



# **Tewkesbury Museum**

## **Supporter's Newsletter**

**JULY  
2022**

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We're now in the season for outdoor events and the big one this month is the Medieval Festival, on 9 and 10 July. The first since 2019. The museum has an interest in this, apart from the hope that large numbers of visitors will find their way to the museum to view the battle room. Costume hire, particularly for people taking part in Sunday's parade, has long been a museum interest. The museum will also have a presence on the site, in the 'Exhibition Tent', hosted by the Battlefield Society, and alongside a number of other organisations with a focus on history. If you visit the event, call and say hello.

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### **A Cannon Ball**

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Magnet fishing is the new metal detecting and sometimes people throwing magnets on ropes into the Mill Avon outnumber fishermen of the conventional kind.

At the beginning of June, a group of magnet fishing enthusiasts from Birmingham, the 'Peaky Dippers' descended on Tewkesbury and blitzed the river. They pulled out a very large number of old shopping trolleys and bicycle wheels, but no unexploded ordnance, luckily.

One item recovered from near Healing's Mill was a cannon ball. Not a huge one; maybe 100mm diameter. The group believe, with no other evidence than proximity, that it is a relic of the 1471 Battle of Tewkesbury and they have been in contact to offer it to the museum.

Whilst expert opinion will be sought once it arrives, the theory seems unlikely.

Guns developed rapidly through the fifteenth century, being first used as siege-breaking weapons, replacing trebuchets, and as they got lighter and more mobile they started to be used in battles, with evidence of guns being found on several Wars of the Roses battlefields. However, cast iron cannon balls were not introduced until about 1450, by a French military engineer. Until then, cannon shot stone balls (gunstones, of which the museum has two examples, both found in the battlefield area, or lead balls. Both these items had the advantage that they could be made on site. Gunstones were formed locally by masons, using a gauge made to the size of the barrel. Lead was usually looted from buildings and cast into moulds, with stones used to eke out the metal. Examples have been found at Bosworth, but not Tewkesbury. Casting iron was, especially then, a very specialist activity and balls had to be transported with the gun; and extra load which would not be worth the effort, as it would not bring any particular advantage except in a siege.

Tewkesbury saw other conflict beyond the 1471, and at a time when gunnery was much better developed. Between 1642 and 1644 the town was under constant attack by both Parliamentarians and Royalists. Cannon balls from this period must have been quite common in the town.

It is, of course, entirely possible that there was another reason why the ball was in the river, in an area which was once heavily trafficked by trading boats.

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## **THE CORDWAINERS GUILD**

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Warder's Alley is named for Richard Warder, who was a cordwainer. Judging by the number of people who ask, it can't be well known that cordwainers made shoes, and cobblers repaired shoes.

Cordwainers were a large group until factory production and ideas of mass production eventually put them out of business. The Eagle Factory, at the bottom of Old Post Office Lane, was Tewkesbury's attempt at factory production of shoes and boots.

There were sixteen cordwainers listed in Tewkesbury in the 1841 census. It might have been that a town which had a lot of leather production, through the tanneries, attracted trades which utilised the leather, and it was a local centre for shoe making.

In market towns, trades were controlled by guilds. These became powerful organisations, as the many guildhalls around the country testify. Tewkesbury had its guilds, and the Cordwainers' Guild (or Society) was the longest surviving. Here's a brief summary, which appeared in the 'Register' in March 1958:

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### **LOCAL GUILD LASTED 300 YEARS**

The medieval counterparts to modern trade unionism were described by Mr. A. T. Gaydon. BA, who continued his lectures on local history in the Town Hall last Friday. He mentioned that the Cordwainers' Society (for shoemakers) a trade guild formed in Tewkesbury at the beginning of the sixteenth century, existed in the town until 1941. Mr. Gaydon said that the trade guilds developed in the Middle Ages to keep out of trades all those had not undergone the proper course of training, to regulate wages. and to enforce the enrolment of apprentices' indentures.

