



Tewkesbury Museum Supporter's Newsletter

November
2022

November now and summer is well and truly gone. We have the run-down to Christmas and worries about leaking roofs to look forward to.

October seemed to be a positive one in the museum, visitor-wise. Numbers continue to be buoyant and half term brought school children in to seek out penguins and to bring noise and laughter into the building. Let's hope that this continues through to Christmas.

A Postcard to Ken Smale

Found in a correspondence file, this anonymous postcard from 1968 aimed at the Town Clerk couldn't have been plainer!



Is this the Museum?

Nora Day's book, 'They Used to live in Tewkesbury' is a treasure trove of random pieces of research about Tewkesbury. One example is a long schedule of fines dating from 1698, for misdemeanours connected with property. This was in the period when owners on the main streets were beginning to 'modernise' by replacing house fronts with brick. This often involved encroaching on the street to incorporate the space under the jetty. Among a surprisingly large list of owners encroaching on to the pavement with their newly-framed houses there is one entry, which is a variation on the theme:

'of Mr Richard Kinge for his porch and a range of pales newly erected in the streete before his house...'

Could this be 64 Barton Street? The porch is certainly a later addition, and the pales are contemporary.

There are several other instances of porches being built into the street and two others of palings, but none of both porch and palings. If only they used house numbers!

Rules of the Ham

The 'Act for the Inclosing Lands in the Borough and Parish of Tewkesbury, in the County of Gloucester, and for vesting the after or latter Math of a Meadow called Severn Ham, within the said Borough and Parish, in Trustees for certain purposes', made in 1808, sets out the rules for putting animals on the Ham once the hay is taken and the grass has recovered:

XLVII Provided always, and be it further enacted, that it shall not be lawful for the said Trustees, their Tenant or Tenants, Lessee or Lessees, to stock or depasture at any time or times whatsoever, on the said Meadow called Severn Ham, any Horses of His Majesty's Regiments of Dragons, or any Bulls or Pigs; and that from the 10th day of October to the 20th day of November in every year, it shall not be lawful for the said Trustees, their Tenant or Tenants, Lessee or Lessees, to stock or depasture any Horses or Neat Cattle on the said Meadow called Severn Ham, unless there shall at the same time be stocked or depastured thereon three Sheep at the least for every acre of which they said Meadow called Severn Ham consists; and that from the 20th date of November to the 13th day of February in every year, it shall not be lawful for the said Trustees, their Tenant or Tenants, Lessee or Lessees, to stock or depasture any Horses or Neat Cattle whatsoever on such Meadow, but that the same shall annually, during the said last mentioned period, be stocked or depastured with Sheep exclusively.

Official verbosity has been around for a long time.

Two Edmund Ridges

Tewkesbury's most famous miser was Edmund Rudge, who lived a frugal life next to his tan-yard. The town seemed to be proud of him, and jealous of Gloucester, whose Jemmy Wood was the supposed model for Scrooge. When he died in 1843, at the age of 83, Mr Rudge was remembered in newspapers all over England:

On Saturday last, the 7th inst., died, at his humble residence in St. Marys-lane, Tewkesbury, in the fifth year of his age, Mr. Edmund Rudge, opulent tanner, "who, from his eccentric habits, parsimony, and great wealth, had acquired the appellation of "the Tewkesbury Jemmy Wood." He had been a regular attendant at Gloucester market for upwards of half century, constantly performing the journey there and back on foot; and had even made arrangements for his accustomed weekly visit to our city, to purchase hides, on Saturday last. Previous to starting, however, he experienced such an utter prostration of strength, that although he was wholly exempt from sickness, pain, and bodily disease, he was compelled reluctantly to return to his bed, where he quietly expired the next day. Mr. Rudge was never married; he lived entirely alone, performing himself all the drudgeries of his limited domestic establishment; he laboured unremittingly in his tan-yard until within a few days of his death; he had even denied himself the comfort and conveniences, if not the necessaries, of life ; and died, as he had always lived, in a mean and filthy habitation and neighbourhood; yet it is generally supposed that his property will very much exceed £100,000! It may hence be inferred although he was strictly honest and upright in all the transactions of his life — that he was, in the true sense of the term, a miser: —

