

WELLAND HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter April 2024

Friday 26 April, Welland Village Hall, 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm, entry £1

Meriel Hodgetts (1918-2004), local artist and historian

Mary Weaver will talk about Meriel Hodgetts, who spent most of her life in Upper Welland. She became well known for her painting on china and interest in local history and natural history. In 1978 she restored the artwork in the summerhouse at Dell House, Green Lane, Malvern Wells, originally created by Francis Hopkinson in the 19th century.

Little Malvern Court estate - the 1947 auction

Wendy Gillespie will look at the properties and land sold off by Little Malvern Court in 1947 and why the auction particulars are useful to us today. The properties concerned were Grounds Farm, Huntley's Cottage, Gate Cottage, Painters Cottage, Mill Brook Cottage, Marlbank Farm, Yew Tree House Farm, The Grange, Wood Farm, Mayalls Farm, Woodend Farm, Jessamine Cottage, Eight Oaks Farm in Castlemorton and Yoke Farm nr Leominster.

Writeup of The History of Marlbank Farm - Chris Mesley, February meeting

Marlbank Farm – A grand home with two front doors

Sometimes documentary evidence is not able to answer all of the questions about a property. An approach by the current owners of Marlbank Farm for help to understand its history initiated a chain of research using a range of disciplines and sources of information which we have not consulted before. At the Group's meeting in February Chris Mesley presented the results of this research.

A set of deeds provided the names of some 18th and early 19th century owners and residents: John Lutwich (father and son) and Thomas Heming (grandfather and grandson) but we could not go further back in time with documentary evidence alone. For the rest of the 19th century Land Tax returns provided a picture of the owners living in other parts of the country and a series of tenants managing the farm. The Beringtons of Little Malvern Court acquired the property at the beginning of the 20th century and held this until the well-known auction of much of their estate in 1947.

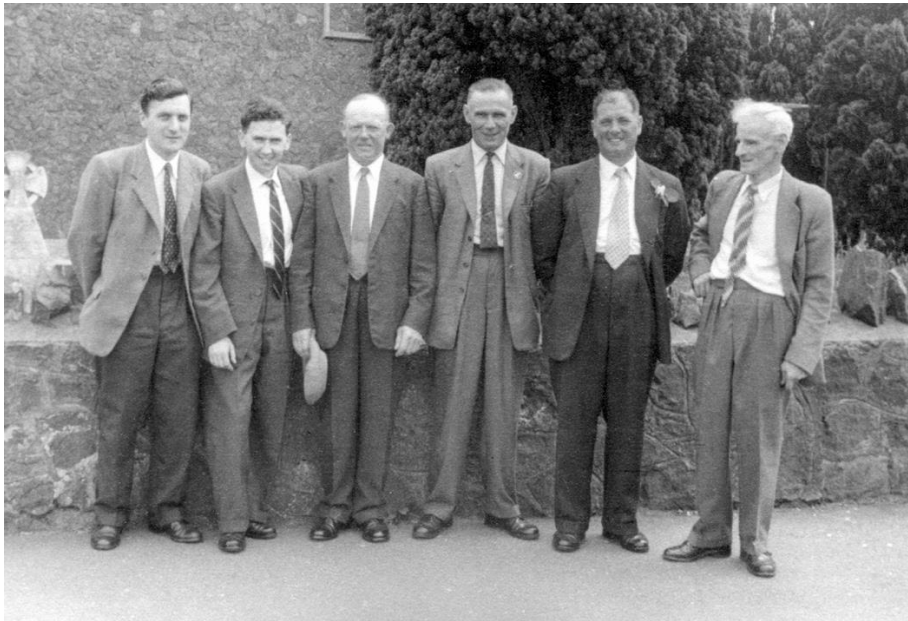
Edmund Bridges and his son were tenants of the farm for about 30 years and Roger Wood (one of their descendants) provided a wonderful photograph of the family in front of the house in about 1890. One of the curious things about the image is the presence of two front doors.

With the help of Dr Edward Peters, a buildings historian, we were able to date the original construction of the building and also to suggest a reason for such a grand building with its anomalies. If you would like to know more, please check the website for the more detailed article on Marlbank Farm.

This was the best attended meeting yet with about 40 people present including a former resident of Marlbank Farm. It was great to see so many interested in the history of Welland. We are looking at ways to improve the presentations for future meetings with amplification and improved projection facilities.

