it was not uncommon to disassemble the whole structure when bodies were added. This movement would gradually create larger gaps. Another contributing factor could be from the movement of ground and possible subsidence when the churchyard was transformed.

There seems to be no record of exactly when the monument was constructed as the earliest death inscription date may not match when it was erected. The Diocesan Office has confirmed that there are no original drawings as there was no need at that time for a ‘faculty’ (permission) to be obtained – you bought your family plot and that was that.

Conserving these monuments in a sensible way is just as important as conserving old buildings, although sadly not many people think that; hence the lack of maintenance and continuing decay.
Edith Pargeter was born on 28th September 1913 at Horsehay, where her father was a clerk in the fitting shop at the local ironworks. She was educated at Dawley Church of England School and Coalbrookdale High School for Girls. Leaving school in 1930, she had a brief spell as a temporary clerk in a Labour Exchange before becoming an assistant and dispenser in Bemrose’s, the chemist in Dawley High Street, where she stayed for seven years, living in a terraced cottage in nearby King Street. The above photograph of Edith was taken at the chemist’s in 1936.

She was an avid writer from an early age; her first novel Hortensius, Friend of Nero, was published in 1936 and the background to her second novel, Iron-bound (also published in 1936), is set in the area where she had grown up. The heroine, who worked in a chemist’s shop in Datchet (Dawley), had a doomed relationship with the manager of the ironworks at Thorpe (Horsehay); and there were visits to the cinema in Meynell (Wellington) and to Happy Valley (?) ...‘the farther side of Datchet, where the coal mines were hideous black growths even in the darkness, and fearful girls did not venture after lighting-up time if they could avoid it’.

Following wartime service in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS), for which she was awarded a British Empire Medal, Edith formed links with Czechoslovakia, translating literary works.

After she moved to Madeley in 1956, she continued her prodigious output of work, eventually writing over 70 books, mostly novels with historical or mystery themes. Though she had several different names as a writer, it was not until 1959 that she first used the pseudonym Ellis Peters. She published the first of the Brother Cadfael series, the work with which she is mostly associated, in 1977; and she went on to write 20 more stories of the medieval sleuth of Shrewsbury Abbey before her death in 1995.

The previous year she was awarded an O.B.E. in recognition of her services to literature.
As our underlying theme is memories and the past, I thought that it would be an appropriate occasion on which to try and clarify a couple of points about our predecessor club’s very early days.

The first one is the connection between the football team of Wellington Parish Church Institute and Wellington Town Football Club.

The Institute was founded by Reverend Benjamin Banning, and the Wellington Journal of 14th December 1872 reported on an inaugural meeting. Other references tell us that the Institute also had cricket and horticultural sections. It did not take long for the footballers to become active, for the Journal reported that in March 1873 the Institute played matches (home and away) against United Civil Service (Shrewsbury) and the Old Hall School.

The PCI team, as it became known, continued to play matches until Wellington Town Football Club announced its presence in 1879. There are references to matches between the Town team and Shrewsbury Ramblers, Shrewsbury Engineers and Wellington Blues.

Then, on the 26th November 1879, Eddowes Journal (a Shrewsbury weekly newspaper) contained a report of a game, played at Eyton, between the Town club and Scarlet Runners, Shrewsbury. The item tells us that both teams were new, but only ‘in a manner of speaking’, and that the Wellington team contained ‘a number of faces’ who formerly composed the ‘PCI’ team. However, my researches into 1879 failed to find a more definite connection between the two, and I became indebted to an article in the Journal on the 18th May 1930 to confirm matters.

The item was a report of a jubilee dinner to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Wellington Town. It took place in the Erclass Assembly Room (attached to the Erclass Hotel), Wellington, and Mr Harold York, the president, was chairman for the evening. He said he had been present at the first match played by Wellington Town when ‘the club changed its name from The Parish Church Institute’. That is good enough proof that the ancestry of the club goes back to 1873.

The same article in the Journal, in fact the same speech by the president, also clarifies a second point, and that relates to home grounds.

In the first years, it seems that home fixtures were played on a pitch in Leegomery Road, Wellington, ‘kindly loaned for the occasion by Mr Shepard’; Springhill; and Admaston. There are also regular mentions of pitches at Street Lane and Haygates.