*"The multiplication table was his creed,
His paternoster, and his decalogue."*

The heir to his hovel, tan yard and extensive hidden wealth was his nephew, also Edmund Rudge. He was also a tanner, but this was the age of the industrial revolution, innovation and opportunity. He showed a talent as an Engineer and inventor, though it isn't easy to understand how this engine worked:

1840 'Mr. E. Rudge, of Tewkesbury, tanner, has obtained a patent for a new method or methods of obtaining motive power for locomotives and for other purposes, and of applying the same. These improvements are for the construction and application of a new form of atmospheric engine, which may consist of two, three, or more open-topped cylinders, placed either vertically or horizontally, the piston rods of which are connected with two or three throw cranks. The air below each piston in the cylinder is condensed by a jet of steam, when the preponderating influence of the atmosphere on the external surface of the several pistons produces the available power. The cylinders are lubricated by means of a small funnel on the top of the piston rod, whence the oil flows into a hollow space within the rod, and thence into a groove turned in the piston. In order to gain a reserve of power, for any particular purpose, a large cylindrical receiver is filled by a condensing air-pump placed on either side, and connected with the main shaft of the engine; thus when the carriage is descending a hill, the air-pumps will compress the air into the large cylinders, which again will supply the air for working the pistons while ascending a hill.'

Unfortunately, his skills didn't include managing this huge wealth, because he was declared bankrupt thirteen years after inheriting all this wealth. When he was divorced in 1861, his wife alleged that he 'contracted habits of intemperance and dissipation'. There's a story, or maybe a sermon, hidden in those words.

Fixing the Abbey Clock

Whitchurch, February 11, 1805:

TO CLOCK-MAKERS.

ANY Person inclined to contract for putting the CHIMES of TEWKESBURY CHURCH in complete Repair, may signify his Intention to Messrs. VERNON and KINGSBURY, Churchwardens of that Parish, on or before the 25th Day of March next, who will state to the Person applying the Particulars to be done.

AT LIVERPOOL

- Aris' Birmingham Gazette. 18.02.1805

Mumming and the Library

The Library has reopened after a major refurbishment. It has some impressive new facilities, including a reorganisation of the first floor to create a space for meetings and events. The Librarian has invited community organisations to use the area to advertise their activities. The first programmes are about to be published.

Among the groups is a small, very informal, folk drama group. The Tewkesbury Mummies. For many years their sole activity has been to spend Boxing Day performing their short, traditional play around the town's hostelrys and seeking donations towards Parkinson's research. Like many other groups, they're seeking new blood. They'll be displaying costumes and props from 24th November and performing at 11.00 on Saturday 3rd December. Call in and find out more, especially if you fancy joining in.

Autumn Talks

All the gremlins have been ironed out with the Baptist Church's projector, and it is proving a very good venue. The café is almost too comfortable for post-talk networking!

The last two talks have been very different, but both very informative. Nick Humphris gave us an insight into Chedworth villa, ranging through its life in the Roman and Romano-British periods, its rediscovery centuries later and the archaeological work which has led to understanding its layout and the changes made during its occupation.

Dr Edward Thomas Wilson has been overshadowed, especially among those of us who know of Raymond Priestley's polar exploits, by the tragedy of his son, Dr Edward Adrian Wilson's death. David Elder remedied that, though. Dr Edward Thomas was an important, and influential, figure in Cheltenham, as a pioneer photographer (related to Francis Frith) and especially as a doctor with an interest in public health during a period when dangerous diseases were endemic and vectors of transmission were just beginning to be understood. It was a lecture well worth listening to.