Every month there was a social evening. when members met together to drink. From the seventeenth century onwards the guilds kept up the drinking evenings and that was about all.

### **FINED FOR SWEARING**

The first reference to a Tewkesbury Guild occurred in 1528. Records of the Tewkesbury Cordwainers' Guild began in 1562. From about 1630 onwards the meetings of the guild, became social affairs. Later, the guild was a political club.

Members could be fined a maximum of 6s. 8d. if they used bad language at meetings.

The employees were called journeymen and their masters had a tight grip on them. The employers had the power to refuse them work if they disobeyed the rules of the guild. A minimum wage rate was fixed for the workers and there were rules preventing them from moving from one master to another.

### **FREEMAN FOR FEE**

Any boy over the age of seven could be apprenticed. He served seven years and then for a small fee he could become a master and for another small fee a freeman of the Borough. Most of the boys came from Tewkesbury, but a few men from the surrounding villages, as well as one or two from further afield. There was one apprentice from Chipping Campden and another from Pershore.

The relief that as given to the poor and sick members of the guild was generous and certainly more than the later poor relief rates ever allowed.

The first annual dinner mentioned in the records took place at the end of the sixteenth century and cost 11s 6d – a large sum for those times.

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though, attracting 2238 people for the three months it was open, with 1037 of them visiting in August, the highest monthly number we have on record.

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## Past Tewkesbury

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A Tewkesbury guide book from 1902/3 contains a series of sixty full-page advertisements for Tewkesbury businesses, most with photographs of the premises. No 3 Barton Street has had an interesting past, which has been investigated by Wendy.



**EASTMANS LIMITED**

**3, Barton Street,**  
**TEWKESBURY.**

Wholesale, Retail,  
AND  
**FAMILY BUTCHERS**

*Best Quality Meat only.*

ORDERS Punctually Attended to, and  
Free Delivery to all parts.

Our Sausages, Polonies, Pork Pie, and  
Brawns are a luxury!

**SHOPS EVERYWHERE.**

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This building was the Globe Inn in 1740 when it belonged to a John Lewis. It descended through his daughter Susanna who was married to Samuel Webb, a cutler, and down to Mary Webb who, after it being in the same family for a number of years, sold it to Thomas Whithorn, hairdresser in 1798 for £135

After a short residency he sold it in 1800 to Richard Screen, a hosier for £200. It is was then bequeathed to his nephew William Causon, a victualler in 1828

When William Causon died the property was sold to William Knight, cordwainer, in 1831 for £240

A period of stability followed for 3 Barton Street as William Knight made and sold shoes here and his son, also William, partnered with Ruscombe Washer Ashley and the firm of Knight and Ashley Boot and Shoe Manufacturers was set up in the Eagle Factory in Church Street

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William Knight senior died in 1870 but 3 Barton Street remained a Boot and Shoe shop being managed by the splendidly named Artemus Poole

The property was purchased from the estate by his son, Philip Knight, for £380 and continued to be leased firstly to John C. Moulder, a watch and clock and jewellery repairer before becoming void.

In 1903 Eastman's butchers took a lease for 21 years and this was then a period of stability once more as Eastman's purchased it 1920 and stayed there until 1940 when after becoming void again it was used as U.S. Army billets

Since the War there has been a succession of occupiers – Decor Supplies; Bardwell decorator supplies being in situ for a good time before it became Cavendish Carpets; Price Right and then Pine Furniture.

More recently it has been home to Wrighton Kitchen and Bathroom Supplies; Trinity Blooms florist and currently Tewkesbury Nails

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

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This newsletter is intended for supporters of the Museum. It is confined to local history, the background to items in the museum collection and things which the editor thinks are interesting. I hope you also find them interesting!

Contributions are very welcome, and will add to the range and variety of topics covered. If you have a few minutes to type up something you're researched, or even to suggest a topic which would be of general interest, please email [info@tewkesburymuseum.org](mailto:info@tewkesburymuseum.org) .

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