

Diary Dates

Saturday 30 September 2017

Bishop's Castle History Day

A day celebrating the history of Bishop's Castle with talks about local people, places and events, followed by guided visits to some of the town's attractions.

10.00am - 4.00pm The Community College, Brampton Road, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5AY

Saturday 28 October 2017

VCH Shropshire - Annual Lecture: River Histories: exploring the past on the Severn and Wye

Britain's major rivers have a rich heritage that remains under-appreciated. This year's lecture by Dr. Richard Hayman explores some of the ways that rivers have played an important part in our history, with special emphasis on the Wye and Severn.

1.30pm - 5.00pm Central, Shrewsbury Baptist Church, Claremont Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 1QG
A donation of £5 for this event would be gratefully received. *See leaflet for further details and booking information*

Monday 4 December to Tuesday 19 December 2017

Shropshire Archives Closed Fortnight

Essential stocktaking, cataloguing and maintenance.

News Extra...

Do you have any stories to tell about Shropshire's history or have any news about Shropshire Archives? If you have, the editor is waiting to hear from you now. The contact details are below and photographs are always welcome.

Saturday 18 November 2017

Friends Annual Lecture - The Road to Enlightenment: Shropshire 1750-1830

During the mid-18th and early the 19th century, social, cultural and economic development across Western Europe has been reflected in what has become known as the Enlightenment. But it manifested itself in different ways in different locations. It has been characterised by the pursuit of improvement; rational thought and attempts at understanding nature; and economic progress for the benefit of society.

In this lecture Roger Bruton draws on aspects of his doctoral thesis to highlight how emergence of such change is identifiable in Shropshire.

10.00am Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Cost: £5

Please book early as places are limited, see leaflet for details

Saturday 17 March 2018

Friends Volunteer Showcase and Open Day

An opportunity to find out about the fascinating and varied projects carried out by volunteers at Shropshire Archives.

10.00am - 1.00pm Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Cost £5. Programme to follow

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The newsletter of the Friends of Shropshire Archives is edited by Andrew Pattison and designed by Nat Stevenson, Shropshire Archives' Image Services.

There are three issues per year, paid for by the Friends. The contents are provided by friends and well-wishers. If you would like to join the contributors, please contact the editor at apattison@clara.net

DISCLAIMER: We have made every effort to ensure that the information in this publication is correct at the time of printing. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.



Salopian Recorder

The newsletter of the Friends of Shropshire Archives,
gateway to the history of Shropshire and Telford

Newport's 'Miss Havisham' - Fact or Fiction?

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English Bridge, Shrewsbury (part 1)

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James Mallinson, (1891-1959), photographer from Shrewsbury

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*Part of the Old [Stone] Bridge at Shrewsbury with two arches of the new English Bridge under construction, November 1st 1778.
Shropshire Archives ref. PR/4/35*

Contact... For further details or to pass on your comments, please contact:
Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ • Tel: **0345 6789096**

Email: archives@shropshire.gov.uk • Website: www.shropshirearchives.org.uk

Feature

Linda Fletcher

Newport's 'Miss Havisham' - fact or fiction?

The notion that Newport's Miss Elizabeth Parker was the model for 'Miss Havisham', the jilted spinster in Great Expectations, written by Charles Dickens in 1859-60, has taken hold in Newport, but what is the evidence for this?

The first, and apparently the only, evidence is identical articles which appeared in the Shrewsbury Chronicle and in the Newport Advertiser in December 1949. They suggested that a Newport lady - Miss Parker - was the original for Miss Havisham. The evidence was given by another Newport Lady, Mrs Ann Milward, and an anonymous journalist. The story was that Miss Parker of Chetwynd House, Newport, lived the life of a recluse after being jilted by Sir Baldwin Leighton on her wedding day, and that Dickens heard about this when he was visiting Newport.

Is there any local contemporaneous evidence for Miss Parker being 'Miss Havisham'? Our local researchers were TW Picken, an antiquarian and pharmacist, and TP Marshall, the editor of the Newport Advertiser. Both researched and had articles published on a wide range of local subjects from 1880s to 1910s. There is nothing in their articles about Miss Havisham. Perhaps they might not have printed what could have been regarded as tittle-tattle about Miss Parker, but there is also nothing at all in TW Picken's private research and letters. We know from these papers that Picken was not averse to gathering gossip, but there is nothing. We can imagine that Picken and Marshall would have been enormously proud for Newport to

have been associated with Dickens. If they had had any news of Dickens visiting Newport, they would have noted it in their papers or in print, but again there is nothing.

