



# Queen Street, Wolverhampton Essays

Edited by Ashleigh Hudson



# Queen Street Wolverhampton

## ESSAYS

Edited by Ashleigh Hudson

2018



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WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

The research for this booklet was carried out by volunteers at Wolverhampton Museum and Art Gallery and Friends of Wolverhampton City Archive, and edited by Ashleigh Hudson, the Queen Street Community Engagement Officer.

It was part of the Community element of a bid by the City of Wolverhampton Council to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The research focused on a range of aspects relating to Queen Street; people, places, trades and events.

Many of the sources used in the research for this booklet can be found at Wolverhampton City Archives, and the researchers would recommend any person interested in the local history of Wolverhampton and its wider area to take advantage of the resources to be found there.

Thanks are due to Wolverhampton City Archives for permission to use their photos, and to all the staff who helped during the research.



# Contents

Chapter 1 - Queen Street Through Time	
By Jackie Harrison .....	5
Chapter 2 - The Blue Plaques in Queen Street	
By Rebecca Taylor .....	7
Chapter 3 - 19-21 Queen Street: Daniel Read the 'Truss Maker'	
Research provided by Jackie Harrison .....	11
Chapter 4 - 27 Queen Street: Snapes Tea Shop	
By Frank Sharman and Jackie Harrison .....	13
Chapter 5 - 29-31 Queen Street: The Trocadero	
Research provided by Jackie Harrison .....	17
Chapter 6 - Fashion and Textiles in Queen Street	
By Michelle Nicholls.....	19
Chapter 7 - 32 Queen Street: The Pet Shop	
By Sally Burrows.....	27
Chapter 8 - 34 Queen Street: The Jennings Family	
By Susan Martin .....	29
Chapter 9 - A Brief History of a Victorian Transport Hub in Queen Street	
By Mitch Davie .....	31
Chapter 10 - 43a Queen Street: The Mechanics Institute and Athenaeum	
By Danielle Oakley.....	39
Chapter 11 - 46 Queen Street: The Public Dispensary	
By Sally Burrows.....	41
Chapter 12 - 46 Queen Street: The Orphan Asylum	
By Sally Burrows.....	47

Chapter 13 - 46 and 55 Queen Street: The Post Office & Development of the Postal Service	
By Janet Lowe .....	51
Chapter 14 - 49 Queen Street: Henri Gascon's Photography Shop	
By Michelle Nicholls.....	55
Chapter 15 - 51-55 Queen Street: The Express and Star	
By Jackie Harrison.....	57
Chapter 16 - Queen Street and the Wolverhampton Suffragettes	
By Michelle Nicholls.....	61
Chapter 17 - Queen Street and the Second World War	
By Janet Lowe .....	63
Chapter 18 - 63 Queen Street: E F Allen and Sons – Piano Makers	
Research provided by Jackie Harrison and Michelle Nicholls .....	71



# Chapter 1

## Queen Street Through Time

By Jackie Harrison

QUEEN STREET first came into being in the 1750s, during a time of growth and prosperity for Wolverhampton. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, a surveyor from Hereford named Isaac Taylor carried out a survey of the township of Wolverhampton. The resulting map reveals that much of the area now occupied by Queen Street, Castle Street and Tower Street was undeveloped croft and meadow land.<sup>1</sup>

The development of Queen Street took place over time. The first phase began in 1754 on the north side of the street, between the present Princess Street and Piper's Row. This land was under the ownership of a Mr Thomas Tomkys and upon his death, was duly staked out into plots of differing sizes and sold off. The earliest deed in Wolverhampton City Archives concerning the sale of one of

these plots is dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1756 and records the sale of a plot of land measuring 123 square yards to a Mr William Clarke.<sup>2</sup>

In 1770, the Sketchley's and Adams Tradesman's True Guide makes reference to twelve people trading from Queen Street.<sup>3</sup> This top-end, north-side development phase was initially all there was to Queen Street.

By 1777, the Town Commissioners levied an improvement rate against all properties in the town. Records reveal that there were already twenty-eight rateable properties in the street at this time and very soon afterwards twenty-nine.<sup>4</sup> Remarkably, of the original 29 properties, the footprints of 28 still survive today. Thanks to Godson's 1788 map of Wolverhampton, we can see that the north side of the top-end of Queen

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Taylor 1750 Map, Wolverhampton City Archive, MAP/804

<sup>2</sup> Deed, Wolverhampton City Archive, DEED/J155/2

<sup>3</sup> Sketchley and Adam's Tradesman's True Guide, Wolverhampton City Archive

<sup>4</sup> Town Rate Book, Wolverhampton City Archive, LS/352/92

Street was not only completely built-up, but also built-up along the street line as it is today.<sup>5</sup>

During the early years, people both worked and lived in the street and the small metal trades that the area was known for were well represented; for example, brass & iron founding, buckle making, tinplating, rulemaking. Being a new street, people were keen to live and trade there and slowly it became home to the full range of trades from pubs to plumbing and tailoring to watch-chain making.

For 55 years or so, this original development existed entirely on its own, overlooking Piper's Croft from its frontages. A second phase of development, on the south side of the street, began in 1812 and was on a much grander scale than that of the north side. Here, there were larger houses and prestigious municipal buildings including the Congregational Chapel.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, development began in what is now the lower end of Queen Street between Princess Street and Dudley Street, but this required an Act of Parliament.<sup>7</sup> Older buildings already existed here and compulsory purchases had to be made and compensation paid, before the development could proceed.

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the small metal trades declined, the north side of the street became a treasure trove of emporiums instead where you could buy any item - bespoke clothing, hosiery, hats, boots & shoes, books & stationery, surgical instruments, clocks & watches, leather goods, various household provisions, musical goods. You could also access many services

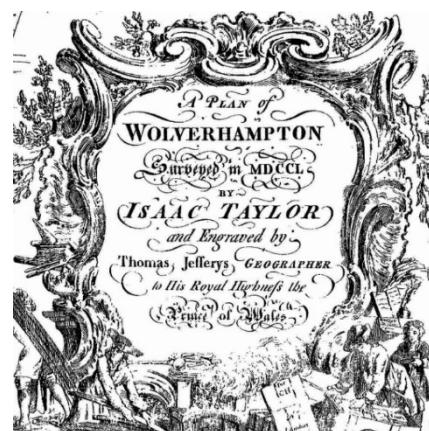
<sup>5</sup> Godson's Map 1788, Wolverhampton City Archive, D-JSR/44/46

<sup>6</sup> May, Henry Arthur, Queen Street Congregational Church: the story of a hundred years 1809-1909

including accountancy, legal advice, surveying, fire insurance, cabinet making hairdressing, engraving and gilding.

Queen Street has continued to evolve over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, it is an important gateway for commuters arriving into the City by train or bus. It is hoped that this project will encourage a greater awareness of the historic development of Queen Street and a stronger appreciation for the City itself.

The Queen Street Townscape Heritage Scheme has engaged a group of volunteers who have researched many of the buildings in Queen Street and uncovered the fascinating stories of those who lived and worked there. Volunteers have used a range of sources, including documents, maps and photographs from Wolverhampton City Archives, to highlight areas of continuity and change.



*Detail from I Taylor's map 1750*

<sup>7</sup> Acts for Improving the Town of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton City Archive, DX-286/1

## Chapter 2

### The Blue Plaques in Queen Street



By Rebecca Taylor

#### Robert Jackson Emerson

**R**OBERT JACKSON Emerson was a prominent art teacher and sculptor in Wolverhampton. In 1932, he made the Mercury Frieze sculpture which sits above the original entrance of the Express and Star building in Queen Street. Today, Emerson is commemorated by a blue plaque which is located on the left-hand side of the Express & Star building. He is also commemorated by a blue plaque on his childhood home at 25a Old Shop Cottage, North Street in Rothley, Leicestershire.

