

WELLAND HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter February 2026

Friday 27 February, Welland Village Hall, 3:00 pm

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

This month we bring you three short talks on different aspects of Welland's history.

Memories of Old Welland and Richard Drinkwater

Richard Drinkwater of Knights Farm passed away in May 2025. Gordon Baylis knew him for many years and will share his memories with us.

Life on the inside at Welland Remand Home

Welland House Care Home was originally the vicarage, built in 1880. From 1943 to the 1970s it was a boys' remand home. John Barley's parents worked and lived there during 1947-1949 and 1956-1961. John, a regular visitor to Welland and our meetings, will describe what life was like for his parents and himself.

The Pheasant Inn

Wendy Jones' previous presentation on The Pheasant in September 2022 covered its history up to 1900. This talk will pick up from that date and take us through subsequent chapters in The Pheasant's turbulent story, including many changes of owners, tenants and breweries, associated sporting teams and even an arson attack.

Write-up of the 28 November meeting: *Farm buildings: recording and researching the past for the future* by Alan Wadsworth

Alan Wadsworth has led the Worcestershire Farmsteads Project since 2017 and before that he was in charge of a corresponding project for Wiltshire. Both are concerned with recording farm buildings, which are very much a part of the history of any farm, giving clues to what was produced and what livestock were kept in the past. Many old sheds and barns have gone out of use and been demolished or replaced. The aim of the project is to record those remaining before they disappear or are repurposed. The project's work of documenting, photographing and researching is done by volunteers.

In Welland, Chris Mesley has worked with Alan to document Marlbank Farm and Willow Grange, formerly Woodside.

Welland's Church House

The old church of St James and its churchyard occupied a site near Welland Court. As with several other parish churches in the area the building did not fare well during the Civil War. Whether this was from neglect or deliberate act is not clear. A survey of vicarages taken in January 1650 notes that in Welland "... the Church is now downe and the minister doth officiate in the Churchhouse." Initially I had assumed that the latter was referring to the vicarage.

It would have been quite a squeeze to accommodate all the parishioners on a Sunday as church-going in this period was the norm. In 1676 the churchwardens recorded that there were 72 adult males in the parish meaning there could have been as many as 200 people living in Welland at the time and only one dissenter.

I recently attended a conference of the Vernacular Architecture Group where I met Dr Joanna Mattingly. She opened my eyes to another possibility. Across southern England many parishes had a specific building known as the Church House. From extensive research it seems as though the peak period for their construction was the early 16th century (and none after the Reformation).

Typically they were built adjacent to the churchyard and were often quite substantial two-storey structures. They were maintained by the churchwardens on behalf of the parish. Their main purpose was in providing parochial entertainment. In earlier centuries events such as the "Church Ale" involved brewing and Saint's day festivities in the church building. Although the nave of the church was the responsibility of the parishioners, the Church authorities increasingly frowned upon its use for anything other than sacred purposes.

In Welland, St. James' was only rebuilt in 1674 meaning that the Church House was used as the primary place of worship for at least a quarter of a century. No other mentions of this building in Welland have been found and it is possible that it was decommissioned when the new church was built. The exact location of the Church House is open to speculation. The site could have been at the back of the churchyard and later incorporated into the grounds of Welland Court as the stables.

The nearest surviving Church House is the Ale House in Colwall, shown on the next page.

Chris Mesley



Colwall Ale House in front of St James the Great Church, Colwall
(Photo: Google Maps)

Exploring Welland

<https://wellandhistory.uk/>

Next meeting

Friday 29 May 2026 - subject to be announced

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.