We need, however, to look at the life of Dickens to confirm whether evidence shows visits to Newport. The 1949 article claimed that

Dickens stayed on several occasions at the Bear Hotel - now Beaumaris House - during his coach journeys along the Wolverhampton to Chester road

But the evidence of the deeds of The Bear Inn in Shropshire Archives show that it closed in 1787 and became a private house. (*Shropshire Archives ref 1696-1812 286/33-34*) TW Picken also recorded that the old Bear Inn's sign was later taken to an inn over the road, which we shall call Bear Inn mark 2, but even this inn was closed and demolished by 1830. At that time Dickens was just an 18 year old junior clerk working in a law office in London. His first novel, Pickwick Papers, was 8 years away, as were his first recorded travels to Shropshire (Shrewsbury). Dr Tony Williams, president of The Dickens Fellowship, has helped with the research for this article, and has searched all the surviving Dickens letters, diary entries and 'The Dickensian' journals. He reports that there is no mention of Dickens visiting Newport (or even Whitchurch or Oswestry where, we shall discover, Miss Parker had lived).

You may ask, surely Dickens visited Tong when he was writing The Old Curiosity Shop, and travelled up the main road to Newport at that time? The fact is that he seems only to have known the name 'Tong'

because his paternal grandmother worked at Tong Castle before she was married. Her family came from Claverley. She left Tong, however, for London when she got married in 1781 and so ended the link.

We can also look in detail at Miss Parker's life to see if she fits the bill for 'Miss Havisham'. Elizabeth was born in 1802 at Hatton Grange, Shifnal. Before long, the family moved to Sweeney Hall near Oswestry, her mother's family home. From here her elder sister, Mary, married Sir Baldwin Leighton in 1832. At the 1841 census Elizabeth was still living at Sweeny Hall with her parents - now aged 39. She then appears in Chester at the time of the 1851 census, described as 'a lady'. By the time of the 1861 census she had her own establishment near Whitchurch. She bought Chetwynd House, Chetwynd End, Newport circa 1862. According to 'Eddowes Journal' she attended local events from 1862-1866. She was now in her sixties. She lived there until her death in 1884. She was, therefore, not a Novaportan, and was definitely not living in Newport when Great Expectations was written. So, there is no evidence of Dickens visiting Newport, and we know that Miss Parker did not live in Newport until after Great Expectations was published (1860-61).