Emerson was the eldest child of John Emerson, a shoemaker, and Fanny

Emerson, who ran a general store from the family home and came from a family of stoneworkers.<sup>8</sup> There are some discrepancies as to when Emerson was born. The blue plaque in Queen Street states that Emerson was born in 1878, while the plaque in Rothley details 1879 as does his grave in St Philips Churchyard. Emerson's birth certificate verifies that he was in fact born in 1879 so it is likely that an error was made on the Queen Street plaque.<sup>9</sup>

Emerson left school in 1893 and became an apprentice at a boot and shoe factory.<sup>10</sup> Around this time, Emerson was encouraged by his former headmaster to enrol in evening classes at the Leicester School of Arts and Crafts. Emerson won several awards during his time as a student. In 1902, he won an award that enabled him to visit Rouen and Paris for a month to study metalwork and modelling.<sup>11</sup>

In 1901, Emerson obtained the Art Class Teacher's Certificate and the Certificate for Art Instruction; allowing him to teach art on a part-time basis.<sup>12</sup> In 1906, he began working for Collins and Company, a firm of art metalworkers in Leicester, until he was appointed as Second Master at Wolverhampton Municipal School of Art in 1910.<sup>13</sup>

Emerson was an extremely popular sculptor and produced numerous pieces, many of which are based in cities and countries around the world. There are

<sup>8</sup> Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951, [https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib4\\_1204027815](https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib4_1204027815), accessed 25/06/2018

<sup>9</sup> Find My Past, Accessed 25/06/2018

<sup>10</sup> Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951, [https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib4\\_1204027815](https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib4_1204027815), accessed 25/06/2018

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jackson Emerson: A Rothley Artist, Rothley Parish Council, <http://www.rothleyparishcouncil.org.uk/robert-jackson-emerson-a-rothley.html>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## *Rebecca Taylor*

also numerous examples of his work in Wolverhampton and the surrounding area. Notably, many are war memorials which isn't unusual considering he was sculpting during both the First and Second World War.

In 1932, Emerson produced the Mercury Frieze sculpture for the Express & Star. Reportedly, Emerson used the son of a local doctor as a model for the central figure piece.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that Emerson was commissioned for this sculpture because he was a good friend of the Graham family who owned the Express & Star newspaper. It is also believed that Emerson had a small studio inside the Express & Star building though this has proved difficult to verify.

Emerson continued to make sculptures despite failing health until his death in 1944. Winston Churchill recommended Emerson's wife, Annie, for a civil list pension as a tribute to Emerson and his work.<sup>15</sup>

## **Thomas Graham**

Thomas Graham is commemorated by a blue plaque on the Express & Star building in Queen Street because he is the founder of the Express & Star newspaper.

Thomas Graham was a weaver from Dunfermline. In 1862, at the age of 21, Graham purchased a bacon curing business in Wolverhampton before

becoming a magistrate and a member of the town council.<sup>16</sup>

In June 1880, Graham launched the Evening Star newspaper. It cost a halfpenny and consisted of only four pages. Graham was motivated by his liberal leanings and a dissatisfaction with the views espoused by the conservative Evening Express. In 1882, Graham persuaded his friend Andrew Carnegie, an American steel tycoon, to buy the newspaper. He and Carnegie had met in the 1860s in London - Carnegie was also from Dunfermline and the two were lifelong friends.<sup>17</sup>

The Evening Star was very successful, selling 10,000 copies per day. In 1883, Carnegie and Graham founded the Midland News Association and in 1884, the Evening Star bought the Evening Express and the two newspapers merged together to form the Evening Express & Star. In 1889, the word 'evening' was dropped and the newspaper became known as the Express and Star, a name that remains to this day.<sup>18</sup>

Carnegie ultimately left the venture but transferred power of attorney to Graham who could now outvote other members on the board. Graham eventually became the sole proprietor of the Express & Star. Today, Graham is commemorated by a blue plaque on the right-hand side of the Express and Star building.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Wolverhampton's Blue Plaques: Queen Street, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/plaques/QueenStreet.htm>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>15</sup> Express and Star news article: May 1945, Scrapbook, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>16</sup> Wolverhampton's Blue Plaques: Queen Street, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/plaques/QueenStreet.htm>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Wolverhampton's Blue Plaques: Queen Street, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/plaques/QueenStreet.htm>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

## George Wallis

George Wallis was a deaf artist born in Wolverhampton on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1811 to John Wallis and Mary Price.<sup>20</sup> Following the death of his father in 1818 when George was only 7, George was adopted and raised by his father's aunt and uncle.<sup>21</sup> George's uncle was John Worrallow, a well-respected steel cut jewellery maker. John also held the position of 'Chief Officer' of the Town Commissioners until 1848 when the new Borough Council took over.<sup>22</sup>

George attended Wolverhampton Grammar School in 1820.<sup>23</sup> After leaving school, George became an apprentice to a coach and heraldic painter whilst also making designs and drawings for well-known japanners in Wolverhampton.<sup>24</sup> George harboured ambitions to attend art school and in 1832, he moved to Manchester and enrolled in art classes.<sup>25</sup> George returned to Wolverhampton in 1837 where he was employed by Ryton and Walton to paint japanned trays and various other objects.

In April 1838, George delivered his first public lecture at the Wolverhampton Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute entitled 'The Cultivation of Popular Taste in the Fine Arts'. The following year, he delivered another lecture entitled; 'On the Principles of Natural

<sup>20</sup> George Wallis, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/b/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28570?docPos=2>, Accessed

25/06/2018.

<sup>21</sup> George Wallis,

<http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/genealogy/wallis/wallis01.htm>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> George Wallis, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,

Form'. These lectures were well-received by the press and attendees.<sup>26</sup> Today, a blue plaque commemorates these lectures on the building of 43a Queen Street which formerly housed the Wolverhampton Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute.

Between 1838 and 1839, George curated an exhibition of art and manufacturing for the Mechanics Institute in Queen Street. The exhibition is often credited as one of the first industrial arts exhibitions in the country.<sup>27</sup>

By 1841, George had moved to London to complete a teacher training course related to industrial art education. In January 1843, he left the school and was appointed Headmaster of the Spitalfields School of Design. He occupied this position until December of that year before transferring to the Manchester School of Design where he remained until he resigned in 1845. In 1851, he became Headmaster of the Birmingham School of Design until 1858 when he once again resigned.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the 1850s, George organised several art exhibitions, including an industrial art exhibition in Birmingham in 1855. He also played a vital role in the Great Exhibition of 1851 for which he

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/b/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28570?docPos=2>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> George Wallis,

<http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/genealogy/wallis/wallis01.htm>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

received a medal.<sup>29</sup> The Great Exhibition was organised by Henry Cole and Prince Albert and is considered the first international exhibition of manufactured products. In 1858, George was employed by the South Kensington Museum in London, which is now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum, where he eventually became the 'Keeper of the Art Collections' - a role he maintained until his retirement at the age of 80 in 1891.

### The First Meeting of Wolverhampton Council

In 1777, the Wolverhampton Improvement Act was passed by Parliament. It appointed 125 commissioners with the charge of running the town. Various improvements were made including the demolition of the Old Market Hall in 1778, the replacement of the ineffective oil lamps and the widening of roads to deal with increased traffic.<sup>30</sup> However, residents became increasingly dissatisfied with the Commissioners and demanded a modern system where members were elected.

In 1847, a petition was delivered to John Hartley, the Head Constable, asking him to call a public meeting to consider the possibility of starting a petition to be sent to Parliament and the Queen asking

for the town to be granted a Charter of Incorporation which would give Wolverhampton a borough status where the commissioners would be replaced by an elected borough council.<sup>31</sup> The application was successful and Wolverhampton was granted a borough status.

The first municipal elections (elections which decide who holds certain positions in a city or town) in Wolverhampton took place on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1848 to decide the members of the new borough council.<sup>32</sup> The new council consisted of 36 councillors and 12 aldermen who met for the first council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1848 in the Assembly Rooms at 50 Queen Street.

After the council vacated the premises, the building became the County Court.<sup>33</sup> Today, a blue plaque commemorates the first meeting of Wolverhampton Council and is located on the front of 50 Queen Street.



*Photo courtesy of Ellie Ramsey*

<sup>29</sup> The Great Exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/g/great-exhibition/>, Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>30</sup> Wolverhampton Town Commissioners, History Website, [http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/articles/1777/C\\_commissioners.htm](http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/articles/1777/C_commissioners.htm), Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>31</sup> Local Government in Wolverhampton, The History of Wolverhampton The City and its People,

[http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.politics/local\\_government/wolves/index.html?sid=14003c39a8d30c9d4326cdaba02d54e8](http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.politics/local_government/wolves/index.html?sid=14003c39a8d30c9d4326cdaba02d54e8), Accessed 25/06/2018.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Wolverhampton's Blue Plaques, History Website, [http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/plaques/Queen\\_Street.htm](http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/plaques/Queen_Street.htm), Accessed 25/06/2018.

