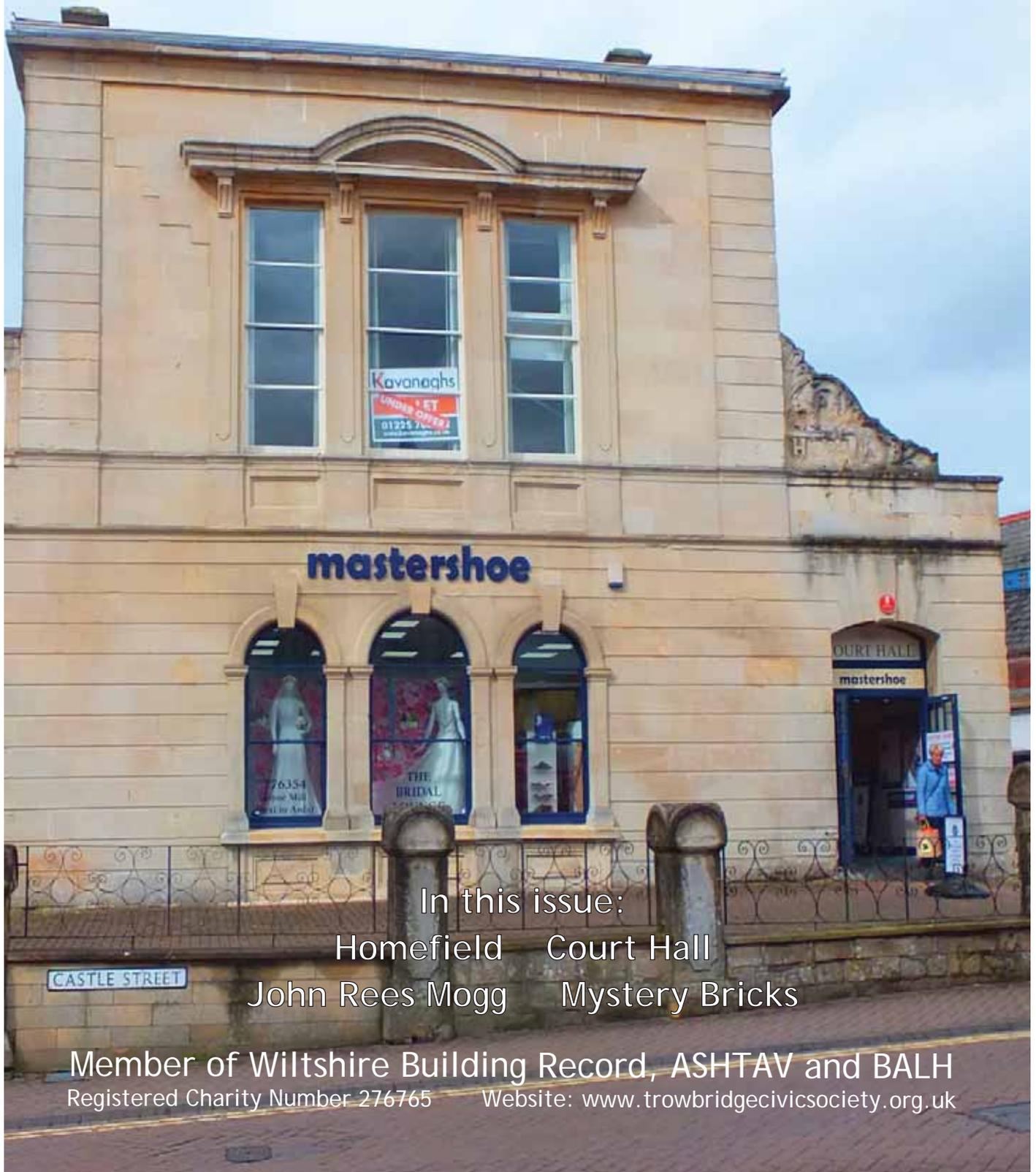


# Trowbridge Civic Society NEWSLETTER



Spring 2019

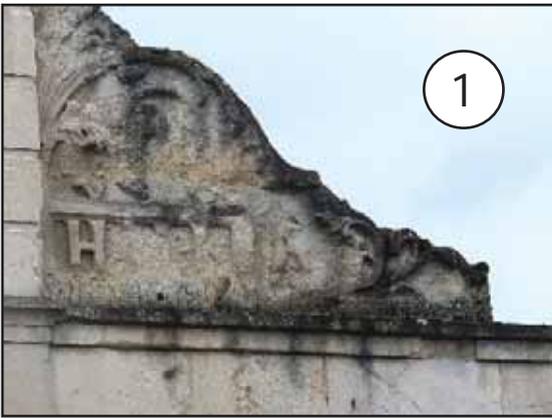


In this issue:

Homefield      Court Hall

John Rees Mogg      Mystery Bricks

Member of Wiltshire Building Record, ASHTAV and BALH  
Registered Charity Number 276765      Website: [www.trowbridgecivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.trowbridgecivicsociety.org.uk)



**Court Hall**  
 1. Hall 2. View from outside Court in 1905  
 2 3 and 4. Before and after  
 Refurbishment 5. Berni Inn Advertisement  
 Pictures courtesy of Giles Propoerties