Now, this is where a little family history comes in useful.

My grandfather, Bill Robinson, told me he could remember, when he was still young enough to be wearing a smock (which I took to be a child’s country gown – the point is that he was quite young), seeing his uncle Harry play for Wellington Town on a field at Barnfield Farm (opposite The Old Orleton).

My grandfather’s memory should have been accurate because he was born and raised at Barnfield Farm, which was owned/tenanted by his father. My late mother could also...
remember a field at the farm being called the Football Field. I am confident that, as the farm is opposite the southern end of Haygate Road, this would be the pitch that reports called Haygate.

As to Street Lane, that was the name my grandfather and my mother often gave to the section of Holyhead Road that lies between Haygate Road and Ercall Lane.

Anyhow, I think that the chairman’s speech in 1930 clarifies the point, because he stated that the club had played at Haygate (i.e. Barnfield), then at Admaston and later on the Red Lion ground (Street Lane).

It seems to me, then, that the pitches in regular use in those days were at Eyton, Barnfield Farm/Haygate, Admaston and at the Red Lion/Street Lane (Holyhead Road).

* * * * *

**Part Two**

The recent activities in connection with historical matters (as a result of which the club has been awarded the distinction of being a champion on behalf of dementia-related illnesses) have certainly stimulated interest.

As a result, I am indebted to Judy Meeson, who is an archivist at All Saints’ parish church, for very valuable information on the relationship between the football team of Wellington parish church Institute and Wellington Town Football Club.

The Parish Church Institute was accustomed to publishing a magazine, one of which (November 1879) states that ‘the football club, led by Mr Walter Corbett, in addition to winning a number of matches, has placed a small sum to the credit of the Institute. The thanks of the Club are due to Mr Taylor, of Haygate, for the loan of his field’.

It seems to me that this was effectively an end-of-an-era report, because Wellington Town Football Club had taken over the mantle of the PCI in the same month.

Two thoughts come to mind in relation to this information. One is the reason for the change of identification to Wellington Town Football Club. I think that Judy Meeson and I have (independently) come to a similar conclusion.

In Judy’s words, ‘when it no longer remained purely an activity for the ‘spiritual and intellectual improvement of its younger members’ the club broke away from the church and became a town-wide football club’.

In the early years of Wellington Town club, reports of attendances of upwards of a thousand are not uncommon, and it would not be stretching the imagination too far to suggest that the popularity of the PCI’s team had taken over the Institute’s original purpose.

We need to bear in mind, also, that the population of Wellington was much smaller than it now is, which indicates that attending football matches was a rather popular pastime.

Judy Meeson’s information also throws some light on (or, alternatively, rather muddies the waters in relation to) the early grounds. It records the fact that a Mr Taylor had loaned a field at Haygate. As my great-grandfather Robinson owned/tenanted Barnfield Farm (my grandfather watched his uncle Harry Robinson play for Wellington Town on a field there), it suggests that Haygate and Barnfield Farm were different venues.*

We can also throw into the mix that matches were reported as having taken place at Street Lane (i.e. the present-day Holyhead Road); Spragg’s Recreation Ground, Street Lane; the Red Lion pitch (referred to in a speech by the then chairman to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Wellington Town in 1930).

It occurs to me that it is possible that the pitches at the Red Lion and Barnfield Farm were one and the same, but that remains conjecture at this point. Nevertheless, reports of the time indicate that the following grounds were used:

1. A match took place in March 1873 against the Old Hall School on ‘a field kindly loaned for the occasion by Mr Shepard’ in Leegomery Road.
2. In March 1874, there was a game versus the YMCA ‘on a field opposite Dr Rider’s.’
3. In February 1875 a fixture versus Trench took place at Spring Hill.
4. The game against Trinity (Shrewsbury) in October 1878 took place at Street Lane.
5. The venue for Wellington Town’s match against Scarlet Runners (Shrewsbury) was Eyton. (A report of February 1880 tells us that a field, possibly the same one, was ‘kindly lent by TC Eyton’).
6. In October 1880 a game took place at Haygate – possibly Mr Taylor’s, or Barnfield Farm or the Red Lion or Street Lane etc.). There are then frequent references to Haygate.
7. Also in October 1880, an away fixture was played at the home of Wellington Blues. I wonder whether that was the present-day Buck’s Head ground.
8. Spragg’s Recreation Ground, Street Lane, is mentioned.
9. September 1888 witnessed the move to a new ground at Admaston Spa, but it was a change of surroundings of which the Wellington Journal did not approve. It commented, ‘The field can scarcely be said to be a good one. Not only was the grass far too long, the field of play was very uneven, and it certainly requires a lot of levelling before it as good a piece of ground as the old one. The field was, however, capitaly fenced out; the spectators being kept away from the touchlines’.