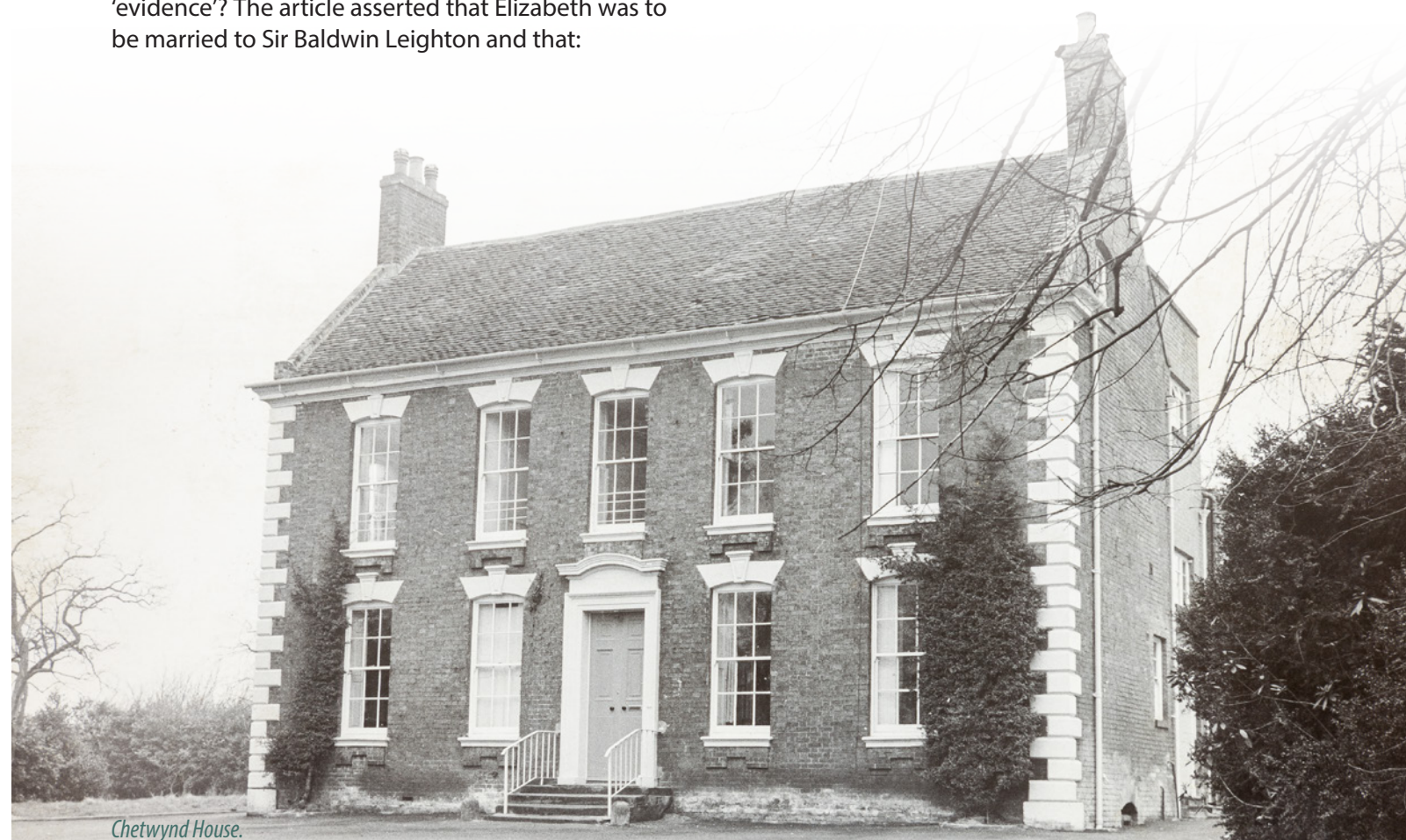
Does the 1949 article come up with any other 'evidence'? The article asserted that Elizabeth was to be married to Sir Baldwin Leighton and that:

The marriage day was fixed, the guests invited and the reception prepared but alas Sir Baldwin, at the last minute, changed his mind and married another

According to the article all this was happening in Newport, but we now know this is not the case. The Parker family lived in Oswestry. We do know that Sir Baldwin did marry Elizabeth's sister, Mary. It is interesting to note that Mrs Millward did not know that the 'another' was in fact Miss Parker's sister!

Does the story perhaps relate to some gossip about Elizabeth and a jilting at Oswestry? But would Elizabeth, the younger sister, be allowed to marry before Mary? Unlikely, since marriage was rigidly controlled by the parents of wealthy families in the 19th century. Also, why would their father - TN Parker - entertain Sir Baldwin as a spouse for Mary, if Sir Baldwin had jilted the younger sister? It makes no sense at all.

A letter by TN Parker in Shropshire Archives talks about the forthcoming wedding; the "consummation [of which] we look forward to with the greatest satisfaction" (*Above left: Shropshire Archives ref. 1696-1812 286/33*). The local papers are also very happy, recording,



Chetwynd House.

Shropshire Archives ref. PH/C/11/19

"The arrival at Loton Park of Sir B.L. and his bride on Wednesday excited unbounded joy. Bells were rung, cannons fired, a large ox and several sheep were distributed at Alberbury and Cardiston (Shrewsbury Chronicle 09.03.1832).

Was there anything more sinister going on, however? It is unfortunate that the record which could have finally proved the case one way or the other (the banns, if there were any of Elizabeth and Sir Baldwin at St Oswald Oswestry), do not now exist. (Note for researchers. I found it useful to be able to download a pdf of a list of all Shropshire registers. Important to note that B = 'Births' and Bn = 'Banns')



Mrs Millward and her ghost writer talk of the Chetwynd House as being as mysterious as Miss Havisham's Satis House:

The ground floor was not furnished, except one room which never saw the light of day, and it was here that Miss Parker kept her wedding cake on top of which were candles which were kept burning constantly...