### Calendar of Events 2019 -2020

- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April**- Sir Isaac Pitman Walk - Civic Centre at 7 pm
  - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May** - Guided Walk around Bratton Meet at 7pm. Park in The Duke car park.
  - Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June** - Visit to Frome - a walk round central Frome led by Diana Ingram and Delia Horsfall followed by light refreshments in Frome Museum Meet at 7pm by the Cheese and Grain-- BA11 1BE
  - Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July** - Cream Tea Afternoon by kind permission of Glyn and Ruth Bridges 4 Alma Street, Trowbridge BA14 7EX from 3 - 5pm
  - Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August** - Trip to Gloucester Cathedral and Docks
  - Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September** - Heritage Day Various sites open - see website for details
  - Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October** - Trowbridge Through Kevin's Lens by Kevin Hartley - The Supper Room, Trowbridge Town Hall at 7.30pm
  - Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November** - Public Lecture - Crossing the Brick Threshold - the story of brick and tile in the Medieval and post Medieval period in Wiltshire by Mike Stone (former curator of Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre) The Supper Room, Trowbridge Town Hall at 7.30pm
- 2010**
- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January** - New Year Social with Quiz The Supper Room, Trowbridge Town Hall at 7.30pm
  - Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March** - AGM and Talk The Supper Room, Trowbridge town Hall at 7.15pm

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Ken Rogers has written two articles for this issue, a history of Homefield, which one of our members had asked for, and a piece about one of the ancestors of one of our more notable politicians. It was a surprise to hear of a Trowbridge connection.

We also have a fascinating history of Court Hall at the entrance to the Shires.

There is more about bricks and a mystery which several members would like the answer to. Can you help? And if you remember Riddy's ice cream, perhaps you can send us some of your memories, including reminiscences of the Chocolate Box.

Help - We are looking for someone who would be willing to collect and collate news for future issues. The present editor is finding the task more and more difficult because of eyesight problems. One of our members has volunteered to set up the newsletter for printing so no computer would be necessary. Please get in touch if you think you would be able to do this.

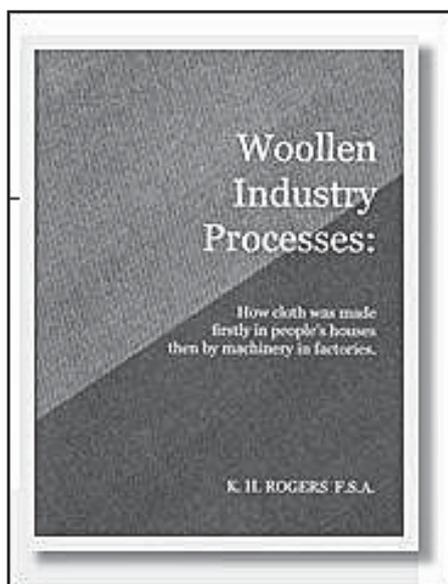
## TROWBRIDGE CIVIC SOCIETY INFORMATION

- President: Kenneth Rogers
- Vice Presidents: Michael Marshman;  
Wende Maunder;
- Chairman: Glyn Bridges, 4 Alma Street, Trowbridge. Tel 755784
- Vice Chairman: Margaret Howard,  
52 Avenue Road,  
Trowbridge. Tel 764691
- Hon Secretary: Celia Russell, 18 Churchlands,  
North Bradley. Tel 754668
- Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary:  
  
Janet Carpenter, 2 Chepston Place,  
Trowbridge. Tel 752770  
janet\_carpenter@btinternet.com
- Committee members: Sue Glover; Kevin Hartley;  
Jonathan Hawkes; Diana Ingram
- Newsletter: Jennifer & Peter Collier  
Tel 761270  
Sue and Kevin Eames;  
Glyn Bridges  
pcollier@blueyonder.co.uk
- Photographic Recorder: Kevin Hartley
- Web Site: Jonathan Hawkes
- Subscription Rates: Single £6, Joint £10, Corporate £30  
New members welcome - please contact Membership Secretary

### From the Treasurer

**If you haven't yet paid your subscriptions for 2019, please send them to Janet at the address above or pay directly to our bank account Lloyds 30-98-97 AC No: 46956860 using your name as a reference.**

Deadline for next issue - 28th June



## Woollen Industry Processes

Ken Rogers' latest book about how cloth was made, firstly in people's houses and then by machines in factories, is now available, price £15. It is very interesting and full of illustrations. You can get a copy by ringing Trowbridge Museum - 01225 751339 -and arranging a mutually convenient date and time to pay for it and collect it from the Civic Hall where the museum staff are based while the museum is closed.

All profits will go to the museum.

Margaret Howard

## From the Chairman

Glyn Bridges

Over the last few decades our town centres have seen huge changes. Thirty years ago there were very few cafes in the town. Now it seems that every other shop is a coffee shop, restaurant or take-away and sandwiched in between are the charity shops. The two malls go some way to improve the shopping facilities and there are the supermarkets and the out of town centres on Bradley Road.

In an effort to improve high streets the Government has provided 'The Future High Streets Fund'. This is a central government fund of £675 million that is open for applications from towns and cities across England. It recognises the continuing importance of high streets and aims to support them as they change to meet the needs of present and future communities. Wiltshire Council has submitted an expression of interest for Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge.