* * * * *

[The photograph on the previous page shows the Wellington Town team in 1882-3, with my grandfather’s Uncle Harry on the extreme left of the middle row!]

* Editor’s note: This statement is correct. Mr T Taylor owned (as his family had for a substantial number of decades by this time) the building known as Haygate Farm. In the past, it had had other names, including the Royal Oak, the Haygate and the Falcon Inn – several of which were closely associated with stage coach services.

www.wellingtonhistorygroup.wordpress.com
One of the most creative periods in our architectural and design history, strangely neglected now, was during the 1930s. People usually think of this time as one dominated by poverty, unemployment, strikes and war but it was also one of the most exciting time in the development of new artistic styles which embraced new building design, London Underground stations and posters, clothing, jewellery, cinemas and glamorous cinema sets, pottery, ship, car and aircraft design.

This new universal style was known at the time as 'Moderne' but is better known today as 'Art Deco'. It was perhaps the first time that a single style had so much influence over such a wide range of products, a few of which appear in the far column.

Anyone who watches the Poirot programmes on ITV3 will recognise the style in many of the buildings and interior decoration. The spectacular Midland Hotel, Morecambe, Lancashire (below) is sometimes used.

Grove Street, St Georges
The most significant collection is in the most surprising location, hard to find unless you know.
There are seven classic Deco houses in Grove Street, next to each other, built by George England a local man who planned a further 23 houses there in the same style. This would have made it a site with more deco houses than anywhere else in the country, rivalling Frinton Park Estate in Essex.

Surprisingly the Grove Street houses were not built in the 1930s. The foundations were laid in 1939, only seven of the planned 30 houses were completed in 1947.

Wellington Centre
Wellington’s former Rural District Council office on Tan Bank (top of next column) was built in 1939.
It was then a single story building displaying typical Deco windows and stepped recessed doors, flat roof and a white pillar on the classic frontage.

In the photograph above, you can see the shielded car headlight, a wartime precaution to prevent enemy aircraft spotting the car from above at night time.
Glass bricks were a favourite of the 1930 Deco builders and we were fortunate to have a good example in the former Boys’ Grammar School (latterly Ercall Wood Technology College):

Shropshire cannot compete with the ‘Poirot’ examples but we do have quite a collection of Deco buildings in our county.

WHERE ARE THE DECO BUILDINGS LOCALLY?

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Glass bricks were a favourite of the 1930 Deco builders and we were fortunate to have a good example in the former Boys’ Grammar School (latterly Ercall Wood Technology College):
town. Let us all hope the committee succeeds in this exciting venture.

The foyer at the front will become a café and could be redecorated in the original pink Deco style.

Iron Bridge Power Station

The original power station was completed in 1932. All excepting the water pump house, was pulled down in the 1960s to make way for a much larger plant. The pump house has some Deco features with the stepped top of the front facade (compare it with the Wellington Spiritualist Church), the geometrical pattern of coloured bricks and the long narrow rectangular windows.

Spiritualist Church, junction of Regent/Watling Street, Wellington

Although built much later, the pale render on the front, the lettering style and the stepped top frontage follow the 1930’s style. So many men were lost in the First and Second World Wars that people flocked to spiritualism at this time in an attempt to contact their lost sons and husbands.

Other buildings of interest in the locality are in Shrewsbury and Ludlow. Oakfield Road and Shelton Road, Shrewsbury have two fine examples of domestic houses but the most dramatic is the one next to the Catholic Church in Henley Road, Ludlow, a stark contrast with the Basilica church next door:

It was not just buildings that captured the excitement of the Deco style.