## Chapter 3

### 19-21 Queen Street: Daniel Read the 'Truss Maker'



By Jackie Harrison

IN THE LATE 18th century, the original numbers 19 to 21 Queen Street were three separate buildings and were for the most part residential.

Improvement Rate documents held at Wolverhampton City Archives contain the earliest recorded inhabitant at number 19 - John Best, a steel toy and buckle maker. Next door, at number 20, resided Joseph Nock who was a plumber and glazier.<sup>34</sup> From 1811, Joseph Duffield, a Japanner, occupied the property which he later purchased from Richard Lockley two years later, along with number 19.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Improvement Rates, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS L352 92

<sup>35</sup> Highway Rate, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-WOP/5/8

<sup>36</sup> Poor Rate, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-WOP/5/14

<sup>37</sup> Improvement Rates, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-WOP/5/23

By 1818, Joseph's business and property appear to have passed to his son, William Duffield. This is confirmed by the 1819 Poor Rate record which shows William as both owner and occupier of numbers 19 and 20 Queen Street.<sup>36</sup> Later, in 1825, William Duffield leased both buildings to Richard Perry, also a japanner,<sup>37</sup> and around this time, Perry is recorded in local trade directories as trading from both properties – 19 and 21.<sup>38</sup> This is perhaps the first recorded instance of numbers 19 and 20 being joined together for commercial purposes.

Between 1834 and 1855, various individuals and business are recorded at 19 Queen Street. Notably, by the mid-1850s, no. 19 is occupied by James Hildreth who was a printer and bookbinder.<sup>39</sup> In 1844, Mr Hildreth was infamously involved in a case of infanticide and was tried at the Stafford Assizes. The case against him and his fellow defendants were dismissed, mainly due to the unprofessional behaviour of the arresting officer.<sup>40</sup>

From 1871, census records place Daniel Read, 'Truss Maker', at no. 20 Queen Street. Daniel is listed along with his wife, two daughters and four sons. The family also employ a servant, Annie Littley. Three of Daniel's four sons are listed as 'scholars'.<sup>41</sup>

From 1884, trade directories reveal that Daniel was providing his goods to the South Staffordshire Hospital, the County and General Infirmary in Stafford and the District Dispensary. He supplied a range of medical goods including; elastic stockings, knee caps, ladies' abdominal belts and trusses 'of

<sup>38</sup> Whites Staffordshire Directory  
Wolverhampton City Archives, S91

<sup>39</sup> The Wolverhampton Directory,  
Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 L5

<sup>40</sup> The Carlisle Patriot, 27 December 1844

<sup>41</sup> Census, 1871

various kinds'. The advertisement boasts;

*"D. R calls the attention of the public to his new 'Elastic Truss', believing it to be the most perfect Truss yet produced without a steel spring."*<sup>42</sup>

Among the other products listed are chest expanding braces, artificial limbs, crutches, instruments for curvature of the spine, deformed legs, air cushions, enemas and syringes. Read also assures readers that 'special' trusses can be made at just a few hours' notice.<sup>43</sup> By 1891, census records reveal that two of Read's sons and one of his daughters are now employed as a 'surgical instrument maker'.<sup>44</sup> Between 1899 and 1900, he submitted plans to the Borough Council for nos. 20 and 21 seeking approval for alterations to both shops and some work on a party wall.<sup>45</sup>

Between 1901 and 1911, Daniel relocated his business from no. 20 to no. 19<sup>46</sup> although Poor Rate records show that by 1914 he owned all of nos. 19, 20 and 21 Queen Street, leasing nos. 20 and 21 out to various other traders.<sup>47</sup> Over the next few decades, various individuals and business occupied both 19 and 20 Queen Street.

Like 19 and 20 Queen Street, 21 Queen Street was initially a residential property. The first commercial entry for no. 21 can be found in a trade directory of 1933 which lists Mr James Adams, a watch and clock maker who also dealt with jewellery and silversmithing.<sup>48</sup> Between 1855 and 1860, the Staffordshire Advertiser had an office

recorded in the street at no. 21 with Thomas Hall being the branch office agent and reporter.<sup>49</sup> No. 21 hosted various businesses over the years, including (in 1961) the gentleman's outfitter Lance Stansfield, who also occupied a number of other properties in Queen Street.<sup>50</sup>

During the Read family's ownership of nos. 19, 20, and 21 Queen Street, probably in the early 1900s, the buildings were replaced with the three-storey edifices which we see today and given their splendid terracotta frontage.

**DANIEL READ,  
TRUSS MAKER,**

To the Wolverhampton and Staffordshire General Hospital,  
The County Infirmary, Stafford, the Dudley Dispensary, &c.

HAS ALWAYS ON HAND A LARGE AND VARIED ASSORTMENT OF

**ELASTIC STOCKINGS,**

KNEE CAPS,  
LADIES' ABDOMINAL BELTS,  
AND  
TRUSSES of Various Kinds,

Special Trusses made at a few hours notice.

D. R. calls the attention of the public to his new "ELASTIC TRUSS," believing it to be the most perfect Truss yet produced without a steel spring. The whole of the bands are made of very strong elastic web, the result being a proper adjustment of pressure to the various movements of the body; it also does away with the projections which are so objectionable in the majority of Trusses made without a steel spring.

Chest Expanding Braces, Artificial Limbs, Crutches, Instruments for Curvature of the Spine, Deformed Legs, and Feet; India Rubber Goods, Air Cushions, Urinals, Enemas, Syringes, Pessaries, Injection Bottles, Catheters, Bougies, &c., &c.

20, QUEEN STREET, WOLVERHAMPTON.

<sup>42</sup> Crocker's Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 04 & Wolverhampton Year Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 N7

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Census, 1891

<sup>45</sup> Corporation of Wolverhampton Building Notice, 1899 & 1901, Wolverhampton City Archives, WP/1809 & WP/2007

<sup>46</sup> Census, 1901

<sup>47</sup> Poor Rate, Wolverhampton City Archives, FIN-1

<sup>48</sup> Bridgens Directory of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>49</sup> The Wolverhampton Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 L5

<sup>50</sup> Kelly's Directory of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton City Archives

# Chapter 4

## 27 Queen Street: Snapes Tea Shop



By Jackie Harrison and Frank Sharman

**I**N 1761, 27 QUEEN STREET was owned by a Mr Thomas Higgs. Deeds held at Wolverhampton City Archives refer to two properties; 26 and 27 Queen Street. The first, 26 Queen Street, was purchased by a Mr Samuel Doleman for £35 and measured 350 square yards. The other property, 27 Queen Street, was purchased by Mr Thomas Higgs for £25 16s and measured 258 yards. The deeds also reveal that no. 27 had a newly built, adjoining, untenanted house.<sup>51</sup> These properties were amongst the first erected on the north side of Queen Street during the

initial phase of development. By 1788, Godson's map of Wolverhampton shows the north side of the top-end of Queen Street not only completely built-up but built-up along the street line as it is today.<sup>52</sup>

In 1768, 27 Queen Street passed to Thomas Higgs' wife, Mary Higgs, and in 1780 to their son, John Higgs.<sup>53</sup> Trade directories reveal that John Higgs ran a 'rule maker, japanner and brush maker' business from the property.<sup>54</sup> Higgs continued to trade from 27 Queen Street until 1806 when it was leased to new tenants.