Our next talk, the last in our autumn series, will be on **Tuesday 29th**, when Mike Kean-Price, once a Horse Guard, will be talking about a remarkable soldier. His talk is entitled 'Deserter to VC Hero'. It promises to be a fitting finale for 2022's talks.

The spring programme will be finalised in the next few weeks, so look out for an announcement.

The local autumn talks season is now in full swing. Other talks this month are:

Thursday 17th November. Tewkesbury Historical Society: The War Crimes Trials after the Second World War, given by Joseph Gabbott. 7.45pm at the Methodist Church.

Walks

Sunday afternoon Alley Strolls have, so far, avoided the rain, but that won't last forever! For November, walks are on 13th and 27th, leaving at 2.30 from Warder's Alley. With nights drawing in, walks will be finishing in the twilight, which can be quite atmospheric in the late autumn.

Occupations 1608

In 1608, Lord Berkeley had a survey of the men of Gloucestershire carried out to determine their fitness for military service. Among other things, it records their occupations. Here is an analysis of the occupations for Tewkesbury:

- 1. Agriculture, horticulture, fishing:** 10 yeomen, 5 husbandmen, 2 gardeners, 3 fishermen, 6 servants
 - 2. Provisions, retail:** 4 millers, 14 maltsters, 1 brewer, 10 bakers, 19 butchers, 1 cook, 1 fishmonger, 2 salters, 2 vintners, 3 innkeepers, 2 chamberlains, 3 ostlers, 2 tapsters, 11 tipplers
 - 3. Leather:** 18 glovers, 12 tanners, 1 currier, 1 tewgorer, 28 shoemakers, 1 cobbler, 2 saddlers
 - 4. Cloth:** 3 drapers, 2 woollen drapers, 5 haberdashers, 12 mercers, 28 tailors
 - 5. Shipping:** 23 mariners, 4 trow-men
 - 6. Woodwork:** 7 carpenters, 7 joiners, 1 turner, 12 coopers
 - 7. Textiles:** 1 clothworker, 8 weavers, 3 dyers, 1 wool dyer, 1 wool drier, 1 tucker, 5 shearmen, 5 feltmakers
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- 8. metalwork:** 5 cutlers, 2 pewterers (one with 2 servants), 12 smiths
9. miscellaneous trades and retail: 3 chandlers, 2 bottle makers, 1 basket maker, 1 roper, 1 turnmaker, 1 seveger
10. Building: 2 masons, 2 slaters, 1 tiler, 2 glaziers
11. Transport: 4 carmen, 3 carriers
12. Paper and books: 1 stationer, 3 papermen, 1 parchment-maker
13. Dealers: 1 merchant, 1 peddler (with 1 servant), 2 chapmen, 1 horse courser
14. Professions: 1 barber, 1 surgeon, 1 scrivener, 1 schoolmaster
15. Weapons and raw materials: 1 fletcher, 1 bowyer, 1 saltpeterman
16. Other: 16 gentlemen (one with a servant), 1 servant (master's occupation unspecified), 91 labourers, 19 Unspecified.

There were clear differences between the streets. Nearly all the mariners and tanners lived on the High Street, and the tailors on Church Street. There is no further information about the 91 labourers, who could be associated with any of the trades. There is a surprising shortage of building trades. Though this was before bricks became common, the numbers of woodworking and building tradesmen seems small for the work which must have been involved. The bowyer and fletcher must surely have been among the last of their trade.

John Rogers

John Rogers' journal for November 1902 is very wordy, so only a short extract has been reproduced to illustrate what he was doing 120 years ago. As his 94th birthday was on 20th, this is the section selected. What he did on his birthday is a little idiosyncratic!

The text below has been transcribed by Wendy. The spelling and grammar are Mr Rogers'. Wendy's translations, explanations or comments are in italics in square brackets.