Highly collectable pottery from Clarice Cliffe (above), Susie Cooper and Charlotte Rhead, all trained at the Burslem Art College, are very sought after now by private collectors. In May 2013, two Clarice Cliffe candle sticks sold at auction in Newport, Shropshire, for £400!

It was a universal style. Radios, furniture, even the humble vacuum cleaner were given the sun ray treatment sometimes decorated with shiny aluminium or chrome ‘go faster’ stripes.

Dancing girl statues, like those shown above, were produced in bronze, nude or nearly so, in very stylised poses. Buy them quickly if you see one ... they still seem to be shooting up in price.

What to look out for

It is very easy to spot the classic flat roofed white stucco rendered thirties Deco buildings, but there are many features in ordinary 1930s semis that reveal the influence.

1. Sun Ray design on doors and eaves, as on these Hadley houses:

2. Coloured window glass, chevron design.

3. Stepped recessed doors with canopies.

4. Sun trap window glass (curved glass at each end of window).

5. Metal ‘Crittall’ window frames, (made by Crittall Company of Essex).

6. Corner windows straddling two walls.

7. Port hole windows and rectangular windows geometrically arranged.

8. White outside render.


Open to the Public?

Very few major Deco houses are open to the public. The full scope of the style can be seen in hotels like the Midland in Morecambe.

There are a few houses which are open:

1. Coleton Fishacre, Kingswear, Devon (National Trust).

2. Eltham Palace (interior), Greenwich, London (English Heritage).

3. Hoover Building, Greenford, Middlesex (a Tesco supermarket now, but front and side still have original features).

4. Highcroft House, Dartington (National Trust).
There have been a few articles about the Dothill estate recently in other publications. We have been asked to clarify a few aspects and provide some more illustrations.

The correct name for both the estate and its principal house was always **Dothill Park**, not Dothill Hall or Dothill House. Dothill House was the name given to what had been known as Dothill Lodge which lay on the northern side of the road which now curves round where Whitchurch Road joins North Road. Dothill Park Farm (later just Dothill Farm) was the name given to the farm buildings which lay immediately north of the main Dothill Park residence.

Dothill Manor was the name given to the pre-Conquest house and surrounding estate. The original property was enlarged at various times and parts rebuilt until the Georgian-style complex seen in photographs (including those shown here) resulted.

A date stone set into the south facing side of the segment which sits between the highest portion and the lowest building (supporting the conservatory) bore the date 1642, confirmed building work done at that time.

At no time was Dothill Park a castle; there has never been a licence to crenelate the former manor house, as was the case at nearby Apley Castle. Without such permission, Dothill was forbidden to fortify the manor house.

Sometimes the existence of a moat or earthwork is cited as evidence but remains of an apparent earthwork to the immediate east of the house (see the 1929 map above) was probably nothing more than an enclosure for cattle and sheep to prevent them straying before being taken (for example) to market or for slaughter.

Such 'raised bank enclosures' were common from Iron Age times right through to the end of the eighteenth century: Watling Street Grange on Red Hill had one. Full or partial moats were often created around Medieval manors as a basic form of protection against intruders. Orleton Park still has the remains of one, for example.

Furthermore, a ditch between the flower garden and the adjacent field was simply a ha-ha, the ditch-and-bank device used to separate grazing land from formal gardens at many country houses.

In 1734, Lord Forester had two grassy hillocks created, one on each side of one of the pools, for spectators to watch such entertainments as water jousting.

Dothill was owned by the Lord Forester for many years before the Groom family occupied it from the early 1890s (Richard Groom died there in 1893, aged 75).

Some time after Ernest Groom, the last of the dynasty to occupy the Park, died of a coronary thrombosis at the family timber works on 22nd August 1944, the property was owned by the Wrekin Brewery Coy. Ltd. Wellington Urban District Council acquired the Park in 1956 with a view to building housing estates and schools. Which it did.

In addition to farm workers, Dothill Park relied on resident gardeners to provide a steady supply of vegetables and fruit, as well as to maintain formal flower beds. Billy Little (seen below with his wife, and opposite in the photograph of the south-facing garden wall near the Park Pool, in the late 1930s) was the last. Peaches were grown on the wall next to the lean-to conservatory at Dothill Park itself.
Above: Dothill Park c.1890s. Phyllis Little (left) and May Little (right) outside their parents’ cottage (date not known).
Everyone likes a spooky story at Halloween and when we were young my sister and I were no exception. As we travelled along what is now the B5061 past Overley Hill, my mother would tell us of the tale of the gibbet that stood along the turnpike road near Uppington.