In 1891, sources reveal details of a lease for 13 years at a yearly rent of £110;

*"All that messuage or dwelling house No. 27 Queen Street with the yard, shopping, brewhouse and other outbuildings thereto belonging situate at back thereof and extending to Princes Alley, in the occupation of the lessees and their undertenants and also all that workshop fronting Princes Alley"*<sup>55</sup>

In 1896, 26 and 27 Queen Street were held in trust for a Mrs. Julia French, who lived in Rhyl.<sup>56</sup> The Drug Dispensing Stores (aka Martyn's Stores Ltd.) intended to purchase the properties from Mrs. French and valued 26 and 27 together at £4000. Explaining their valuation, The Drug Dispensing Stores stated;

*"...we have taken into consideration the probable effect on business by the*

<sup>51</sup> Deeds, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-651/2

<sup>52</sup> Godson's Map, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-JSR/44.46

<sup>53</sup> Deeds, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-651/2

<sup>54</sup> Wolverhampton Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91F8

<sup>55</sup> Correspondence, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-NAJ/C/1/MA2

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

*removal of the Post Office and also the tram route being diverted, such alterations must effect a decrease in traffic as well as business.”<sup>57</sup>*

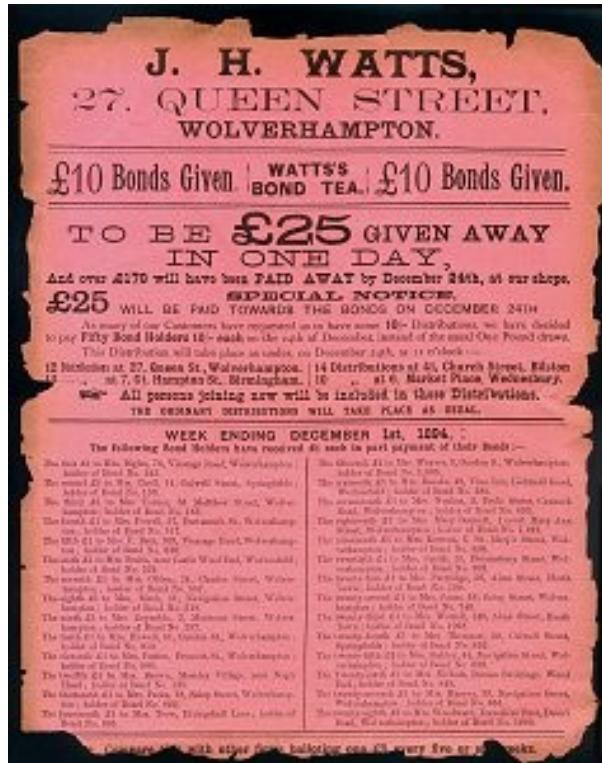
Apparently in disagreement with this judgement, Mrs. French insisted on raising the valuation to £5000. In the end, a compromise was struck, and the properties were sold for £4400.<sup>58</sup>

The 1914 Poor Rate record has the first mention of Snapes Brothers at no. 27a, although the owners were Martyn's Stores who traded from no. 26.<sup>59</sup>

Snapes can trace its origins to a Bristol-based company called Budget and Budget which had around 100 branches in the early 19th century. From the 1830s, Budget and Budget operated a tea shop in Queen Street. They eventually sold the business to the manager of the Wolverhampton Branch, Mr Simeon King. At the end of the 19th century, Mr King sold the business to a Mr J H Watts who is recorded in trade directories as a ‘tea merchant’.<sup>60</sup> An old handbill from 1894 is among the last remaining pieces of evidence of Mr Watts’ ownership.<sup>61</sup>

The business was ultimately purchased by W T M Snape, who gave his name to the establishment. When Mr Snape passed away shortly after the end of the Second World War, the business passed to his assistant, Albert Edward Parkes. Albert is believed to have started working for Mr Snape as a young boy, performing various errands. When

Albert died, the property passed to his son, Tom, and eventually to his grandson, Phil. Phil Parkes was the last owner of Snapes, having worked there from the age of 12.<sup>62</sup>



*Handbill – image Frank Sharman*

The building, dates to the 19th century and it was granted Grade II status in the 1970s. The listed buildings record reads;

“No. 27 has mid-19th century consoled cornice, plate-glass windows and a recessed entrance with a half-glazed door behind the gate...The interior of no. 27 has original fittings including gas lamps and shelves, a rare survival.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Martyns Stores, Wolverhampton City Archive, D-NAJ/C/1/MA2

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Poor Rate, St. Peters, Wolverhampton City Archives, FN-1

<sup>60</sup> Spennell's Wolverhampton Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>61</sup> Frank Sharman, ‘W.T.M. Snape’, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/interesting/snapes/snapes01.htm>, accessed 26 March 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1201860> accessed 09 October 2018

The shop and its fittings barely changed over the years. Visitors entered Snapes through a doorway which was to the right of a large display window. Inside, there was a long mahogany counter populated with brass scales and hand-painted tea canisters. There were 34 decorated canisters, believed to have been made by the tinners of Bradley, and were japanned and decorated with the flags of all nations. The sign above the shop simply read “Tea Merchant” because originally, that was all that Snapes sold. Phil Parkes was the first proprietor to roast and sell his own coffee as it increased in popularity during the 20th century.<sup>64</sup>

Snapes continued to thrive through the war years, despite rationing of basic goods and the business stayed in the Parkes family. When Phil Parkes decided to retire in the early 2000s, he offered the contents of the business to the Black Country Museum. Unfortunately, the Museum declined and so, the items were auctioned off to the highest bidder. Until its closure in 2002, Snapes was considered one of the best-preserved period shops in the country and one of the most loved in Wolverhampton. It retained most of its original features and continued to dispense tea in the same way as it had done when it was founded.<sup>65</sup>



*Interior of Snapes – photo courtesy of Frank Sharman*

<sup>64</sup> Frank Sharman, ‘W.T.M. Snape’, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/interesting/snakes/snapes01.htm>, accessed 26 March 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



*Image courtesy of Frank Sharman*

# Chapter 5

## 29-31 Queen Street: The Trocadero



By Jackie Harrison

Nos. 29 to 31 Queen Street were originally three individual Georgian houses-cum-shops which were re-developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a single building with a grand terracotta façade. No. 30 in particular had for a long time served Wolverhampton as a public house. The first mention of such an establishment at 30 Queen Street can be found in a trade directory of 1805, where it is recorded that John Davis, a rule maker, was also a victualler.<sup>66</sup> Today, the term ‘victualler’ has fallen out of everyday use but it refers to someone licensed to sell alcohol. From the 16th

century, anybody who wanted to sell ale had to apply for a licence at the Quarter Sessions or the Petty Sessions, and from 1617 the requirement for licences was extended to inns.<sup>67</sup> John Davis does not identify as a *licenced* victualler so he may have just been a provisions dealer. Nonetheless, from 1805 onwards, evidence supports a 125-year history of 30 Queen Street providing a licenced trade to the people of Wolverhampton.

The public house has been an important social institution since medieval times but in the 18th and 19th centuries, pubs and inns underwent a vast transformation. These changes were prompted by new demand in industrial areas and changing tastes. In 1855, 30 Queen Street was known as ‘The Queen’s Arms’ and is described as a ‘commercial inn, wine and spirit vaults...within two minutes’ walk of the railway station.<sup>68</sup> The inn was modest in size, but well-equipped to cater to the various visitors passing through the town. An advertisement from that same year reports that a Mr A E Crutchley had taken over from the previous victualler, Mr John Toy. The advertisement reads;

*Having spared no expense for the accommodation of those gentlemen who may favour him with their patronage, he hopes by strict attention and the superior quality of his articles to solicit a continuance of those favours which have already been so liberally bestowed upon him.*<sup>69</sup>

By 1858, trade directories record 30 Queen Street as housing wine and spirit vaults with John Hickling being the wine and spirit merchant.<sup>70</sup> Three years later

<sup>66</sup> The Wolverhampton Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 G5

<sup>67</sup> Publican, Brewery and Licensed Victualler's Records, *The Gen Guide*, <https://www.genguide.co.uk/source/publican-brewery-and-licensed-victuallers-records-occupations/127/>, accessed 26 March 2018.

<sup>68</sup> The Wolverhampton Chronicle, 25 April 1855

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Dix's Directory of Birmingham, Wolverhampton City Archives, S91

the 1861 census confirms John Hickling as the occupier of the property along with his wife, two sons, two daughters and two boarders.<sup>71</sup> An advertisement in a December 1866 issue of the Birmingham Daily Post, is seeking the services of a barmaid.<sup>72</sup>

At the following census of 1871, the licensed victualler in occupation was William Stanway, together with his family.<sup>73</sup> William employed a barmaid and two servants. By the time of the next census in 1881, we can see that Mr Stanway has presumably passed away leaving his widow, Annie Stanway, as head of the household and the new licensed victualler.<sup>74</sup> By 1891, the Stanway family appear to have vacated the property and William Woolwich is now recorded as the in-situ licensed victualler.<sup>75</sup> From the 1890s, the Queen's Arms is referred to as the Queen's Vaults.<sup>76</sup>

In the early-20th century, 29 and 30 Queen Street became known as the 'Trocadero', the buildings being under the ownership of Horton's Estate Ltd of Birmingham.<sup>77</sup> By 1929, it is described as a 'hotel and public house' and by 1931, as an 'inn'.<sup>78</sup> In 1921, The Mercury report that the president of the Licensed Managers' Association opposed the transfer of the Trocadero Hotel license to Albert Groves, the Walsall footballer, formerly a Wolverhampton Wanderers player. The reason given that the case

was one of 'dual occupation'.<sup>79</sup> However, by 1924, trade directories record Mr Groves at the Trocadero so presumably, the case was resolved, although the directory identifies the business as being at 31 Queen Street.<sup>80</sup>

The early-20th century saw a growing demand for retail establishments which led to the closure of many of the town's inns. From 1940, 29 and 30 Queen Street housed popular house furnishers, Campbells, which occupied the site through to the 1960s,<sup>81</sup> whilst 31 Queen Street housed costumier, Annettes, again through to the 1960s.<sup>82</sup> During the Second World War, the basement of 30 (along with 31a) was also used as a public air raid shelter.<sup>83</sup>

Today, the name 'Trocadero' is still retained above the central entrance to the building where the upper floors are dedicated to accommodation. This building is particularly notable for its contrasting red and brownish-red terracotta, a distinctive feature of many of Wolverhampton's late-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Neither the architect nor the exact date is known but the building must date from around 1900. It was part of a widespread rebuilding that was taking place in the town centre at that time to accommodate Wolverhampton's burgeoning industrial and commercial operations.

