

WELLAND HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter May 2025

Next meeting: Friday 30 May, Welland Village Hall, 3:00 pm

Welland and Little Malvern in the 1921 Census - Wendy Gillespie

The year 1921 is not quite within living memory but many long-time residents of Welland and Little Malvern will remember some of the families who are recorded in the 1921 census. I shall be looking at where they lived, what they did for a living, who was unemployed and whether there is any evidence of men left disabled by their war service.

If you have a query about a particular family or house in the census please let me know by 24 May.

Research update - Wendy Gillespie, Wendy Jones, Chris Mesley

We shall be talking about some of the research we have been involved in over the past year, covering a wide range of aspects of Welland's history.

Note that we are always glad to hear from anyone who has been carrying out their own research into Welland or Little Malvern houses or families and is prepared to share it with us.

All welcome, entry £1 at the door, refreshments.

Write-up of the meeting on 28 February

Old St James, New St James and the artefacts that link them Wendy Gillespie and Wendy Jones

The first St James church was built next to Welland Court in the 14th century. It was on a small site to start with which seems never to have been expanded. There was at least one rebuilding during the 1670s. The church would have been an important building in the life of the village as a general meeting place and the focus of religious ceremony and social events. During the ensuing centuries the vicars and churchwardens would have dealt with the upheaval of the Reformation and the Civil War. The only detailed description of the interior of the church was made by Bewdley antiquary Peter Prattinton in 1820, who noted the various monuments on the chancel walls and the burials of important parishioners under the floor of the chancel amongst other things. It is due to him that we know the church once had a singing gallery and the chancel a fireplace.

The church was reputed to be dilapidated by the mid-19th century and was certainly too small for the population by then, with a full graveyard. The Revd Anthony Lechmere, who became vicar in 1828, eventually succeeded in his campaign to get a new church built on a more central site. Raising the funds proved difficult but the present St James was consecrated on 2 April 1875. It was designed by John West Hugall, who also designed the new vicarage (now Welland House Care Centre) and the school.

Demolition of the old church followed but some items were transferred to the new St James: the engraved wall monuments to the Revd Thomas Evans and Edmund Taylor, the chalice and jug donated by Penelope and Jane Taylor, the benefactions table describing the 'poor lands' that generated income to support the parish's poor and the travelling font. Only a few 19th century images of the old church survive - paintings by Maria Martin, Thomas Ricketts, Mary Brandling and George Row Clarke.

Cricket team mystery solved

In the May 2022 newsletter, I appealed for help in identifying the location of the cricket team shown in the photograph below. The photo belongs to Welland resident Sheila Hoare, daughter of the late Marion Phelps. No one was able to provide an answer at the time.

Wendy Jones writes:

At last, after all this time, I know where the cricket team photo was taken!! It was Hanley Castle. The house you can just make out in the background was the vicarage. It is no longer a vicarage and has since been renamed as Pyndar House. I always felt that the slightly Dutch style gable at the front would be the key - and it was. The house does not face the main road (the B4211) and that's what threw me every time I looked at it (among dozens of other possible locations for the photo). The house is sideways on to the road, so the main facade faces south east - and I had been looking for a house that fronted on to a road because the fence posts looked like they were the field boundary of a road (opposite the house) whereas the fence was actually the boundary between the 'formal' vicarage garden and the glebe land associated with the vicarage. At that time, the glebe land would have been farmed for additional income for the vicar. Interestingly, although that land is now Hanley Castle and Upton's cricket pitch, it is still called 'The Glebe Field'.

When I first saw the matching set of chairs in the photo, I thought they must have been brought from a nearby inn or large house, so I now think that it is more than likely they were brought from the vicarage.

Of course, it doesn't mean that the cricket team in the photo were the home team because they could have been the visiting team from any other school's team that Hanley Castle Grammar School played.



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Next meeting

Friday 26 September, subject to be confirmed.

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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.