The exact location was unclear but she was repeating what her Father Thomas Turner had told her having heard the tale when spending time in the village of Aston as a boy, staying with relatives.

On joining Wellington History Group (WHG), I told George Evans the tale but he had no knowledge to back up the story.

Similarly, Allan Frost could not help, except to point out, quite correctly, that Wellington Courts did not have the power to pass a death sentence; therefore, it would be unnecessary to have a gibbet.

Hangings were carried out on the gallows at Old Heath, Shrewsbury until 1795 when the site was relocated to above the Gatehouse of the prison. Public hangings continued there until 1868 from which point criminals met their end inside the prison walls.

Several years passed and I volunteered to give a talk for the Group about the part of my family that had Wellington roots, the Turners. In the short time I have been working on my family tree, one thing I have learned is that families tend to be large and I have often gleaned information from distant relatives or locals ‘in the know’.

In this vein, Jim Cooper brought a document to my attention, *The Journal of James Turner 1854-58*. I borrowed his copy and read it from cover to cover. Sadly, this fascinating document was about a totally different Turner family that was based in Wrockwardine. However, it did contain a story that intrigued me because it referred to the gibbet on the turnpike road.

How could this be?

Reaching for the dictionary, I saw the initial definition of gibbet as ‘a gallows’ but reading on there was a second description of ‘an upright post with an arm on which bodies of executed criminals were left hanging as a warning or deterrent to others’.

This must have been the nature of the gibbet I had been told about. (WHG Special Paper 2, page 2 refers to another gibbet that I calculate was somewhere near the Apley Arms just north of Wellington.) As the practice of gibbetting was outlawed in England in 1834 it is no surprise that little is known of our local gibbets.

My gibbet had existed at some point on the road from Wellington to Shrewsbury.

Here is the story from James Turner’s *Notes of the events of 1723, 290 years ago, more or less as it was written in 1872.*

‘Robert and William Bolas were engaged in breaking into a barn to steal some wheat which William Matthews and Walter Whitcombe were defending on behalf of their masters. Robert Bolas was executed at Shrewsbury for the murder of the men, and was afterwards gibbeted in a field abutting on the turnpike road near Uppington.

‘Sometime after this event, some young men were drinking at the Horseshoe Inn at Uckington, when a wager was made with a young man present that he durst not go to the gibbet and ask old Bolas how he felt.’

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‘Sometime after this event, some young men were drinking at the Horseshoe Inn at Uckington, when a wager was made with a young man present that he durst not go to the gibbet and ask old Bolas how he felt.’

The young man set out on his errand, but another of the party, by a nearer road, got to the gibbet first, and concealing himself behind it, awaited the arrival of the young man, who mustered just sufficient courage to put the question, “Bolas, how are you?” when he was answered in a sepulchral and tremulous voice, “Cold and chilly.”

The fright of the young man on hearing, as he supposed, old Bolas speak, may be easily imagined; he set off at the top of his speed and immensely frightened, on his way back, his fright being accelerated by another of the party leaping after him from a hedge on his road home, loaded with chains. It is said that the fright was the cause of the young man losing his reason.
Further detail reveals that Bolas’ body was stolen by his friends and taken to the river Tern, weights were tied to it, and it was cast into a hole near Duncott, still called Bolas’s Hole, but, saith report, nothing could make it sink. Ultimately the authorities had it replaced on the gibbet.

This event gave rise to a Shropshire saying “I am like Old Bolas, cold and chilly.” Heard in 1830 in Canterbury, uttered by a native of the London area, according to The Salopian, Aug 24, 1872.

This story leaves me with a number of new questions about the crime and the gibbet location; the search for answers is on-going.

For the record, William Matthews’ murder left a pregnant widow. He was buried in the south west corner of Wellington’s All Saints churchyard (near where the Lych Gate now stands). The grave is no longer there, but in 1872 a record of the inscription read:

June 18th 1723
Here Lieth the Body of WILLIAM MATTHEWS, who was barbarously Murdered by ROBERT BOLAS and his accomplices.
Also William his son aged 29 years
1770 Margery his wife aged (blank) years.