The Trowbridge application recognises opportunities that could help transform the centre to improve the environment, leisure and shopping opportunities. The bid for funding includes resources to help improve traffic and encourage walking and cycling by improving access, enhancements to Castle Place and the Town Hall, and an assessment of development potential around Court Street and Castle Street. BUT all this is dependent on a successful bid.

Some members may have read the article in the press recently about the Bristol lamp posts that were being taken from a thirties estate to improve the street scene in Clifton. Understandably, the locals on the estate objected to losing their lamp posts. This is nothing new as the pavements and kerb stones were taken from Trowbridge some years ago to enhance the streets of Bradford on Avon.

## Planning Matters

Sue and Kevin Eames

There have been very few planning decisions of note since the last newsletter. There were two relating to the centre of the town. The first (19/007020) concerns 33/34 Fore Street. Permission with conditions has been granted for a residential unit on the first floor and three residential units on a new second floor with associated works.

The second (18/11203/FUL) relates to 19/19a Stallard Street where number 19, a former shop is to be incorporated in to the existing residential property 19A.

## What do you want Trowbridge to look like in future? David Feather

Trowbridge Town Council is developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the town and Wiltshire Council is undertaking a review of the Core Strategy. There will be opportunities for putting forward your ideas as to how you would wish to see your home area develop. As a Civic Society member you care about Trowbridge and so the following lists some issues for your consideration.

- 1 The population of Trowbridge Community Area, There is little open space left between Trowbridge town and the surrounding villages. Should this open space be protected from future development? Where would development be acceptable? Would higher density in the town centre be an alternative?
- 2 Although the population of Trowbridge has grown significantly, new shops and restaurants have been built and internet shopping is popular. With the likely increase of internet shopping as retailers get smarter, the amount of floorspace needed in the town centre could be less and there could be more empty properties. What should be done about it? Are there any shopping streets that could become residential? Are there other alternative uses?
- 3 Ken Rogers has told us that Trowbridge has more listed buildings than Bradford on Avon. Is this obvious to you, as you walk around the town centre? Should there be better control of shop front design and advertisements? Are the pavements and road surfaces maintained to a standard that a Conservation Area merits?
- 4 Are there any areas of the town centre that could be made more attractive? Could more trees be planted? Could pavements be widened in some locations?
- 5 A bigger population will mean more traffic. More traffic will mean more congestion unless some road improvements are done. Are there any locations where more road capacity is needed?

These are just a few issues to set you thinking. If you already have ideas then perhaps you could jot them down and pass them to a Committee member to enable the Civic Society to form a view. Importantly, when the time comes for public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and the Core Strategy Review, please take part.

[If you wish to comment, you can send your ideas to the editor - email address on page 3]

## History of Court Hall

Jon Giles

Court Hall was built in 1853 by eight parties, each of whom had a 2/16ths shareholding in the premises, as follows: John Perkins Stancomb, Jesse Goldsmith, Thomas Clark the Younger, John Slater, George Haden, John Edward Hayward, Rowland Rodway, and Frederick Webber.

In May 1853 the Bath Chronicle wrote: "A County Court House and Mechanics' Institute are to be built at Trowbridge at a cost of £1320. Messrs. Rogers and Rawlings of Trowbridge are the contractors and the plans have been prepared by the Surveyor of County Courts. The extreme length will be 68 feet with a frontage of 54 feet. On the ground floor will be a reading room, 30 feet by 18, a committee room 14 feet by 12, a judge's room 14 feet by 12, and a classroom 22 feet by 16. On the upper floor will be one large room 60 feet by 30, having an altitude of 20 feet.'" The Surveyor of County Courts was Charles Reeves (1815-1866) of 102 Guildford Street, Russell Square, London, who is known to have designed 64 County Court buildings.

Newspapers of the time show that for a number of years the Court Hall was used by the Mechanics' Institute for their meetings, and was the venue for a wide range of social activities. These included plays and concerts,. However it was never actually used by the court for the Petty Sessions, which were held at the Police Station in Stallard Street.

In 1871 it was bought for £1,200 by Goldsmith brothers, Jesse the Younger and William, who later converted it into a cloth warehouse and let it out to W.H. Tucker & Co. The seats etc formerly used for Public audiences were sold off by auction.

The Goldsmiths owned a number of other significant properties in Trowbridge, including The Home Mills, occupied by Samuel Salter & Co, plus associated offices and warehouses; Duke Street Mills; Duke House, family residence on Duke Street; and various other dwellings and business premises. On the death of Jesse Goldsmith the Trustees of his will sold all the above properties by public auction on 5th March 1885. The successful bidders were William and James Mackay, woollen cloth merchants, who paid £1,200, (plus auctioneer's fee of 8 shillings 3d, and contract fee also of 8 shillings 3d). W.H. Tucker & Co. continued to occupy the building until the outbreak of WW2 in 1939.

From 1911 to 1946 Court Hall was owned by the Starkey family, also woollen cloth merchants, but for the duration of the Second World War it was used by the American forces as a store, ending the war as a Services Club. In January 1940, Tuckers entered into a Lease Agreement with the Wessex Electricity Company, allowing it to occupy the land immediately to the North of Court Hall (now forming the pedestrian entrance to the Shires Shopping Centre off Castle Street) in order to construct an air-raid shelter and ancillary buildings for an annual rent of £1.