<sup>71</sup> Census, 1861

<sup>72</sup> The Birmingham Daily Post, 10 December 1866

<sup>73</sup> Census, 1871

<sup>74</sup> Census, 1881

<sup>75</sup> Census, 1891

<sup>76</sup> Staffordshire Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>77</sup> Wolverhampton Archives, Rates St. Peter's, FM90

<sup>78</sup> Wolverhampton Archives, Cope's Staffs Directory and Buyers Guide

<sup>79</sup> The Mercury, 18 November 1921

<sup>80</sup> Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire, Wolverhampton Archives,

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Wolverhampton Archives, Flyer, M829

# Chapter 6

## Fashion and Textiles in Queen Street



By Michelle Nicholls

**I**N THE 19TH CENTURY, Wolverhampton witnessed a massive burgeoning of the middle classes and many prominent families grew wealthy on the fruits of successful industries. The prosperous didn't have to make a beeline for Birmingham to spend their hard-earned cash, they could simply visit Wolverhampton and be presented the latest fashions. Towards the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, retail underwent vast changes. There were huge social upheavals during these times, but the biggest changes in retail outlets is evident when comparing Edwardian

clothes shops with those of the 1960s or present day.

*Numbers 10 and 11: Rosser Jones & Co.  
- The Woolen Merchants*

The history of Wolverhampton is tied up with the history of the textile industry, Wolverhampton having prospered and grown out of the woolen trade. In 1884, trade directories record a Rosser Jones & Co operating from 10 and 11 Queen Street. The establishment is described as a 'woolen merchants and wholesale woolen warehouse'.<sup>84</sup> It had a very attractive and prominent shop front which can be seen in the 1912 Souvenir of Wolverhampton and District.<sup>85</sup> The establishment dated back to 1873 and was considered a -

*"...noted, reliable, quality, woolen merchants...Under the patronage of her majesty Queen Alexandra and distinguished members of the British Court."*<sup>86</sup>

They sold various types of wool including: tweeds, homespuns, cheviots,

<sup>84</sup> Crocker's Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91 04

<sup>85</sup> Souvenir: Wolverhampton & District, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91/122

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

own brand Devonshire & royal marine pure wool serges. The advertisement reveals that many thousands of yards had already been sold and that any length was supplied directly from the mill.<sup>87</sup> The advertisement evokes the image of a high-quality woolen manufacturer proving goods for the gentry across Great Britain. Rosser Jones and Co continued to trade from 10 and 11 Queen Street until around 1911.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Numbers 3 and 4 Queen Street: Henry Gardner - The Fancy Draper*

In 1892, Henry Gardner managed a popular drapers shop from Nos. 3 and 4 Queen Street. Henry first appears in Queen Street in the 1891 census though he had previously negotiated a tenancy agreement for No. 4 in 1883.<sup>89</sup> He is listed as living at Nos. 3 and 4, along with his wife Cecilia, four shop staff and two domestic servants.<sup>90</sup>

Mr Gardner has an interesting history. He was born to a relatively affluent family in Yorkshire and his father is described as a 'land agent' in the 1851 and 1861 censuses.<sup>91</sup> Land agents had an enviable and well-respected position in society, managing the estates of the landed aristocracy.<sup>92</sup> Henry and his siblings are all but one described as 'scholars' in the 1861 census, indicating that their father could afford to keep them in education.<sup>93</sup>

Henry appears to have entered the fashion trade at a young age and was

reportedly employed by renowned department store, Marshall and Snelgrove, situated in London's Oxford Street.<sup>94</sup> In the 19th century, department stores sought to create a decadent retail experience. Customers would often walk through large mahogany doors and enter a world of chandeliers, beautifully fitted displays and impeccably dressed employees. Marshall and Snelgrove's would have stocked the latest fashions, most likely from Paris.<sup>95</sup>

Henry Gardner's experience working at the prestigious Marshall and Snelgrove clearly influenced his own foray into the industry. In 1897, a description of Henry Gardner's Queen Street shop reads:

*"A business of special importance and considerable prominence in Wolverhampton is that of Mr Henry Gardner...A very valuable and extensive trade is being done by Mr Gardner, a gentleman of wide experience in the trade...He commenced business on his own account with the policy to place before the public the very best quality goods at remunerative prices, and the support of the best circles has been ungrudgingly and worthily bestowed..."*

The shop is described as having various departments including millinery, ladies outfitting, fancy drapery, trimmings, furs and 'in each can be seen the newest fashions and styles'.<sup>96</sup> There were many retail outlets in Wolverhampton selling clothing at this time, including Beattie's, and Mr Gardner would have been keenly

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Census, 1911

<sup>89</sup> Tenancy Agreement, Walsall Local History Centre, 315/3/5.

<sup>90</sup> Census, 1891

<sup>91</sup> Census, 1851 & 1861

<sup>92</sup> Beardmore, Carol, et al, *The Land Agent in Britain, Past, Present & Future*, 2016: <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/63506>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Illustrated Towns of England Business

Review of Wolverhampton, 1897,  
Wolverhampton Business Review, Bev Parker,  
<http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/>, Accessed 25 June 2018

<sup>95</sup> Adburgham, Alison, *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914*, George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1964.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

aware of the ‘the fierceness of competition’ for the loyal custom of the wealthiest clientele.<sup>97</sup>

In another description, the front of Henry’s shop is described as ‘conspicuous’ and the whole establishment is described as ‘eminently convenient and admirable’.<sup>98</sup> There were four large plate glass show windows and the description goes on to state that the displays were ‘always of a brilliant and attractive character’.<sup>99</sup> It is likely that the shop windows displayed a few ‘fancy goods’ to draw the eye and entice customers but prices would not have been displayed. At this time, an establishment appealing to a certain clientele would have operated an ‘apply within’ price policy.

Henry Gardner often placed advertisements in local newspapers to recruit new members of staff. In 1890, Gardner advertised in the Birmingham Daily Post for a saleswoman for the ‘gloves and trimmings’ department.<sup>100</sup> In subsequent years, Gardner advertised in the Birmingham Daily Post, Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser for ‘milliners assistants’.<sup>101</sup> In 1891, the census lists four staff and two domestic servants at 3 and 4 Queen Street.<sup>102</sup> Eva Benbow was employed as an ‘apprentice milliner’ and the original indenture or contract can be found in Wolverhampton City Archives.<sup>103</sup> Eva continues at 3 and 4 Queen Street as a

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Illustrated Towns of England Business Review of Wolverhampton, 1897, Wolverhampton Business Review, Bev Parker, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/>, Accessed 25 June 2018

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Birmingham Daily Post, 1891

<sup>101</sup> Birmingham Daily Post, 1890, Manchester Courier, 1894 & Lancashire General Advertiser, 1895

<sup>102</sup> Census, 1891

milliner, even after the business changes hands. It seems that Eva’s experience at Gardner’s was very useful for her career prospects and gave her a good founding in the trade of millinery.