Burial records show the burial took place on Jun 21st (an affidavit delivered).

The inscription was ambiguous and this led to speculation in the late 19th century that Bolas had murdered all three family members, but inspection of the church records show that the couple were married in Nov 1722 so had not been married a year when William’s life was taken. Margery died almost fifty years later. Their son lived until 1752, when he died aged 29.

* * * * *

There will be more to report on this story in the next issue of Wellingtonia.

Plaque ‘TRIGGED’

Folk walking to the summit of The Wrekin Hill often touch the trig point near the summit (the highest point is actually a few metres to the north east) as a sign that they’ve ‘made it!’ Yet few take the trouble to read the two small plaques fixed to the column sides. One plaque simply states ‘This monument forms part of the Ordnance Survey’s National GPS Network’; the other includes a tribute to a man who, like many of us, had a strong affection for the hill.

Andrew Rochelle (1942-2006) had not long retired from his job as a surveyor for the Ordnance Survey (OS) when he died while exercising in a gym.

Very much a Shropshire Lad, Andrew was born in Leegomery and joined the Ordnance Survey after leaving Adams Grammar school, Newport.

Following training at Southampton, he worked successively at Sutton Coldfield, Wick (where wife Wendy enlarged the family with son Christopher and daughter Sarah), West Malvern (for the Satellite Tracking Unit), Haverford West, Stafford and, finally, Wellington where the OS office occupied the floor above the HSBC on the corner of Station Road and Market Square.

After Andrew died, the idea of a plaque was mooted by Neil Dewfield, a former colleague. As far as we know, the memorial plaque on The Wrekin Hill trig point is the only one in existence, and is an indication of how well Andrew was regarded.

The plaque was installed in December 2006 in a touching ceremony attended by OS colleagues, ladies from Leegomery WRVS cafe where Andrew had worked in retirement, and members of his family.

Left: Ordnance Survey engineers fix Andrew’s plaque to the side of the column. Right: Ordnance Survey colleagues toast a respected colleague with his favourite tipples: Old Pulteney single malt whisky (from Wick) and Martell Cognac.
Major refurbishment of the Charlton Arms under the management of Mr. & Mrs. R. Baldwin does much to raise the hotel’s status. The cocktail bar (above), and the newly-created Open Road lounge bar were just two areas to benefit. The hotel had just been added to the RAC’s list of Appointed Hotels.

The weather was cold enough to warrant a mention: it was the coldest January since 1948.

Boys at Wellington Grammar school made their own skis. Members of the school’s Ski Club (below) tried them out on the slopes of their playing fields.

British Rail chairman Dr. Richard Beeching’s plan to restructure the British rail network included withdrawal of these services:

- Local stops (Admaston, Walcot, Upton Magna) between Wellington and Shrewsbury;
- Wellington–Stafford;
- Wellington–Crewe. The Wellington–Much Wenlock route was already closed.

All was not what it seemed. Beeching’s duplicitous ministerial announcements said the changes were essential to improve the railway network and guarantee its future; in fact, the (hidden) agenda was to promote road transport and increase the number of motorways in the long term.

Local authoress Edith Pargeter is presented with an ‘Edgar’ (a ceramic statue of Edgar Allan Poe, whom some consider ‘to be the father of the detective story’) awarded by the Mystery Writers of America.

Edith’s novel, written under her Ellis Peters pen name, Death and the Joyful Woman, had been serialised in the Chicago Tribune, and made into a film by Alfred Hitchcock.

The Gas Board moved into a ‘fine’ showroom in New Street:

The Midland Bank on the corner of Station Road and Market Square was proud to reveal its totally refurbished and modernised premises (below), complete with all the latest banking facilities for the comfort and benefit of customers.

The Midland Bank was formed in 1908 following the absorption of the North and South Wales Bank
which had previously occupied the site.

JULY/AUGUST

You can often tell when town planners have outlandish and hideously expensive ideas: they persuade councillors to raise public awareness of, for example, congestion and untidiness problems – and the wonderful ideas they have to solve them.