After the war Herbert Stanley Starkey sold Court Hall to Leslie and Alice Hoare, a local couple from Hilperton. It subsequently became the Court Hall Café from 1946, operating as a café restaurant. In 1948 the café business & premises were leased to a Swindon based company, Swindonia Limited, for a term of 14 years at an annual rent of £300.

By 1958 however the café was due to be closed, but as it was considered to be good for Knees customers, H.J. Knee Limited took an assignment of the lease on 31st December 1958.

The following year Noel Knee, (grandson of H.J Knees founder, Henry Knee), acquired the freehold title to the property, and reinvented Court Hall as a public house, calling it 'The Woolpack'. This revived the name of a former pub on Fore Street in Trowbridge which was demolished in 1914 to make way for the Palace Cinema, (also long since demolished). Noel wished the 'Woolpack' name to be perpetuated because of its association with the cloth trade in Trowbridge.

Noel put in toilets and a dance floor upstairs, and catered for dinner/dances, using the whole of the ground floor as a restaurant. At this time, however, the licensing laws were extremely onerous and restrictive, and initially Knees were granted only a conditional license for the sale of 'intoxicating liquors' for a term of 2¼ years from 12th March 1959. The conditions were that



the premises could not open for the whole of Sunday, and that alcoholic drinks could be served only with meals, or to ticket holders attending organized functions, such as dances.

Noel had plans for extending the building to provide a new cocktail bar and to maintain a full time barman however, and applied for planning permission for the same in anticipation of the granting of a full 'On-License' for which he applied to The Trowbridge Licensing Justices on 9th March 1961. The application was met with fierce resistance, not least from the then owners of the George Hotel in the town centre, which was the only fully licensed premises serving evening meals in Trowbridge at that time. The records suggest that a full license was subsequently issued some months later, but only after considerable further effort and expense on the part of Noel and H.J Knees. The plans for the cocktail bar and forecourt alterations were never progressed.

In this form The Woolpack proved very successful and it was sold to Berni Inns in 1963, who continued to run it under the same name for many years.

In 1986 the freehold title of Court Hall was acquired by property company Merpco/Grand Metropolitan Estates Ltd in the sum of £81,650. At this time it was part of a much larger development site upon which the Shires Shopping Centre was built, opening in 1990.

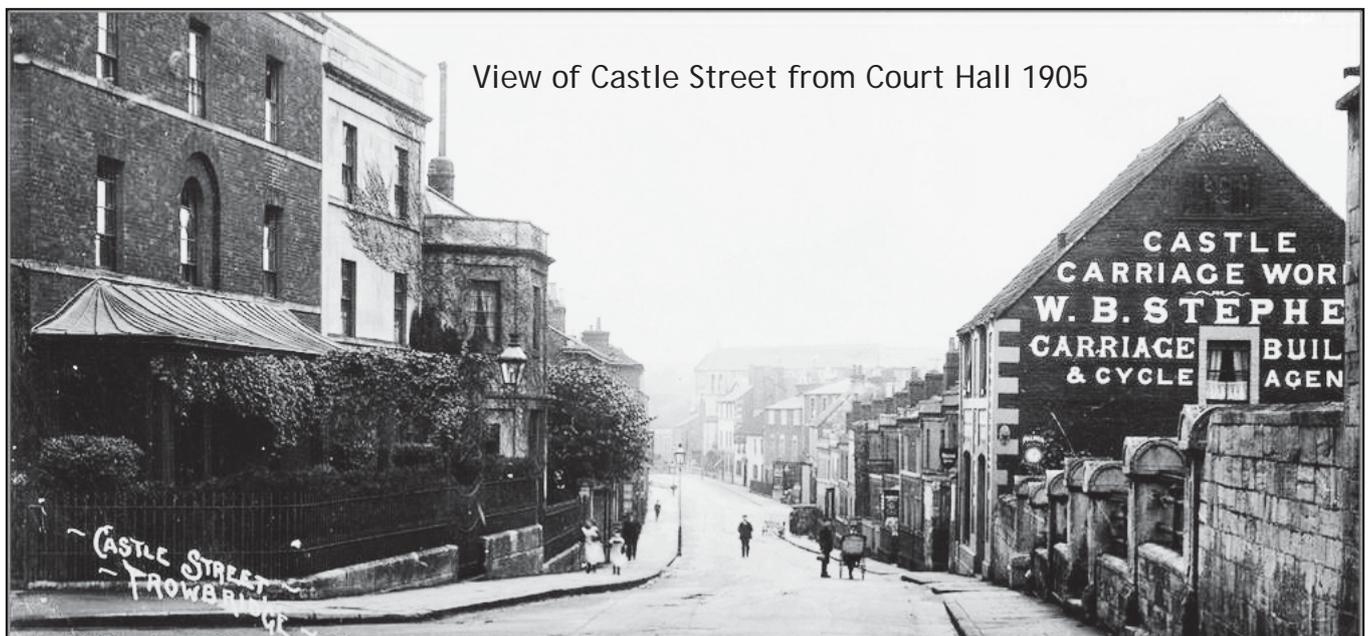
Throughout this time The Woolpack continued to trade as a licensed premises and restaurant, but the ownership of the building passed to Hunters Tor Securities Ltd in 1992, and then again to ATA Engineering Ltd in 1994 for the sum of £581,000. The latter specialise in tooling for the aerospace industry, effectively buying Court Hall by default, due to their then Director, Mr Amos, having an interest in Hunters Tor Securities. Because of the recession in the early 1990's, redevelopment of the property was not commercially viable, and Hunters decided to liquidate the asset, effectively passing ownership to ATA Engineering as a stop gap until a buyer could be found.