In 1897, a Gardner’s advertisement reveals:

*“Competent hands are employed on the premises in the Millinery branch, and all the orders receive the most careful and prompt attention.”<sup>104</sup>*

Mr Gardner appeared a professional and disciplined individual who had the drive and courage to move from a successful department store in London to open his own store in Wolverhampton. Whilst Henry’s professional life flourished however, his personal life was marred by scandal. A divorce document from 1905 concludes:

*“That the said Henry Gardner is a man of violent and ungovernable temper and of very intemperate and dissolute habits.”<sup>105</sup>*

Mr Gardner’s personal behaviour is in very stark contrast to the respectable image he cultivated in public. It is likely that Henry Gardner’s reputation was severely damaged by the scandal and from 1908, Mr Thomas Raynes (one of Henry’s employees) takes over the business.<sup>106</sup>

*Numbers 23 and 25 Queen Street: Albert Henry’ Huse - The Everyday Outfitter*

<sup>103</sup> Indenture of Eva Benbow, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>104</sup> Illustrated Towns of England Business Review of Wolverhampton, 1897, Wolverhampton Business Review, Bev Parker, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/>, Accessed 25 June 2018

<sup>105</sup> Civil Divorce Records, 1905, The National Archives

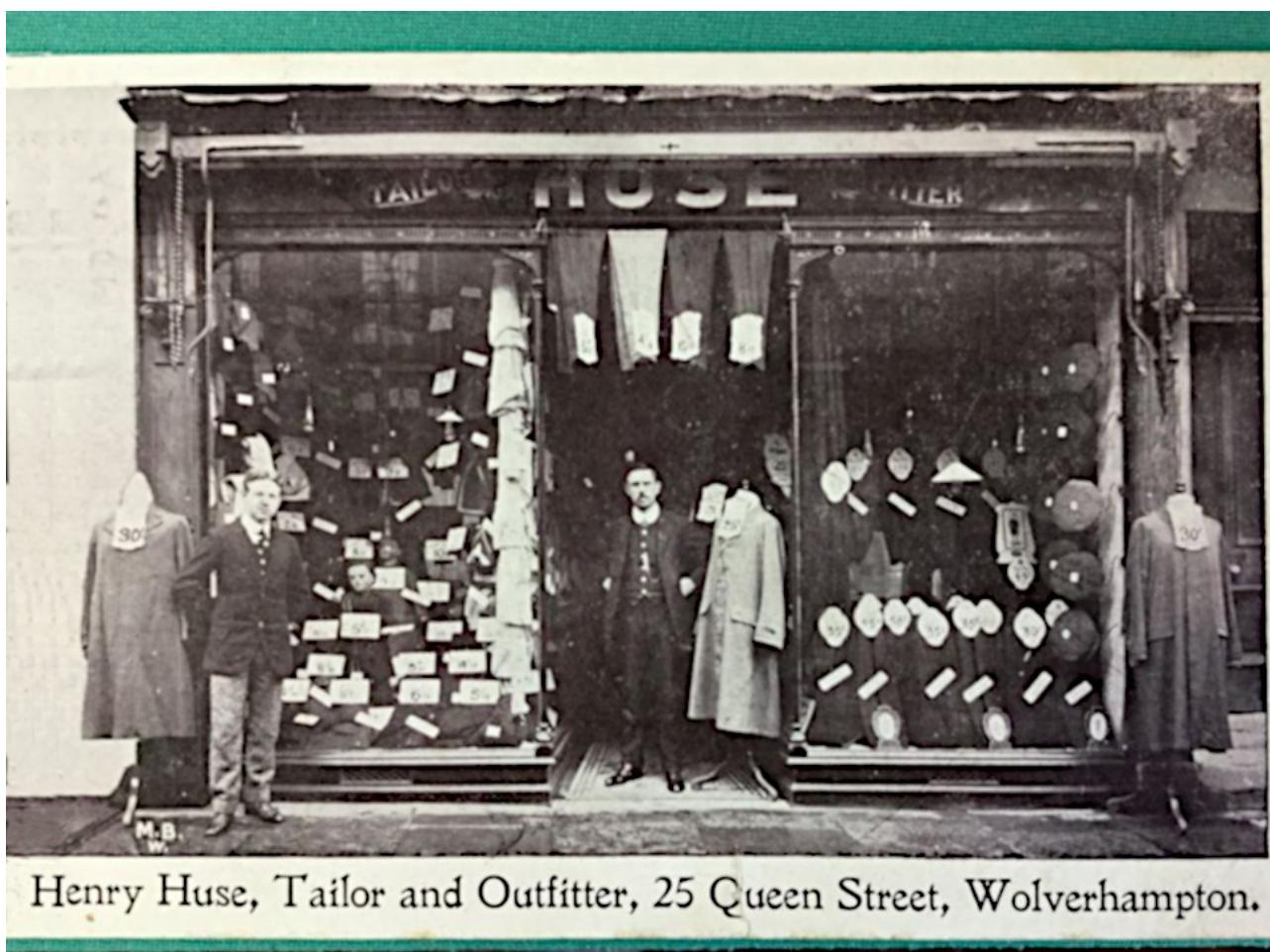
<sup>106</sup> Wolverhampton Red Books 1908-1914, Wolverhampton City Archives

Albert 'Henry' Huse had two premises in Queen Street, Nos. 23 and 25. Like Henry Gardner, Henry Huse appears to have entered the trade at a young age. In the 1891 census, he is described as an 'outfitters assistant' and in 1901, a 'clothiers assistant'.<sup>107</sup> The first mention of Henry's business in Queen Street appears in a trade directory in 1908.<sup>108</sup> Shortly after, Henry moved from number 23 to 25 Queen Street.<sup>109</sup> By 1911, the census reveals that Henry has progressed to the rank of 'clothier dealer'.<sup>110</sup>

A photograph captured in 1914, depicts Henry Huse's shop in its heyday. From

the photograph, you can clearly see the stock displayed in the large front window. The clothing appears to be quite utilitarian in design and mostly intended for everyday wear. Huse's shop also appears to stock outfits for the whole family, with the prices clearly displayed in the shop window.<sup>111</sup> Presumably, Mr Huse appealed to a different class of clientele to Henry Gardner.

Mr Huse's shop continued to operate from 25 Queen Street until 1968.<sup>112</sup> Today, many Wolverhampton residents affectionately recall visiting the shop in the 1960s. Huse built a good reputation as a well-run, reliable retailer which led



<sup>107</sup> Census, 1891 & 1901

<sup>108</sup> Kelly's Trade Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>109</sup> Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>110</sup> Census, 1911

<sup>111</sup> Woolley, Eric, *Wolverhampton a Second Portrait in Old Picture Postcards*, 1992. Henry Huse, Tailor & Outfitter, No.25 Queen Street. p. 90.

<sup>112</sup> The Wolverhampton Green Guide, Wolverhampton City Archives

to repeated custom and contributed to its longevity in Queen Street.

### *Number 12 Queen Street: The Pointon Sisters - The Hat Makers*

Records reveal that there were shops managed by women in Queen Street in the early-20th century. One such business was a milliner's trading from 12 Queen Street. The business was run by three unmarried sisters, the Pointon sisters, who all hailed from Shropshire.<sup>113</sup> All three women had previous experience as dressmakers and milliners and, like Gardner and Huse, decided they would try their hand at running a business.

In Edwardian times, a hat was considered a fundamental item of clothing for the respectable lady leaving the house.<sup>114</sup> It is likely that the Pointon sisters made hats on the premises and their previous experience suggests they would have undertaken most of the work themselves. Sadly, their business was short-lived. One of the sisters passed away in 1919 and another the following year.

### *Social Transformations after the Second World War*

Class divisions in retail become less distinct after the Second World War thanks to changing social attitudes and the mass production of goods. Goods were increasingly no longer bespoke but bought into stores en masse. From the 1950's onwards, the working classes had an increase in disposable income and with that came a change in where and

<sup>113</sup> Census, 1911

<sup>114</sup> Couldrige, Alan, *The Hat Book*, Batsford, 1980, p.8

<sup>115</sup> Wolverhampton Red Book, Wolverhampton City Archives

how they shopped. For women, these changes were profound. Increasingly, women no longer relied on their husband's wealth and status because they could earn their own money. Technological advances and labour saving appliances also gave women more leisure time.

There was also a massive shift in fashion itself. The outfitting and trimmings associated with the Edwardian period, along with corsetry, declined in popularity in the 20th century reflecting women's changing status in society. Men's fashion also shifted away from tailored, formal pieces to include an array of more relaxed clothing. The shop fronts along Queen Street changed to reflect these social transformations. There is also a gradual decline in the smaller, individual drapers shops along the street, which were consigned to another era.