So it was in 1963 when Wellington Journal ran reports of how bad the traffic problems in New Street (above) had become.

How long would it be before expensive plans would appear?

As it happened, no time at all. Urban District Councillors apparently voted ‘unanimously’ in favour of a drastic redevelopment of the town centre (see plan above right, which included a bowling rink – very popular at the time) which would have destroyed much of its architectural heritage.

Commonsense prevailed, assisted by a stark realisation that someone would have to pay for it.

The one aspect which was clung to like a lifebelt was the idea of a Ring Road. Every town worth its salt had one. The fact that it was utterly inappropriate for Wellington and would act as a noose, stifling future commercial development, was ignored.

Then as now, town planners and councillors don’t always see things as normal folks do ...

SEPTEMBER

Midlands Electricity Board’s products had instant appeal to women. In an exhibition at Wrekin Hall, new equipment meant ‘lighter work in the kitchen for meal preparation, cooking, laundry and washing dishes.’ Naturally, disinterested men only had to pay for all this wonderful stuff ...

Vernon Cooper opened a new electrical shop at 33 New Street (below), selling all the latest designs under the slogan, ‘Try in your own home first.’

The firm ‘believes in high speed service’ and delivery vans were fitted with radio telephones.

NOVEMBER

Dramatic improvements to emergency 999 calls came when the Wellington telephone exchange was upgraded to include an automated system.

DECEMBER

The weather made headlines again at the end of the year.

Mr. & Mrs. C. Rigby and their son Paul, of Severn Drive, made a snowman in their garden:
Workhouse or Almshouse?

Geoff Harrison

Our picture of the workhouse is no doubt the picture of Oliver wanting ‘more’; that story by Charles Dickens was a deliberate attempt to portray the workhouse as a place to avoid, but the simple truth is that ‘Life was meant to be much tougher inside the workhouse than outside, and the buildings themselves were deliberately grim & intimidating - they were designed to look like prisons. They were full of illness and disease brought about by over-crowding & the starvation diet’.

This purpose of the workhouse was a response to the perceived ills of the time, the nineteenth century, when each person knew their place in society and what was expected of them; the poor worked or starved. Poverty was a social disease and the sufferers were responsible for their own fate. Legislation was put into place so that each Poor Law Union would ‘look after its own}; this simply codified what was already available; there had been ‘poor support’ from the parish for centuries but it appears that with the influx of poor families migrating to find work, which they mistakenly believed could provide better financial rewards than working on the land.

The state had to intervene to encourage the development of workhouses. In 1782 an Act of Parliament permitted parishes to combine to provide for a ‘proper’ workhouse but many parishes preferred to act independently in providing for their poor. Further legislation in 1834 compelled parishes to unite into ‘unions’ to deal with the poor and set up workhouses.

Our local area was not one of the new centres of manufacturing such as Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and others; the relief of the poor changed little, yes there was a workhouse but often the local parishes did their best to aid the poor in the traditional manner. The Established Church was not totally ignorant of the situation. As with any local authority, the church wanted to know about their ‘region’ and in 1772 the Bishop of Lichfield & Coventry sent out a questionnaire (below, right). And one of the questions concerned the provision for the parishioners; the response is from the Parishes of All Saints and Eyton (left).

Relief of the poor in earlier centuries was the task of the Established Church through the parish, where a Poor Rate was levied to support the work. In addition people of wealth often gave donations to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

Church records, often the Glebe Terriers, provide some evidence. Wrockwardine Glebe Terrier 1845 – ‘Benefactions: Edward Pemberton’s bequest towards setting forth and binding an apprentice every third year, orphans being preferred; Thomas Ore left £2 to the poor not dependent on the parish’.

In All Saints Glebe Terrier we read ‘Benefactions; Richard Steventon in 1658 gave £10 pa. to the poor ... Walter Marygold of Leegomery gave £1 pa. to the poor on Good Friday; Roger Patier gave £4 for the poor on Easter Monday’ ...

This tradition of benefaction – those with wealth giving to the parish poor – has a long history and almost always was rooted in ‘buying salvation in the afterlife’.