The tale of the cake and the candles seems ridiculous. Firstly, any reception of Elizabeth's would have been at Sweeney

Hall, Oswestry, not at Chetwynd House. Also, if the Parker family had organised a wedding reception for Mary, would the wedding cake of the jilted sister Elizabeth have been kept? Remember that Mary and Elizabeth were both living still at Sweeney Hall. Could Elizabeth somehow have secreted the cake from her parents, and moved the cake over a thirty year period to Chester, Whitchurch, and finally to Newport? This is incredible.

Mrs Millward was 90 at the time of the article being written (1949). She was born c. 1859. She would, therefore, not have been old enough to remember Miss Parker moving in to Chetwynd House in the early 1860s. She probably assumed that Miss Parker had lived there all her life. She just didn't know the truth.

Is there anything of Mrs Millward's story that may be true? Certainly Miss Parker seems to have been eccentric. She was wealthy and lived in one of the biggest houses in Newport. She was an elderly spinster, who chose to live life according to her own rules. Mrs Millward remembered that Miss Parker:

Spent almost her entire life in the upper rooms of Chetwynd House... [she] had all her meals brought to a small table hinged to the wall on the landing upstairs and she would come out of her room to fetch them. If tradesmen called she would speak to them from the top of the staircase.

Odd perhaps, but nothing more.

Mrs Millward had another piece of 'evidence':

[she] attended one public function only after her great disappointment and that was a county ball in Newport to

which she went attired in her wedding gown because it was rumoured that Sir Baldwin would be there. He was not.

Perhaps she did indeed go to a ball in Newport. This would have to be in the 1860s or 1870s. Would she go as a sixty-something year old intent on inveigling the elderly Sir Baldwin? By the early 1860s he had been married to her sister for over thirty years. Why would either of these elderly people bother? In respect of the wedding gown – the same argument applies as for the cake story. Why would anyone wear and move it around the country from Chester, to Whitchurch to Newport over a 30 year period? If she had done this, everyone in Shropshire would have known about it, not just Mrs Millward!

Adding weight to the unverified Advertiser story are, unfortunately, Ann Warner's book Newport, Shropshire Past and Present (1983) and Rob Prentice's A History of Newport (1986). Unfortunately, both repeated the newspaper 1949 story without going back to primary sources.

My research on this topic began when our president Miss Tavia Maclean, now sadly no longer with us, told me about the evidence of the Bear Inn not being an inn after 1787, and that she could find no evidence of Dickens visiting. So I resolved to try to get to the bottom of the story. My conviction is that there is no evidence either for Dickens visiting Newport or for Miss Parker being the model for Miss Havisham. I have now, however, to convince various websites - chiefly Shropshire tourism - to amend this unsubstantiated tale which has got totally out of hand! ■

From the Chair

Jill Ming

Every year we arrange summer visits to give our members an opportunity to meet up and discover places and properties of historical interest in and around the county. These generally include a guided tour and, of course, afternoon tea. Our first two visits in June and July were also blessed with fine weather.

In June, the Friends combined their AGM with a visit to Lilleshall National Sports Centre near Newport. Vice-Chair Sue Cleaves chaired the AGM and once the necessary business was concluded, local historian David Adams gave a history of Lilleshall Abbey and Hall. His specialism is industrial history following a life in cartography, mining engineering and geology. David's talk was appreciated by everyone who warmed to his enthusiasm. Notably, he explained that the long drive was once a canal! A drink and cake were followed by a tour around part of the garden or an invitation to wander around on our own. The fine weather showed the grounds to their best advantage.

Above and right: Comber Abbey. Lyn Leach

We had a glorious day for our visit to Combermere Abbey in July. Our guide Myra Logan led us on a tour of the house and regaled us with many fascinating facts about the former Cistercian Monastery and its evolution from a Tudor timber-framed building to the Gothic exterior visible today. The fortunate discovery of an oil painting of the house and garden prior to its 'Gothicisation' illustrated the many changes that had occurred during the last three centuries both to the building and the landscape, including merging two former lakes to form one large body of water – the Comber Mere. Myra introduced us to the families who have shaped the house and, most recently, completed a major restoration project.

We are looking forward to hosting the Bishop's Castle History Day in conjunction with the Bishop's Castle & Area Heritage Forum on 30 September.