By this time the Woolpack had become very run down and neglected, finally closing for good around 1994/5.

Court Hall remained unoccupied for the next 7 or 8 years, falling into a further state of disrepair and neglect, becoming rat and pigeon infested, with leaking roofs and its front terrace overgrown with weeds. In 2002 local brothers Rob & Jon Giles bought the freehold for £425,000, and set about a complete refurbishment prior to establishing a branch of their retail footwear chain, Mastershoe, on the ground floor, with the upper floor let out as offices. The refurbishment, by Heritage Restoration, won a Trowbridge Town Council Enhancement Award 2003.

[This history has been taken from the website <http://www.courthalltrowbridge.co.uk/history.html>

There are a great number of photographs of the hall including many of the refurbishment that was undertaken before it was reopened.]



The earliest certain owner of this site was the clothier William Brewer, singled out by John Aubrey as driving the greatest trade for medleys of any clothier in England. He had been living in the large house, once called Hall's Place, and many years later The Limes (on the site of the Town Hall), from at least 1660 as tenant to William Eaglestone, to whom much of the former Langford family property had descended. About 1670 Brewer purchased Hall's Place from Eaglestone, and since a Langford deed of 1563 mentions land in Polebarn Lane, it seems likely that Brewer's purchase included that too.

The Brewer ownership gives the site a particular interest. In 1673 and 1674 twenty-nine Dutch cloth workers with their dependents, who had responded to an invitation by royal proclamation welcoming foreign craftsmen, were sent down to William Brewer at Trowbridge, and a later deed, mentioned below, refers to property on this site as including a house called the Dutch House formerly of David Solose or his tenants. David, his name more commonly appearing as Celosse or similar, can be traced in the manorial records living in this part of the town until 1697, when he went back to Holland. The Dutch appear to have been settled in various places (some certainly went to Bradford), but quite likely others stayed in Trowbridge as tenants to Celosse. Mary Cornil, Dutchman's wife, was buried in 1692, and Daniel the Dutchman and his family were receiving parish relief in 1693.

William Brewer died in 1707; a monument to him and his wife is in the parish church. His will shows that he left much property to his oldest son Thomas, but there is no mention of Hall's Place or the Polebarn Lane houses. This was almost certainly because they had been assured to his second son William (born 1664) by a settlement made when in 1688 he married Elizabeth, daughter of John Curle of Turleigh. This couple baptised four children in Trowbridge between 1689 and 1693, but there is no certainty as to where they lived, nor has William's death been found. The next certain fact is that their son William (born 1691) was living at Bradford with his widowed mother Elizabeth in 1715. In that year they performed the legal manoeuvre called 'suffering a common recovery' to break the entail on Hall's Place and sell it. Having (rather carelessly, one would suppose) failed to free the Polebarn Lane houses at the same time, they had to go through the same process again in April 1723 to do



so. Only just in time – by September William was dead, and his two sisters had become his coheirs. So it was the widow Elizabeth and her daughters, Elizabeth wife of the Revd. Samuel Freckleton of Lydford, Somerset, and Abigail Brewer of London, spinster, who sold the Polebarn Lane group to James Gibbs of Trowbridge, clothier.

Our first detailed description of what was there comes from the deed of 1715, which mentions the Dutch house and four others; nothing is known of the named occupiers, and it seems unlikely that any were of genteel status.

There were two men named James Gibbs, father and son, active as clothiers at the time of the purchase. In 1701 the father had acquired as a manorial copyhold the large house which stood facing down Duke Street when it was a dead end, and it seems reasonable to suppose that he continued to live in it until, apparently about 1742, he gave up trade and went to live in London, where another son, Philip, was a Blackwell Hall factor.

The younger James married Sarah Howse of Bath in 1717, and may well have settled on the Polebarn Road site as a tenant to the Brewers before he bought it in 1723. By the will of a relative made in 1712, Sarah became entitled to a half share in a sugar plantation, complete with slaves, on the West Indian island of Montserrat which, when it was sold in 1743, brought her £500. It was probably during James and Sarah's time that the house became a genteel one – though whether any part of the structure is older is not known.

By an extraordinary coincidence father and son died on almost exactly the same day, and as James senior had ordered that his body should be brought to Trowbridge to lie near his father

and other relations, both were buried on the same day, 10 April 1753. James the father's will shows that they belonged to the Presbyterian chapel in Silver Street. The younger James left his wife Sarah the house he lived in for life — presumably the Polebarn Road one — and she lived until 1775, but it seems likely that their only son, Philip James Gibbs, moved in straight after his father's death. Born about 1726, he was already wealthy as the residuary legatee not only of his father and grandfather, but also of his uncle Philip, a Blackwell Hall Factor, who had died early in 1752. Philip's will describes him as a clothier, and he continued to be rated for stock in trade until 1780.