### *Number 28 Queen Street: Sanders H. & Co Ltd*

Sanders firsts appears in the Wolverhampton Red book of 1896 and continued trading in Queen Street into the 1980s.<sup>115</sup> It is described in an advertisement from the 1960's as a 'drapers & furnishers'.<sup>116</sup> There were two floors selling everything 'from underwear to net curtains'.<sup>117</sup> A photograph from the 1970s reveals a plain, modern shop front and signage.<sup>118</sup> Today, many residents of Wolverhampton recall that the shop was a little old-fashioned:

<sup>116</sup> Wolverhampton County Borough Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>117</sup> Account taken from Facebook. Names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

<sup>118</sup> Sanders & Co, Wolverhampton City Archives, P/488

"I remember Sanders as an old-fashioned Draper's with an extensive display of clothing and linens."<sup>119</sup>

Residents also remember the wooden interior, glass-fronted cases, hat boxes, cash shoots and staff who remembered their customers by name:

"Children's coats and hats were kept in cardboard boxes in the back room at Sanders, goods in the shop itself were in drawers with glass fronts but a lot of stock was kept under the counter, the shop windows were always well dressed, but looked very old-fashioned to our young eyes..."<sup>120</sup>

The longevity of Sanders in Queen Street is indicative of its ability to attract a loyal base of customers who kept returning for a unique and personal shopping experience that had started to disappear from the rest of the high street.

#### *Number 31 Queen Street: Annette's*

Annette's, described in the 1960 County Borough Directory as simply stocking, 'gowns', was situated at number 31 Queen Street.<sup>121</sup> A photograph of the shopfront in the 1950s, reveals a few items of ladies clothing on sale. The frontage is simple and modern with the word 'Annette' in a distinctive red font. The shop primarily sold clothing for formal occasions.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1960s, fashion became a central part of a young person's identity. For the first time, there was a generation of young people with money to spend and a

desire to express their newfound freedom. Today, residents recall that Annette's was a place where teenagers opted to purchase their clothes. In the 1960s, teenagers often favoured adult styles. As one local remembers:

"Young girls 'best' clothes were usually scaled down versions of adult clothing back then. Very formal."<sup>123</sup>

Annette's also reportedly stocked the latest fashions:

"I don't have the clothes now but remember a lovely suit that was red with white trim, very Jackie O"<sup>124</sup>

Unfortunately, Annette's has long disappeared from Queen Street, but it is still fondly remembered by its former customers who lament the loss of 'personal service'.<sup>125</sup>

#### *Numbers 17, 21, 35, 39 and 40: Lance Stansfield Limited*

Lance Stansfield occupied various sites in Queen Street from 1919 until the 1970s.<sup>126</sup> It catered to both men and women and in 1960, it is described as providing a range of services and goods including 'gents tailors, outfitters, ladies rainwear, etc.'<sup>127</sup>

In contrast to advertisements from the Edwardian era, the adverts for Stansfield's in the 1960s reveal a new attitude and approach to appeal to modern customers:

"When the odds are up, and you don't know where to hire that evening suit, get in touch with Lance Stansfield."<sup>128</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Account taken from Facebook. Names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> County Borough Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>122</sup> Annette's, Wolverhampton City Archives, P/489

<sup>123</sup> Account taken from Facebook. Names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> The Birmingham Post, 14 November 1961

<sup>126</sup> Account taken from Facebook. Names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

<sup>127</sup> County Borough Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>128</sup> Parker, Bev, *The 1960's a Decade of Change*, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/articles/1960s/changes.htm>

This advertisement reveals that suits were no longer considered an everyday item of clothing for men but rather an option for hire on special occasions.

The shopfront was streamlined to appeal to a younger clientele and it sold a range of fashionable goods:

*"I remember my first Ben Sherman shirt from Lance Stansfield's 1969, it had a 14 1/2-inch collar."*<sup>129</sup>

Another resident recalled:

*"I used to shop regularly at Lance Stansfield's. I remember buying a Regency jacket, herringbone flares, Ben Sherman shirts and Levi's - loved the place!"*<sup>130</sup>

Fashion retail has changed a great deal over the last century years. Today, there are no clothing or textile retailers in Queen Street. Over the years, clothing outlets moved to other streets and into the main shopping centre. Gone are the drapers, the milliners and outfitters for all occasions. The shopping experience has also undergone a transformation. It is not now customary practice for shop staff to know their customers by name, goods are no longer wrapped in string and brown paper and items are paid for differently.

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<sup>129</sup> Account taken from Facebook. Names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

3 & 4 Queen Street: Henry Gardner, *Extract from the Illustrated Business Review of Wolverhampton, 1897*

"A business of special importance and considerable prominence in Wolverhampton is that of Mr. Henry Gardner of the Wolverhampton trimming shop, 3 and 4 Queen Street. A very valuable and extensive trade is being done by Mr. Gardner, a gentleman of wide experience in the trade, and who, it should be mentioned, was formerly with Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove, the well-known London House. He commenced business on his own account with the policy to place before the public the very best quality of goods at lowest remunerative prices, and the support of the best circles has been ungrudgingly and worthily bestowed upon his house.

With reference to the premises occupied, they possess a very conspicuous frontage, and comprise shops, with stores etc. to the rear, show stock and work rooms in the upper stories, and the general arrangement, division, equipment and organisation of the whole establishment is eminently convenient and admirable. There are four large plate-glass show windows, the display in which is always of a brilliant and attractive character. The departments are as follows: millinery, ladies' outfitting's, fancy drapery, trimmings, furs, and in each of these can be seen the newest fashions and styles, Mr. Gardner, being one of the first in the trade to introduce each season's novelties.

Competent hands are employed on the premises in the millinery branch, and all orders receive the most careful and prompt attention. The proprietor personally superintends the establishment, and there is little doubt that while under his management it will continue to gain in well-deserved popularity."

## Chapter 7

### 32 Queen Street: The Pet Shop



By Sally Burrows

**I**N ENGLAND in the 1750s, most people made their living off the land. Gradually, with the onset of mechanisation and the industrialisation of processes, people needed to be consolidated into larger groups of workers and thus employment opportunities arose in towns giving rise to rapid expansion and growth in urban prosperity.

Wolverhampton was no exception and one area of land, previously owned by a Mr Thomas Tomkys, became available for development in 1755. This land was known as Wooton's alias Langley's Croft and lay to the north of a fence-line separating it from croft land called Piper's Row. It was divided into plots to

be sold, with a piece of land reserved for a thoroughfare along the frontages which would eventually be named 'Queen Street'.<sup>131</sup>

One such plot was to become no. 32, for which the original deeds survive dated 1760. It measured 10 yards and 8 inches by 24½ yards and a dwelling house was built there to be owned and occupied by William Price, carpenter and joiner, and William Parshouse, bucklemaker. By 1779 there was a stable, brewhouse and other buildings at the rear, and by 1782 the stable had been converted into a back kitchen.<sup>132</sup>

The property came under the tenure of Richard Molineux and, following his death, was passed down through the Edwards family to William Wenman, factor and merchant, who continued as owner and occupier until 1818.<sup>133</sup>

From 1824, John Walker, iron master, occupied the property followed by Mrs Sarah Bond, with Wenman and Walker having a warehouse on the site, first mentioned in 1814.<sup>134</sup> The deeds for 1820 state that there was also a coach house across a yard which was converted into a surgery. In 1835, John Steward is recorded as providing consultations there.<sup>135</sup>

The occupants of the property in the following years included attorney John Riley, his wife, two sons and two servants<sup>136</sup> and Nathaniel Price, a watch and clock maker, residing there with his family, an apprentice and a servant and whose business was sufficiently prosperous for him to have illustrated

<sup>131</sup> Harrison, J. & Hughes. 2018 'Queen Street Research', Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>132</sup> Deeds in private hands

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Poor Rates 1791-1828, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-WOP/5/2-25

<sup>135</sup> Pigot & Co's Staffordshire's Directory 1835, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91

<sup>136</sup> Census, 1851

advertisements in several publications.<sup>137</sup>

By 1871, the building is divided into 32 and 32a with William Higgitt cabinet maker, employing nine men, four boys and four women, living at the former with his wife and servant, with Nathaniel Price next door. Later tenants of the 'two' properties also included a crate maker, cycle fitter, a solicitor, a solicitor's clerk, whose son was a secretary for the Grand Theatre, and a seller of photo postcards. The 1901 census records it as a dwelling.<sup>138</sup> Owners included G&S Lees carriage hardware manufacturers, leather merchants Moesch & Bayliff, and later, leather dealers M.R. Wilson & Son who had a factory on the upper floors.<sup>139</sup>

By 1916, the property is numbered 32a & b and, by the late 1930s, in the occupation and ownership of E J Hartill, and C & H Edwards who ran number 32b as a pet shop. Mr Hartill was replaced by D F Hartland, supplier of surgical, dental and veterinary instruments and appliances including orthopaedic boots. He had a workshop on the site, employed six people and is known to have supplied appliances to RAF Cosford Rehab. Centre.<sup>140</sup> In the 1960s, Robert Patheyjohns snr., part of the same family as the Edwards', took over the premises and, in turn, it came to his son, also Robert, who brought 32a and b back under one ownership and continued to trade as a pet shop selling small animals, fish and supplies. 32 Queen Street is the last surviving Georgian property on this stretch of the street with the buildings to the right succumbing to redevelopment in the 1960s.