We are delighted to welcome Penny Ward as a co-opted member of our committee representing the



Above x2: The Friends visit Lilleshall National Sports Centre. Jill Ming

Shropshire Victoria County History group. There are still two vacancies on our committee awaiting your consideration. You can contact me for a no-obligation chat to find out more on 01694 722261 or email jill@buildingbeginnings.co.uk. ■

English Bridge, Shrewsbury - Part 1

Feature

Anthony L Price

While working on James Mallinson's photographs at the Archives, I became aware of a large collection of photographs of the dismantling and rebuilding of the English Bridge, over the River Severn in Shrewsbury, and thought the subject could make an interesting article.

William Poole Scoltock, in his book 'Memorandum Book of Local Events' – 'English Bridge' – gives the following dates:

- '9th June 1767 - Began with the view of widening the old stone bridge.'
- '1768 - plan altered'
- '29th June 1769 - First stone laid of the New English Bridge'.

He also remarked that there had been several previous suggested projects to widen the bridge.

The architect of the 1769 bridge was John Gwynn, a self taught man from Shrewsbury. A Mr Buddle, of London, was contracted to build the new bridge, from Grinshill sandstone. Having built only two arches, he was discharged from building both the English Bridge and the bridge at Atcham, which John Gwynn designed at the same time, so Gwynn took over the completion of both bridges. There is a picture in the archives of the new bridge partly built, with two arches under construction. The 'new' bridge was completed in 1774. The centre arch was required to be high enough to allow shipping to pass beneath. This caused the road to be steep each side, rising to the centre, which was to cause problems later on with traffic.

Problems of traffic were added to when Telford used the bridge as part of his London-Holyhead Road in the 1820s. The problem was highlighted in the early 1920s when it was reported that two buses found it difficult to pass. The standard width of a bus was 7' (2.1m) and the carriageway was 15' 6" (4.72m) between kerbs. It was recorded that, in August 1925, 3,923 motor vehicles crossed the bridge.¹ The steepness can also still be seen in John Gwynn's other local bridge at Atcham, which is now bypassed, but still in use as a pedestrian walkway. Gwynn's bridge in Shrewsbury had several decorative features, with four dolphins on the centre cutwaters, Neptune's face on the centre keystone and shells on the other arches. The large centre arch keystone weighed over 10 tons. It took

twelve horses to haul it into place.² I can find no reason why dolphins were included in the design, but I have been given the following suggestions: - to act as guardians of the bridge, to stop boats damaging the arches, and for mooring boats. The modern use of the word dolphin is a free standing structure of posts, driven into the river/sea bed for mooring boats to. Also, dolphins were widely regarded in mythology as an aid and a sign of good fortune to sailors.

There were proposals to widen the bridge, which were put before the Town Council as early as 1905. It was suggested that the County Council might help with the £10,000 cost.³ It is interesting to note that part of the report suggested that there could be accidents on the old bridge, although there were none reported. The Shrewsbury Chronicle then started reporting accidents on the bridge, including boys frightening a horse and trap, which ran down Wyle Cop, colliding on the bridge with a farmer and his horse. Mr. G. H. Shuker of Pride Hill, Shrewsbury, was driving his motor car over the English Bridge, Shrewsbury, when the wheels skidded, causing the car to 'come in violent contact with the palisading of the bridge'. The one I like best was concerning the Newport by-election. It was reported that the Unionists had 150 motor cars and the Liberals had between 70 and 80. The police had warned the political parties regarding speeding on the bridge when collecting voters and supporters, but it was reported that there was only one accident, when an

'election' car collided on the English Bridge with a milk float.⁴ There were many more reports of cars hitting the bridge and causing damage, mostly of a similar nature.

In 1910 Shropshire County Council contributed to the rebuilding of two canal bridges in Shrewsbury, but the councillors wanted it recorded that this was not to be set as a precedent for the rebuilding of the English Bridge.⁵ In 1922, several newspapers reported that the Town council was considering building a new bridge as an alternative to widening the existing one.

There have been many anecdotes about the bridge, ranging from the tragedy of a child wrapped in a shawl with a stone tied to it, and thrown from the bridge in 1826, to a Mr Cureton who, in 1903, reported that there was a large otter living under the bridge, and suggested that it be removed as no trout had been caught in the last month! On the Welsh Bridge, on the Mardol side, at the junction with Victoria Avenue, on the corner parapet of the bridge there are the words "Commit No Nuisance" carved into the stone. This is an archaic injunction not to urinate in public! This suggests that there were no restrictions on the English Bridge!