<https://wellandhistory.uk/2024/03/06/marlbank-farm/>

The bellringers of St James Church - identified



The above photo, belonging to Roger Wood, was published in the February newsletter, with an appeal for the ringers to be identified. Judy Davies (nee Price) was able to oblige: l to r, John Clements of Upton, George Morris of Malvern, Frank Lawrence of Welland, Leonard Dovey of Welland, Charles Haylings of Ripple and Edward 'Ted' Maund of Upton. The occasion was the wedding of Judy Price and Alan Davies on 18 June 1960. Judy and Alan were bellringers themselves and their fellow ringers commemorated the occasion with a peal of 5040 plain bob minor, which took 2 hrs 34 mins. Judy says that all the bellringers received a copy of the photo. Frank Lawrence's was passed down to his nephew, Roger, but without the background information. Thank you to Roger and Judy.

Council houses

The February newsletter also appealed for information on Welland's first council houses, built on Marlbank Road in the 1920s. Malcolm Brookes responded with a detailed account of what it was like to live in one of them. Here is an excerpt which may bring back memories for some of you.

I can remember the house with no running water. Water was pumped from a well shared with the adjacent neighbour. The pump froze at times in the winter even though it was lagged. The house had three bedrooms upstairs and a hall, kitchen and living room downstairs. There was no bathroom. The toilet and

coal house were outside in a separate brick building. We had to use a bucket of water from the pump to flush the toilet. it was an extremely cold experience in the winter.

The kitchen had a gloss painted brickwork interior, lino on the floor and there was a coal fuelled range cooker/oven with an adjacent coal furnace under a washtub. Usually on a Sunday when the range was hottest, we used a tin bath filled with hot water in front of the range fire in the kitchen to have a bath. Often, as the youngest child, I was the last to have a bath. On the north side of the kitchen was a larder with a cold stone slab but this was knocked out in the 1950's. I remember our pig carcasses being hung on hooks up the stairs in the hall to cure.

Originally there was no electricity and the house was lit by oil lamps and candles. A radio was operated by a battery (an accumulator) which was taken to Roberts's garage on the Gloucester Road, Welland, to be charged. I'm not exactly certain when electricity was put in the houses but there were many power cuts. Water was piped into the houses in the early 1950's and it made a huge difference. With water plumbed in we had a proper bathroom with a flushing toilet and chain and in the kitchen we had a Burco Boiler for doing the washing and the old range was replaced by an electric cooker. The property was further upgraded over the years and in about 1980 there was a full renovation of these old houses; walls were plastered and the downstairs bathroom was upgraded, central heating was installed and an upstairs toilet was put in.

I'd be glad to receive any other reminiscences or family stories about life in these houses.

You can read a brief article about the 20th century housing estates in Welland on our website:

<https://wellandhistory.uk/2024/03/26/20th-century-housing-estates/>

Books for sale

Gwyneth Gill will be bringing about 30 books of local interest to sell at the April meeting and has generously offered to donate the money raised to our funds. Cash payments only please.

Behind the Scenes at The Hive - places still available

There are still places available on the tour arranged for **Monday 3 June** at 11:00 am for approximately 1 hr 20 mins.

The Archive and Archaeology Service at The Hive in Worcester offer a 'behind the scenes' tour for groups. Attendees have a chance to handle archaeological artefacts and meet the archaeologists and the staff involved in the conservation of artefacts. The tour includes a visit to the archive strongrooms to see a selection of historical photographs and documents, including Shakespeare's marriage bond, a letter sent from the Titanic and a charter from King Stephen. The cost for a group is £70 so the cost per person depends on the number of people involved but this will be capped at £5 per person, with the remainder being paid out of group funds if necessary. I attended one of these tours with some of our members in 2018 and it was very enjoyable. But note you will be standing most of the time and bags/coats have to be left in the lockers provided. Get in touch if you are interested.

Volunteers to help with meeting refreshments

Can you help us? We will provide all supplies out of our funds but need volunteers to make drinks, serve and wash up afterwards. You don't have to volunteer for every meeting.

Borrowed wedding photos

A few years ago, Mary Purser borrowed some wedding photos for an exhibition in St James Church. Four of these were never returned to their donors. I don't know who the owners are but if you think you might be one of them please contact me. The photos belong to three weddings, with one being dated 20/12/1970. I would guess from the outfits that the other two weddings also took place around 1970.

Next newsletter & meeting

I shall send out the next newsletter in early June and the next meeting is scheduled for **Friday 28 June**. Contributions for the newsletter welcome.

Contact

Wendy Gillespie
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If you no longer wish to be on this emailing list please email me, phone me, or put a note through my door.