Philip James Gibbs's first marriage was to Jane, daughter of John and Jane Gay of Haycombe near Bath. By her he had a son James who died aged 22 in 1779, and a daughter Elizabeth Theodosia. Jane died in 1763 aged 40; there is a monument to her and her son in Englishcombe church. Her daughter became entitled to property in that area, and in 1766 Philip James paid £5000 for the rectory and advowson [*the right to recommend a member of the Anglican clergy for a vacant benefice*] of Englishcombe.

His second marriage was at Trowbridge in 1774 to Mary Ley, of whose family nothing has been found. By her he had a daughter Sarah, who distinguished herself in 1796 by eloping to Gretna Green with Lieutenant Alexander Riddell.



About 1800 Philip James moved to Bath, and the house was let to Thomas Bythesea, who carried on his trade as a clothier on the site until his death in 1812. Philip James's wife died in 1809, and he himself in 1813, both having a monument in Englishcombe church. 'No man lived more generally loved and respected in the various departments of life which he so honourably filled' wrote the Salisbury paper, 'nor will the friendly services which it was the chief happiness of his life to render be forgotten by those who had the happiness of his friendship and acquaintance'.

By a settlement made in 1774 the Polebarn Road complex of buildings became the property of the younger daughter Sarah, by now the wife of Captain William Hallett of the Oxfordshire Militia. In 1814 they sold the whole to Thomas Bythesea Mortimer. He and a partner Joseph Mortimer had been using the site for their clothing business since 1809, probably gradually taking over their uncle's trade. After his death they let the house and gardens to another clothier, Joseph Stancomb, but retained the use of shearing shops, handle house, and part of a stable. In 1815 they sold the house and grounds to Stancomb for £1650. The deed shows that the Mortimers had built a factory adjoining to the south. Judging by the rating, their business was extensive, and in 1818 they enquired of Boulton and Watt about fitting a steam engine. However, it ended in unknown circumstances in 1822, and T.B. Mortimer sold seven tenements, workshops, factory, and the land later occupied by the first part of Ashton Street to Stancomb for £1900.

Joseph Stancomb was a partner in a clothing business carried on in a factory in Duke Street which may well have used some of the buildings here for a time. However, the 1835 rate refers only to his own house and 14 small houses. In the 1840s he is known to have got into difficulties, and let the house to Thomas Clark, of the firm of J. and T. Clark, who insured his furniture in it for £400 in 1842, and was still there in 1847.

After this precise details of ownership are lacking. The house appears to have been empty in 1851. George Nelson Haden was living there by 1855, and Hadens continued there until the 1930s. When it was sold, as Rosefield House, in 1946 much of the house was divided into flats.

Rosefield Cottage, which may well have started life as a detached clothier's workshop, was described in an insurance policy of 1920 as The Brewhouse, and was used as a washhouse, laundry, and store. It must have been turned into a dwelling between the wars.

The large extension of the house to the south was built in 1961 to house the offices of various government agencies.

## Photos of Homefield

I worked there twice, once in the late 1960s for DHSS just after National Assistance changed to Supplementary Benefit, and again from the mid to late 1980s until 2001



when I moved to the Bath office in Kingsmead House.

These photos were taken in the 1990s I guess. They are both shots taken on the ground floor where the visiting officers and reception counter staff worked.



In the 2nd picture you can see the 'conservatory' at the back of the building.

The first picture looks out towards the staff car park at the front.

[Gill has created the Historic Trowbridge site on FaceBook. This is very interesting page which now has very many pictures of the town taken over many years and featuring many memories of

## John Rees Mogg at Trowbridge

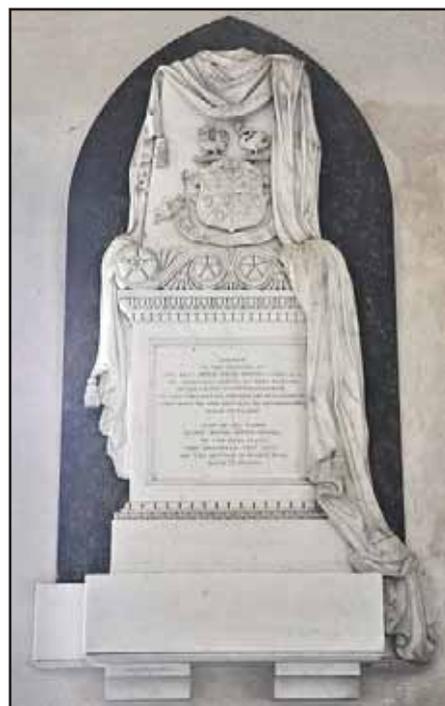
Between 1774 and 1808 the Rector of Trowbridge was John Ekins, who for most of that period was also Rectory of Newton Tony and Dean of Salisbury. In the way usual at that time when pluralism was common, he employed a curate to perform the duty at Trowbridge, paying him a salary and keeping the remainder of the income from the benefice for himself.

John, some of John Rees of Wick in Clamorgan, was born in 1772, matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford, in 1791, and became BA in 1795. He was in Trowbridge by February 1797, when he signed the marriage register as officiating minister. At the time John Batchellor was curate. Rees first signed as curate on 5 December 1797, and last on 17 September 1809, by which time he must have been acting of Ekins's successor, Gilbert Beresford.