November 18th: It is a very sunny day but there is a very cold east wind which makes it very cold indeed but it is beyond the middle of November so we must expect cold weather now' This morning I visited the home of a poor Leshanring [*sic*] [*languishing?*] man and his family whose house is in Bank Alley – his name is Barnes. The poor man is ill and have been so for more than a month .He have a wife and seven children one of them is only 9 months old. He have nothing is not Chrd [*?*] his are badly clothed and gets but little to eat. To me it is a pityable sight to look at and how they lives is almost a mystery. May God in his mercy help them during the coming winter.

The poor ye have always with you and you can help them

I after visited Rich Man on his sick bed and with the painful complaint with which he is now afflicted – its likely to prove his death it is a most painful complaint indeed yet he is destined to bear the whole of it no one can bear it for him

In respect The Rich and Poor meet together and the Lord is the maker of us all

What a great difference was in these of my nahighbures [*neighbours?*] The one is in poverty and sometimes in want of the necessarys of life. The other in a fine house furnished with every luxury that heart could wish for

The gentleman is D. Chandler esq having every possible attention paid him in sickness and doctors and every thing he may require on his sick bed

November 19th: A fine day but very cold east wind all day. Upon enquiring I find Mr Chandler is better today.

I visited a poor sick woman named Pirit [*Peart*] in Compton's Alley also visited Widow Mudy [*Moody?*] Church Street

I also visited W.G. Healing esq at his residence. He was very glad to see me and I stopped sometime with him and had a long talk with him about Tewkesbury affairs etc

November 20th: A fine day but very cold east all day

By God's mercy I have lived through another year and on this day I am 94 years of age which is a great age to live and I thank my God for all his mercys to me for they have been neither few neither small

Here I rise my hehesneser [*Here I raise my Ebenezer*] hither by his help I become and I hope by his good pleasure safely to arrive at my Heavenly home and if my Heavenly father should spare? [spare] me live to see another birthday may it find me more fitter for Heaven and more useful on Earth

I visited Mr Healing who have been ill for sometime and he was very glad to see me and I stopped a good while and he was very kind to me as usual – I find I wrote some of the above yesterday as it was yesterday that I visited him on the 19th of November – sometimes my memory fails me as it is not so good as it used to be but it is as well as I can expect Mr and Mrs Crees [*Creese*] by some means knew it was my birthday came to see me but I was out from home so did not see them but they told Alice that they was come to shake hands with me and they brought one of the finest bunch of grapes I ever seen so in the evening I paid them a visit at they own home and [had] a long chat with them and they was very glad to see me and wish me many happy returns of the day

They are rich people and keeps carriage and horses etc I knew them when one was a little boy and a little girl

In the evening I went to hear a lecture at the Independent Chapel School Room. It was about the Catacombs a room. It was a most interesting lecture about the burying place under the city of Rome where people have been buried for thousands of years ago. There are no burials there now

As it is my birthday I thought I would [*go for*] a good walk on the roads to try my legs to see what they could do so I walked to Ashchurch and back in the morning and Gupshill and back in the afternoon making rather six miles that's pretty well for a man of 94 years old

Local History Learning

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub (aka County Archives) are running a series of ten fortnightly workshops under the general title of Local History Research. They started on 18 October, so the first two have already passed. On the agenda are:

- 15 Nov: THE HISTORY OF THE LANDSCAPE
- 29 Nov: THE HISTORY OF BUILDINGS
- 13 Dec: WORKING WITH DOCUMENTS
- 17 Jan 2023: OWNERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT
- 31 Jan: MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION
- 14 Feb: COMMUNITY, SOCIETY AND WELFARE
- 28 Feb: WORKING LIVES
- 14 Mar: THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

Sessions are 9.30 to 1.00 and each costs £10, payable at the door, though advance booking is recommended. Further information [HERE](#)

The Mitton Cross



A large fragment of a twelfth century stone cross-head, the 'Mitton Cross' is on display in the Thomas Collins Room. This is on loan to the Museum from Bredon Parish Council.