Fulk Eyton who died 1454 left a will, the earliest Shropshire will to survive written in English and the early part is certainly focused upon his afterlife; there is a great deal of instruction as to the ‘dirges and masses’ which were to be said for his soul. ‘... that there be taken my best goods for to say five thousand placeboes and dirigies, and five thousand Masses and for every dirige and Masses fourpence’.

In the latter part of this will he makes a bequest to the almshouses at Tong College, in return the almsmen are to say De profundis at his grave. Such concerns of the wealthy with their afterlife had led to the foundation of almshouses; Tong College was such.

Almshouses were often places where the persons in religious orders had the care of ‘deserving’...
poor; in the case of Tong College, which had been established by Lady Isabel de Pembrugge, wife of Sir Fowke Pembregge, there were five priests and two clerks caring for thirteen paupers.

More locally we have another prominent almshouse; Preston Hospital (see photos on this page).

The almshouse at Preston was endowed by Catherine, the widow of Lord Herbert. In her Will of 1716 she left money to purchase land in Shropshire and to build an almshouse for 12 poor women and 12 poor girls. It is said that the gift was a thanksgiving for her deliverance when lost in the Alps.

The money was in trust to her brother Lord Torrington and three other trustees. A few years later Lord Torrington made land available at Preston upon the Weald Moors to build such an almshouse under the guidance of the Trustees. He himself provided money to build the Hall.

The donated money was wisely invested by the Trustees both in commercial enterprises and in land and property; as a consequence what had been an almshouse for 12 women and 12 girls was able to provide for 20 women and 20 girls after but a few years. The widows were chosen initially by nomination and selection by the trustees on the basis of personal recommendation but they had to be aged 60 or over, members of the Church of England and to have been of good station in life, though of reduced circumstances in old age.

Almshouses are not workhouses, but in some ways are complementary. ‘Almshouses are charitable housing provided to enable people (typically elderly people who can no longer work to earn enough to pay rent) to live in a particular community. They are often targeted at the poor of a locality, at those from certain forms of previous employment, or their widows, and are generally maintained by a charity or the trustees of a bequest’.

Preston Hospital was built on three sides of a quadrangle, the Hall in the centre and each wing providing accommodation; women on the west wing and the young girls in the east wing. The Hall was originally a school room during the week and a chapel on Sundays.

Living conditions could not have been further removed from the inmates of a workhouse; the girls were schooled and prepared for a life beyond the Hospital, instructed in the skills suited to domestic servants particularly relevant in a rural environment, and were expected to go into domestic service: ‘whatsoever could make them useful servants’.

The women were each provided with living accommodation of a bedroom and a parlour, together with a small garden; and each received a stipend, coal to heat their accommodation and a bedding and furniture allowance.

What of the building? If you have not been along the road to Preston, you must. Trustees sold the property recently, using the money raised to provide more suitable and modern accommodation for the recipients of their care.

The buildings have not been altered externally but are now luxury apartments, the brickwork has been cleaned, or so it appears but essentially the exterior is as it was a century or more ago.

We have just cause to be impressed; the images speak for themselves, but to emphasise their architectural merit some words of praise.

It is ‘probably Shropshire’s most architecturally distinguished almshouse’ and, in the opinion of Pevsner, ‘one of the most impressive Georgian almshouses, both grand and sober’.

Further historic accolades include ‘most princely’ of Georgian almshouses, ‘splendid but cheerful and friendly with a generosity of proportion and detail’.

A final comment from Buildings of England (Newman & Pevsner 2006): ‘At the beginning of the eighteenth century public architecture was barely an identifiable category in the county [Shropshire]. In Shrewsbury the Goal, 1705, looked much like an ordinary street house ... The one exception ... Preston-on-the-Weald-Moors Hospital, 1720-6, where generous endowment and a confident architect, probably Francis Smith of Warwick, produced a building not only large but grand and in the forefront of architectural style’.

* * * * *
MORE 1963 IMAGES


Wellington Carnival Queen 1963 with her attendants. From the left: Sandra Buckle, Vera Hensworth, Susan Sheard, Patricia Gainham and Norma Gregson.

The Wrekin Beacon, seen in the cold winter of 1963.

Members and officials of New Street Methodist Youth Club on their annual holiday, this time at in Devon at Ilfracombe, 1963.

Headmistress Ethel Barnes and prefects of the Girls’ High School, King Street, 1963-64.