On 8 August 1805 he married Mary Mogg Wooldridge at Camely or Cameley in Somerset. Her second name came from her mother - William Wooldridge and Mary Mogg were married at Camely in 1772 - and it was Mogg that was chosen to add to the family name. The signature J. Rees Mogg first appears in a marriage entry of 30 June 1806. By this change his wife became Mary Rees Mogg. One 30 May 1806 the couple had twin children, Mary and John. According to John's entry in the 1851 census, they were born at Camely; their father baptized them at Trowbridge on 3 April 1807. Mary must have died, since the couple later had Mary Catherine in 1814 and William in 1815. By that time they were living at Cholwell in Camely parish, and John was curate of Clutton and High Littleton. A monument in Camely church tells us that he died in 1835 and his widow in 1846.

The assertion made by the late Ken Ponting that John Rees was forced by the mob to bury the body of Thomas Hilliker, executed in 1803 for his supposed part in the burning of Littleton Mill, and that he was censured for doing so by Ekins, is not verified by any contemporary source. Hilliker was certainly buried at Trowbridge, and his name appears in the burial register. At this time burial entries do not say who performed the burial. The presumption must be that Rees, as curate, did so, but whether willingly or not we do not know.

## Ken Rogers



Who could be interested in bricks? Surely it is an anorakic activity? But there are three Civic Society members at least who are. These are Peter Collier, Kevin Eames and myself. These are not ordinary bricks you understand. These are special bricks with a whiff of mystery about them.

I was first introduced to these particular bricks in a group walk around the Newtown area of Trowbridge with Peter Collier, who lives in that area. They front numbers 33-37 Wingfield Road and are also in the side wall running up into West Street.

So, what is unusual about them? It is their size. They are more than twice the volume of a normal English house brick. The bricks on the front of the three terraced houses are 12 inches by 6 inches on the face, by just over 4 inches deep ie the width of a normal brick. They have a design cast on them, a lozenge on the stretcher face and a flower on the header. The photographs show them in detail.

I think you will agree that the overall effect of the bricks is to add a fair bit of style to the houses, which have other attractive features like a parapet to the roof and unusual designs for the ground floor window frames. These houses were definitely designed to compete for style with the stone houses adjacent and opposite to them in Wingfield Road.

They are listed. The listing says - "Mid C19, 2 storey terrace framed by dividing pilaster strips, plinth, band over ground floor and band below moulded eaves cornice; all of stone. Also stone dressings and stone cope to parapet. Built of large bricks with stamped patterns. 2 windows each, glazing bar sashes. Round headed doorways with traceried fanlights and 3 panel doors. Nos 33 to 57 (odd) form a group."

Other than just for style, why were such large bricks used? We do not know. Large bricks were used to get around a brick tax, The brick tax was a property tax introduced in Great Britain in 1784, during the reign of King George III, to help pay for the wars in the American Colonies. Bricks were initially taxed at 4 shillings per thousand, but this was done away with in 1850. The houses are believed to date from about that time and are in any case above the maximum size allowed of 150 cubic inches. The Wingfield Road bricks are more like 300 cubic inches. So it would seem that this size was adopted for stylistic effect.

We would love to know where the bricks were made. A guess is that they came from a brickworks at Caen Hill, Devizes, transported to Trowbridge by canal, but we cannot be sure. There are some large red bricks used to infill windows at the rear of M & Co in Silver Street, Trowbridge, but they do not have any decoration. If the bricks did come from a Devizes brickworks this decorated design may have been used in that town. If so it would be nice to locate them. However, these Trowbridge bricks may be unique. If any Civic Society member has information to offer, possibly even having a brick at home, we would love to know. If no-one knows, it remains a mystery.