The cross head was discovered in 1966 when the Mitton housing estate was being developed. It was on display in

Bredon Church for a long time, before being transferred to the Museum.

Medieval Mitton was a hamlet within the parish of Bredon which had its own chapel, dedicated to the festival of the Holy Cross. The chapel was first documented in 1287, and in 1427 its congregation obtained the right to establish their own cemetery, while remaining part of Bredon parish. The Mitton hamlet declined, shrinking to a farmstead. In the seventeenth century, the manor house was built alongside. By 1775, the chapel, probably reduced to being a farm building, had become ruinous. It was 'quarried' for its stone.

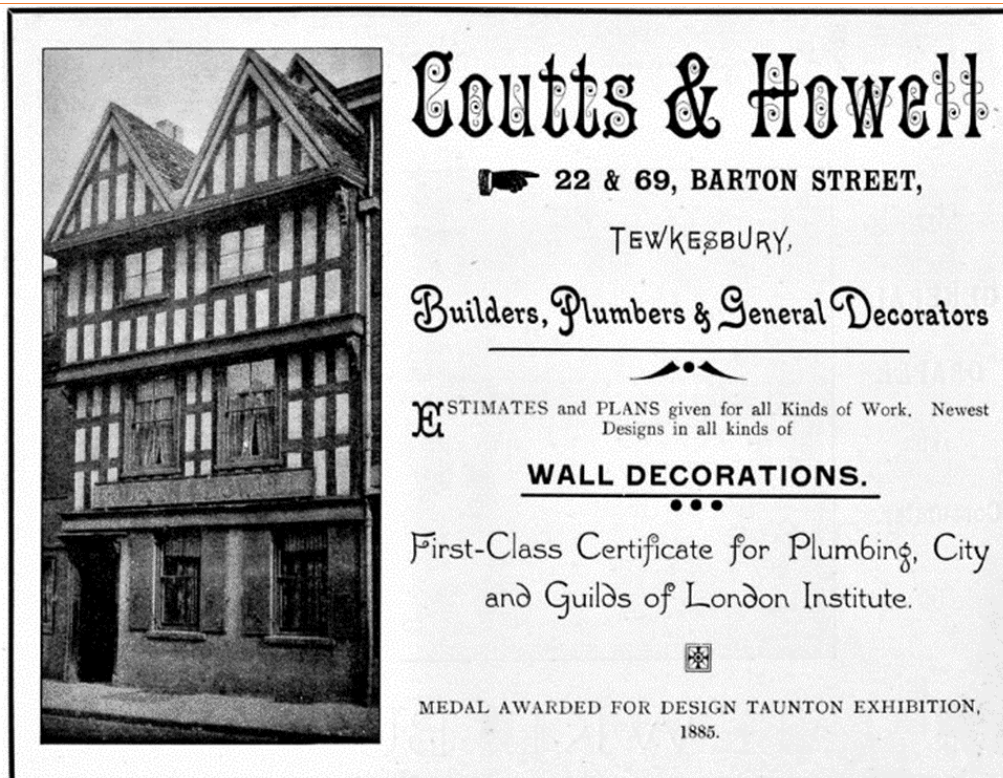
The cross-head can be dated on stylistic grounds to circa 1150-1200, possibly predating the chapel. It is architecturally important as locally there few examples of either Saxon or Norman cross-heads, the prayer crosses which are found in the grounds of some local churches are all of late medieval date. Perhaps during the 12th century when many local parish churches were being constructed, the small agrarian community at Mitton could not afford to build a church, but as a first step raised a stone cross, which was later replaced by a stone-built chapel.

The site of the chapel is shown on a 1702 estate map, and more accurately on the 1888 OS map. It disappeared when the housing estate was built, with limited archaeological investigation. The cross head was found on the chapel site, which is now largely covered by housing plots and an electrical sub-station.