Dismantling of the John Gwynn bridge commenced on 21 August 1925, and is the subject of an article that will appear in the next issue of the Recorder. ■

English Bridge, Shrewsbury, c 1920's. Shropshire Archives ref. PH/S/13/E/1/17

References

1. *Lecture to the Royal Sanitary Institute* by AW Ward, 1929
2. *Short History of the English Bridge* by AW Ward, 1941
3. *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 17/2/1905
4. *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 15/5/1908
5. *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 29.7.1910

James Mallinson (1891-1959) - Photographer from Shrewsbury

Over the past few years several volunteers have been cataloguing the Shropshire Archives' collection of photographs. Among these photos many were stamped on the back with the name 'Mallinson' and a photographic negative number (written number). James Mallinson's family came from Bradford, Yorkshire. His father Benjamin was a newsagent at 47 Frankwell, Shrewsbury. James was educated at Shrewsbury Technical School, where he obtained a certificate in advanced technical drawing. In 1919 he married Lucy Kynaston from Wem. Her occupation in the 1911 census was given as a photographer's assistant. Did she work for James Mallinson?

Feature

Anthony L Price

Mr Mallinson was a professional photographer with a studio in 13 Frankwell. Some years ago librarian Tony Carr, together with a colleague, went to his studio in Frankwell, at the request of the Solicitor who was dealing with the winding up of Mallinson's estate, to collect what remained of his photographic work. The house was in a poor state of repair and the two men were required to take special care in climbing the stairs to the attic, from where they retrieved a quantity of photographic material – liberally plastered in pigeon droppings!

During 2016 I started to work on a collection of unidentified photos. Many of them were attributed to Mr Mallinson and I was made aware by the Archives' staff of the existence of Mr Mallinson's ledgers and records. In these books he had recorded brief details of photographs he had taken, for whom, their address and how much he had charged.

In the 1920s and 1930s Mallinson's business flourished with commercial commissions, including some for the local authority, portraits, passport photographs and photographs for schools and for local companies' brochures. He also produced a set of postcards (for sale) of Shrewsbury, which he called 'The Mallinson Series'. Wildings (postcard publishers) also commissioned him to produce postcards for them, with photographs of the Shrewsbury area.

One amusing item that came from the ledgers was a commission for Ensor caravan makers, who were based in Ketley, to photograph their latest caravan, which was described as a 'Portable Bungalow'. The ledgers record that Mallinson visited Charles Ensor regularly on a commercial basis. An interesting note in his expenses

Main image below: Demolition in Bridge Street, Shrewsbury. Shropshire Archives ref. PH/S/13/B/5/20

was that he usually only claimed for a one-way rail ticket to Wellington. The Ensor Caravan Co. on the A5 continued until the early 1970's.

Mr Mallinson had an interest in major changes in the street scene taking place in Shrewsbury in the 1920s and 1930s. He recorded many buildings before demolition as well as the redevelopment of the sites. There was a link between Mallinson and A W Ward, Borough Surveyor; because of this Mallinson got good access to the sites. There are several good examples of his work. The rebuilding of the English Bridge, (which took place over several years), is of particular interest (this is the subject of another article). Others include the building of what is now the Gala Bingo, Castle Foregate as a cinema, the Shelton Water Works and the many business interests of the Morris family.

The ledgers and paper work revealed previously forgotten information. For example, in the 1920's he was commissioned by the Sentinel works to photograph some of the company's products and their housing developments at Sentinel Gardens. Sometimes his photos recorded contemporary technology – he photographed a lady switching on the electric light in her new home in Sentinel Gardens in 1931.

Since the rediscovery of these ledgers it has been possible to put names and dates to many unidentified photos, although many portraits remain to be identified, as matching names in the ledgers to the negatives has proved difficult.

In the ledgers were found many assorted papers which have now been catalogued. These include invoices, a photographer's pass for the Shrewsbury Show, delivery notes for photographic materials sent by rail, and letter heads.