## RECENT MEETINGS

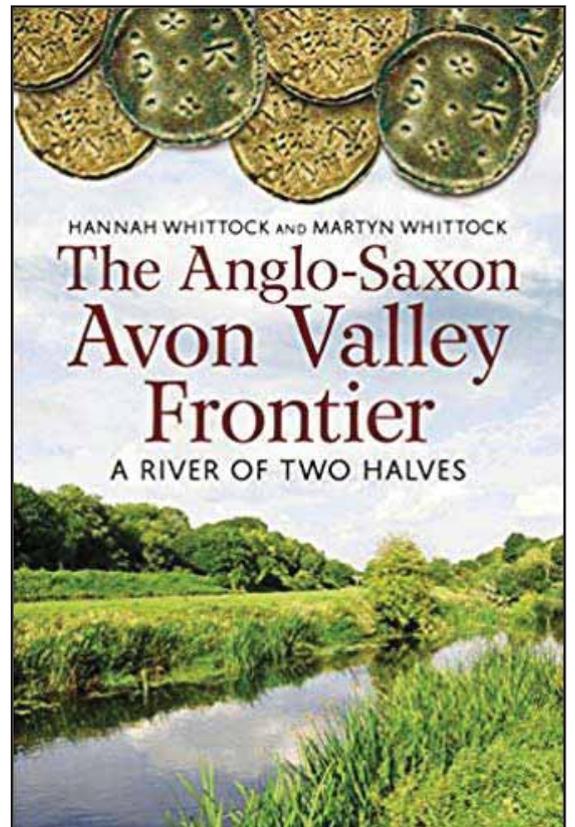
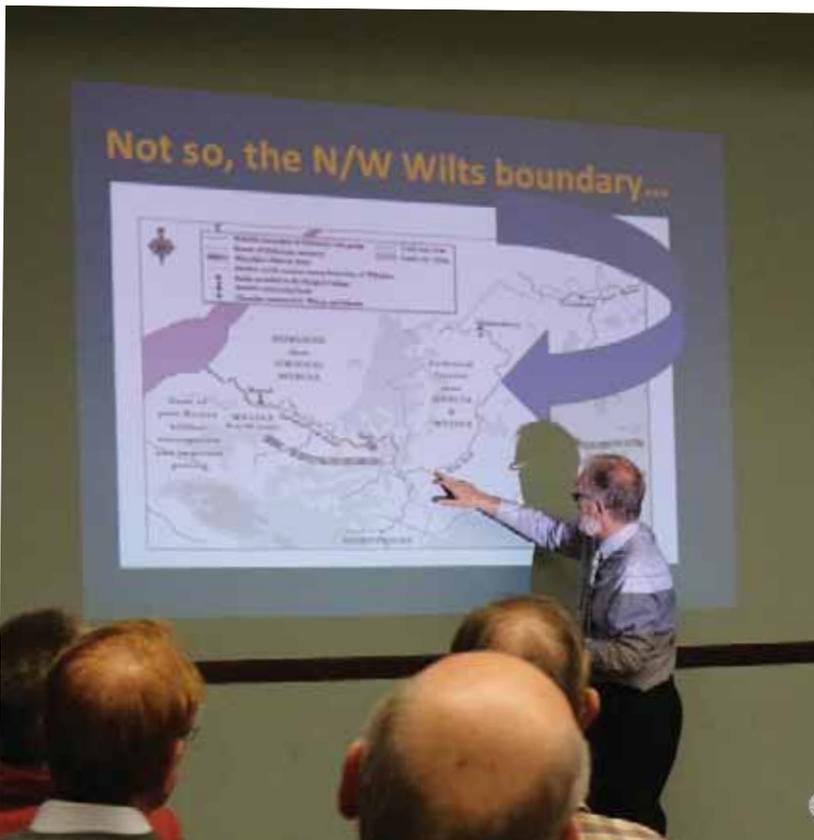
In October **Martyn Whittock** gave a talk on "Why the boundary of NW Wilts ignores the River Avon". This fascinating talk was based on his book "The Anglo-Saxon Avon Valley Frontier: A River of Two Halves" which he wrote with his daughter, Hannah. The book is based on archaeological and documentary sources to present a case for remarkable continuity as measured by a wide range of evidence. Based on research in the department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Cambridge University. Martyn looked at the history of the Bristol Avon as a frontier from the 4th to the 11th century. There are two different stories either side of Bath, which influenced the actions of successor kingdoms over hundreds of years. In this history, Offa, Alfred, Guthrum, Edward the Elder, Athelstan, Edgar and Cnut all played their parts, and he even brought in the legendary Arthur and the semi-legendary Vortigern.. What is surprising is that 21st-century civil and church boundaries still reflect this history which is over 1,500 years old.



A close up of the bricks in Wingfield Road



Refreshments at the January Social Evening



## Riddy's Ice Cream

On page 6 of this issue Ken Rogers writes about the history of Homefield House. Many will remember this building housing the DHSS, but at the back was a stable block which housed Riddiford's ice cream factory. Do you have any more information about this. Let us know if you can add anything.

Some members may remember buying Riddy's ice cream from one of the 10 vans which went round the streets in summer. There were also, at one time, two shops, one of which was opened before 1950 and, before the relaxing of the Sunday trading laws was the only shop to open in town on a Sunday. Children would be able to buy sweets on their way to Sunday school.

The factory closed in the early 1980s and all its contents remained undisturbed until the items were eventually discovered. After the sale of the land, staff from Chippenham Auction Rooms went in to clear the building, and discovered a treasure trove of memorabilia which were auctioned in 2014. A report in the Wiltshire Times quoted the auctioneer as saying: "his is an amazing piece of Wiltshire history. Many local residents of a certain age will remember the chimes of the Riddy's ice cream vans.

"All of its contents have been left untouched, exactly as they were on the day it closed. We have samples of every single piece of packaging and can guarantee these are quite unique to Riddiford's." Some of the firm's packaging and advertising included the likenesses of members of the Riddiford family. The firm was founded by Major Frederick Alexander Riddiford and taken over by Peter and Halina Riddiford in 1949.



## The People's Projects - Trowbridge Town Hall

[As we "go to press" voting is taking place on the "People's Project"]

The People's Projects is a partnership between ITV and the National Lottery Community Fund. The three organisations which receive the highest number of votes will receive up to £50,000 each. The remaining two organisations from each region may receive up to £5,000 each. The process is independently adjudicated by Electoral Reform Services. Trowbridge Town Hall is one of these projects. If successful, the organisers would like to look at using the grant to make



improvements to the building, making it more accessible and welcoming, and would also be interested in hearing your ideas.



Welcome to new members: Michael & Karen Pugh, Mr C Davis & Ms V Killay

Corporate Member: The Trowbridge Museum