Richard Sermon and Bruce Watson published 'A History Of Mitton Chapel And Its Environs' in 'Glevensis' 37 (2004), which this short article draws on.

Past Tewkesbury

A Tewkesbury guide book from 1902/3 contains a series of sixty full-page advertisements for Tewkesbury businesses, most with photographs of the premises. This building is on the opposite side of the street to the museum. In 1902, though, it didn't have its magnificent first floor stained-glass window, which was a twentieth-century addition.



Coutts & Howell
22 & 69, BARTON STREET,
TEWKESBURY,
Builders, Plumbers & General Decorators

ESTIMATES and PLANS given for all Kinds of Work. Newest Designs in all kinds of

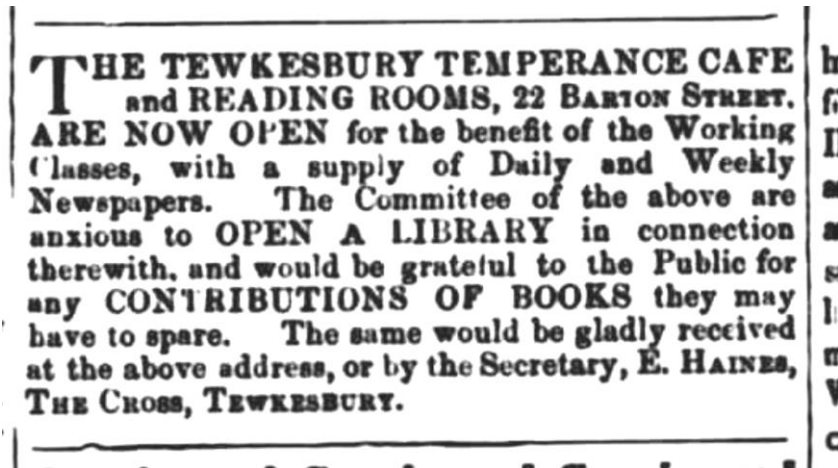
WALL DECORATIONS.

First-Class Certificate for Plumbing, City and Guilds of London Institute.

MEDAL AWARDED FOR DESIGN TAUNTON EXHIBITION, 1885.

This beautiful building, 22 Barton Street, was once the home of a Schoolmaster, Isaac Briginshaw.

George Howell, Borough Surveyor, later lived there and in 1874 the Tewkesbury Temperance Cafe and Reading Rooms were housed there with an appeal for books for the Working Classes.



THE TEWKESBURY TEMPERANCE CAFE
and **READING ROOMS, 22 BARTON STREET.**
ARE NOW OPEN for the benefit of the Working
Classes, with a supply of Daily and Weekly
Newspapers. The Committee of the above are
anxious to **OPEN A LIBRARY** in connection
therewith, and would be grateful to the Public for
any **CONTRIBUTIONS OF BOOKS** they may
have to spare. The same would be gladly received
at the above address, or by the Secretary, **E. HAINES,**
THE CROSS, TEWKESBURY.

When George Howell died his widow married Frederick Webster Coutts and it became the home of George Potter Howell, his stepson.

In 1885 Frederick and George went into partnership and the business of Coutts and Howell was run from 22 Barton Street for many years.

Michael Tomkinson purchased it in 1946 for £2400 and formed the company of Mead and Tomkinson selling motor cycles later moving to East Street.

It stood sad and empty for a while and after the Council refused to purchase in 1952 was eventually sold to Joan Marian, who opened a shop with the advert - "The newest fascinating Dress Shop stocking the cream of well-known names in fashion".

The 2 small windows on the ground floor were probably replaced with the large window to display the merchandise.

The building has had a chequered history being much restored over the years as well as periods of neglect but boasts a stained glass 5 light window on first floor installed by G.P. Howell in 1909.

It is now a private home, standing proudly on the north side of Barton Street.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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 compiler 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 might be of general interest, please email info@teWKesburymuseum.org .

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