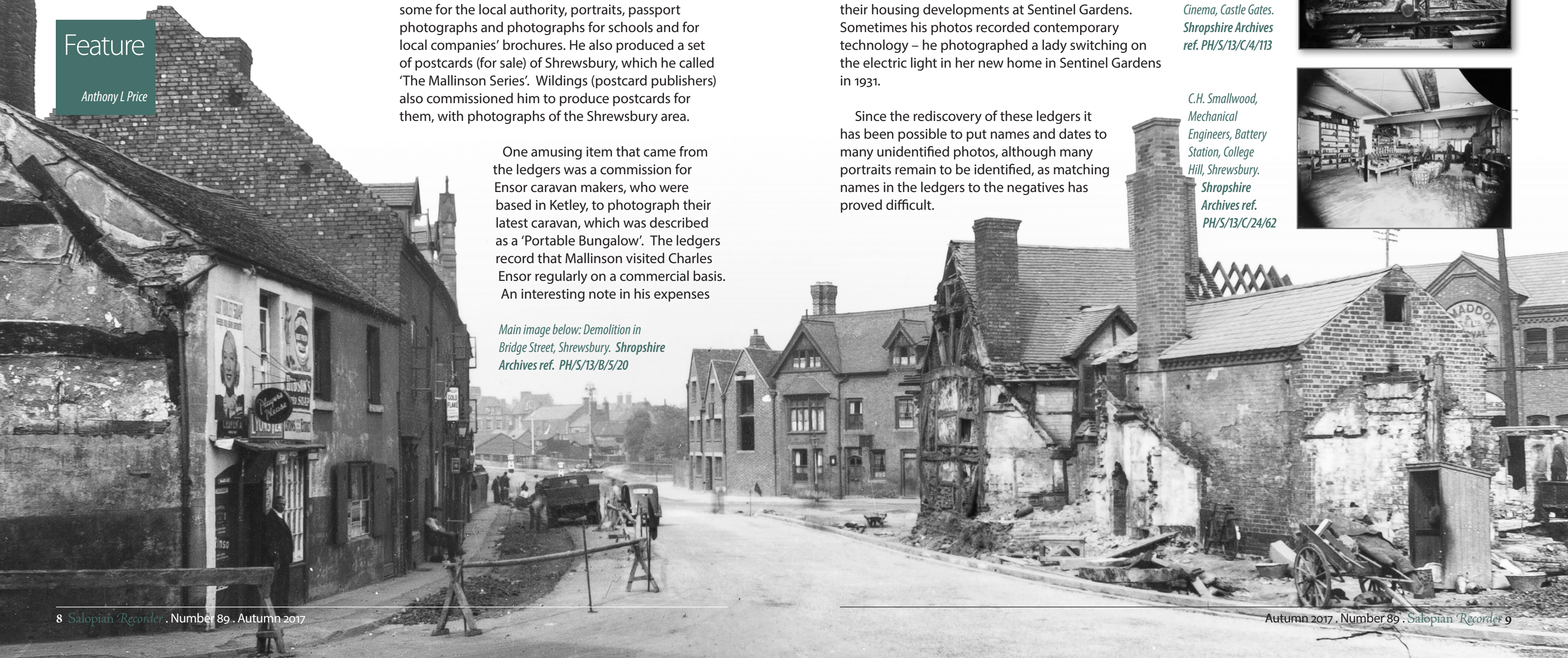
J Baker & Sons Ltd, Bootmakers, No 5, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, May 1933. Shropshire Archives ref. PH/S/13/C/4/109



Shrewsbury : Castle Gates (inc Meadow Place) : Construcion of the Granada Cinema, Castle Gates. Shropshire Archives ref. PH/S/13/C/4/113



C.H. Smallwood, Mechanical Engineers, Battery Station, College Hill, Shrewsbury. Shropshire Archives ref. PH/S/13/C/24/62



Family History - a Stitch in Time!

When we moved to Shropshire for the sake of work in the early 1970s I was only vaguely aware that my father's side of the family, which hailed from Oxfordshire, had ancestral connections with Shropshire. As an archaeologist, my interests have tended to focus on the more ancient past than upon my own family's history, but since retirement I have been delighted to discover family connections with many of the villages that have become familiar from bicycle rides along the county's country lanes — places such as Church Pulverbatch, Longden, Pontesbury, Meole, Baschurch, Wrockwardine, Munslow, Yeaton and Cound. One of the key 'historical documents' that has helped in tracing the history of this side of the family has been an Edwardian sampler which had been in my mother's possession for many years, with the neatly stitched inscription 'Emma Oakley, Her Work, Aged 11 Years, Church Pulverbatch School 1830', (above right) together with a doll-sized chemise with her initials (below).

I assume the school was the one in Rectory Cottage, established by the rector George Gilpin in the glebe before 1818, mentioned in Victoria County History Vol. VIII. School-exercise pieces of this kind evidently played an important role in the education of girls up to the middle of the nineteenth century. Like many similar Edwardian children's samplers it bears a religious text as well as the letters of the alphabet in upper and lower case and the numbers from one to twelve, flowers and several bowls of fruit. Such workpieces were clearly seen as a teaching aid for reinforcing reading and writing skills, religious knowledge and aesthetics as much as for purely needleworking dexterity.

In the circumstances, the quotation 'Those that seek me early shall find me' from Proverbs 8:17, is extremely apt, since with the help of census returns and parish registers it has been possible to identify Emma as my great-great-grandmother, born in Longden in 1819. She appears to have become a



domestic servant in various households in Shropshire and in due course married Richard Wale, coachman and domestic servant, also born in Shropshire. In an age of increasing labour mobility, Emma and Richard's descendants moved further afield in pursuit of gainful employment.

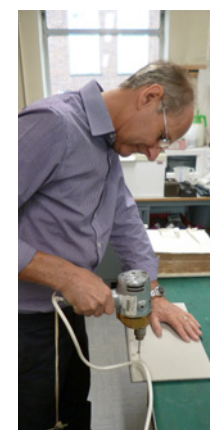
As well as being able to identify family connections, what has also intrigued me is the biography of the sampler and chemise themselves — tracing their progress across England since the 1830s. As far as I can see they seem to have visited Staffordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, Kent, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and County Durham as they were passed from one generation to the next. On my mother's death several years ago they were handed down to me and have by chance returned to Shropshire.

After this long journey the sampler and chemise have inevitably suffered a fair degree of wear and tear. We therefore decided to have them expertly cleaned and stabilized, which was undertaken for us by the accredited textile conservator Michelle Harper. With any luck these tangible mementos of my family history will last for at least another century. But where will their next journey take them?



New website

Thanks very much to all of you who have registered on the new site. We now have almost 300 registered users. The online advance ordering is going well. We are still developing the online payments element of the site but this should be available soon. We are also working with Orangeleaf Systems who created the site to develop the ordering and production systems. This includes creating a locations database for all our collection linked to barcodes which, in future, will dramatically improve our ability to make items available. This is a longer term goal which has been achieved at other archive services, most notably at The Keep, in East Sussex. We will keep you informed as this work develops.



Much Wenlock Minute Books project

Work on the conservation and digitisation of the earliest two Much Wenlock Borough minute books, dating from 1495-1810 is now complete. The books were rebound at Staffordshire Record Office by Senior Conservator Richard Nichols and we are delighted with the result. Good progress has also been made on the translation and transcription of the pages themselves. This work has been done by a dedicated group of volunteers who have done a great job despite the challenging handwriting in both Latin and English.

All the completed cataloguing and transcription is now available on the online catalogue, together with the digitised images. A celebration event took place in Much Wenlock in September where the conserved minute books were on display. It was very satisfying to be able to show the people of Much Wenlock what we had achieved. This project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and led by Much Wenlock Town Council.

Farewell to Katherine and welcome to Andie

In August Librarian Katherine Allcock left Shropshire Archives as her family are relocating to near Plymouth. Katherine has worked at Shropshire Archives for 10 years and during that time she has proved to be a very valuable member of the team both in managing the public service team with Sarah Davis, and dealing with the processing and cataloguing of the library and printed books. We wish Katherine and her family all the very best for the future.

We have appointed Andie Lloyd in Katherine's place. Andie has worked at the British Library both dealing with researchers and cataloguing collections. Andie grew up in Shrewsbury and has now moved back with her family. We look forward to welcoming her to the team.

Left inset: Richard Nichols, Senior Conservator at Staffordshire Record Office rebinding the Wenlock Borough Minute Books.

Right: conserved pages from the Wenlock Borough Minute Book. Shropshire Archives ref. WB/C/1/1

Please send any comments to:
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