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<sup>137</sup> Wolverhampton & South Staffs Almanack 1861-2, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91M12, Directory & Gazetteer of Staffs. 1861, Wolverhampton City Archives, S91, 1871 Visitors Guide to Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91N1

<sup>138</sup> Census, 1901

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Communication in private hands

## Chapter 8

### 34 Queen Street: The Jennings Family



By Susan Martin

John Charles Jennings was born in Kinver in 1849. His father, William, was a roll turner and the young John followed his trade. At rolling mills, metals are shaped by passing heated metal blocks back and forth between the specially formed rolls of a mill stand, until the desired shape and length have been obtained. The roll turner forms and shapes these sets of rolls by means of a lathe and specially prepared tools such as templates (patterns) until they conform to the specified shape. Railway lines are one product made in this way, but John Charles seems to have specialised in bolts.

He married Elizabeth Brown in the Kinver parish church on 21st April 1873. Elizabeth was the daughter of Hiram Brown, a forgeman. John and Elizabeth had seven children, five of whom survived infancy; Martha 1876, Edith

Fanny 1879, Nellie 1880, Helen Gertrude (sometimes Nellie sometimes Gertrude) 1887 and Charles Duncan 1894.

By the 1891 census, the family had moved to 25 Powlett Street, Wolverhampton. John continued to work in the same industry and his eldest daughters, Martha and Edith are recorded as dressmakers. By 1901, John appears to have embarked on a new career path. The family had moved again, this time to 25 Snow Hill, Wolverhampton and John Charles is recorded as a confectioner along with his daughters, Martha and Edith.<sup>141</sup>

In 1908, the family operated a refreshment room at 34 Queen Street. They also had a refreshment room in Exchange Street. The 1911 census reveals that 34 Queen Street had 6 rooms, possibly located over the shop as the household was large.<sup>142</sup> John Charles employed his daughters, Martha and Helen as shop assistants and was also assisted by his wife Elizabeth and son Charles. Possibly the most surprising thing about the Jennings at 34 Queen Street is that the founder of the family-run business was not born in the confectionary or hospitality trade. One must wonder how John Charles learned his new trade.

John Charles and daughters Edith and Nellie attended the Congregational Church in Queen Street from 1890. Although the family attended the Church, they were not admitted as members. In 1918, John Charles' youngest son Charles married Violet Boucher, who had been a member of the church since 1913. John Charles and Elizabeth continued to live above 34

<sup>141</sup> Census, 1901

<sup>142</sup> Census, 1911

### *Susan Martin*

Queen Street during the 1920s with their son and new daughter-in-law.

John Charles Jennings died in 1926 leaving an estate of £2458 7s. It is believed that John's son, Charles, took over the family business. On the 1939 National Register, daughter Martha is still living in the flat above the shop and her occupation was 'dealer in confectionery, sugar, cooked meats and cigarettes'.<sup>143</sup>

An advert appearing in the 1956 Queen Street Chapel yearbook read:

*'for meals of quality and distinction you must try Jennings Restaurant. Always a choice selection of courses readily available, luncheons, teas, suppers.'*

The dining rooms at 2 Exchange Street did not survive the Second World War and the establishment at 34 Queen Street closed around 1962. In 1963 and 1964, the premises were unlet. Martha Jennings died in 1966 and probate on her estate passed to her sister, Nellie.

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<sup>143</sup> National Register, 1939

# Chapter 9

## A Brief History of a Victorian Transport Hub in Queen Street



By Mitch Davie

### Railway

WOLVERHAMPTON'S development as an important railway centre was shaped by the fierce competition between rival companies fighting for the lucrative routes from the West Midlands to Merseyside.<sup>144</sup> By the 19th century, Wolverhampton, although smaller and overshadowed by Birmingham, was an important strategic centre of roads and canals (the latter effectively linking the town to the Severn, Trent, Mersey and Thames). These transport links, especially the canal system, and the advent of the Industrial Revolution, gave Wolverhampton's growing metal working industries access to locally mined coal and iron ore. Wolverhampton's industries in the 19th century ranged from japanned ware, lock

manufacture, tin ware, steel products, chemical works, brewing, iron foundries and brassware, to hundreds of small manufacturing businesses making everything the consumer needed. Local firm, Chubb and Gibbons, became nationally important lock makers who, along with the other town industries, started to trade and export their goods.<sup>145</sup>

Wolverhampton was ideally placed to benefit from the proximity of raw materials and good transport connections by road, canal, and later rail.

The problems of transporting heavy goods long distance was addressed in the 18th century when James Brindley opened his Bridgewater Canal in Cheshire in 1761. Soon, canals were dug almost everywhere. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, linking Wolverhampton to Stourport on the River Severn, arrived in 1761, passing through the centre of Wolverhampton at Broad Street. The important link to Birmingham opened in 1772. Initially, this system suffered from a lack of water due to the high gradients between the towns. This was solved by Thomas Telford who straightened the Birmingham Canals Navigation mainline in 1828 and for a brief time, it became the equivalent of today's Black Country motorway system.

This supremacy barely lasted a decade, when in 1837, the Grand Junction Railway (GJR) was opened, named as such because it connected two early inter-city lines; the Liverpool and Manchester with the London and

<sup>144</sup> Christiansen, R, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain: Vol 7, The West Midlands, p.80

<sup>145</sup> Harvey, D and Hughes, J, A Nostalgic Tour of Wolverhampton by Tram, Trolleybus and Bus: Part 1, The Western Route, p. 10

Birmingham.<sup>146</sup> This was Britain's first trunk rail route and it possessed the longest line in Europe at the time.<sup>147</sup> The route itself from Birmingham to Liverpool passed through the Black Country and Wolverhampton through Stafford to Crewe and joined the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Strangely the GJR seems to have ignored the importance of Wolverhampton as the first rail link avoided the centre of the town with only a small station being provided at Wednesfield Heath.<sup>148</sup> Before the opening of the Grand Junction, two companies ran horse omnibuses from Birmingham to Wolverhampton and Dudley.<sup>149</sup> Although the opening of this line affected trade, it generated new, regular trade for the local omnibus companies who ran services to and from the station into the centre of town:

*“...from post-chaises and landaus, to caravans and omnibii (as a refined friend...pluralises these universal conveyances) are in attendance at this station, to convey passengers to the town of Wolverhampton, one mile distant...”*

<sup>150</sup>

With the GJR effectively skirting the town and the station lying over a mile from the town centre, local merchants, manufacturers and travellers must have

<sup>146</sup> The Grand Junction Railway Amendment Act 1834, Wolverhampton City Archive, DE/6/13/1/2

<sup>147</sup> Bradley, S, The Railways: Nation, Network and People, p. 260

<sup>148</sup> Christiansen, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, p. 20

<sup>149</sup> Christiansen, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, p. 19

<sup>150</sup> Drake, J, Drake's Road Book of the Grand Junction Railway (1838)

<sup>151</sup> Passenger services ceased on 1 January 1873 although goods and parcel services continued until 4 October 1965, Challoner, E.T, The Tramways of Wolverhampton, p. 9

found this novel transport link slightly inconvenient.<sup>151</sup> It was not until 1849, that the Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway (S&BR) planned to reach the town itself<sup>152</sup> with the building of the grand, arched entranceway (Queen's Building) and a temporary station situated on Wednesfield Road until the completion of the actual station. However, by the time the S&BR's Bill<sup>153</sup> passed through Parliament in 1847, the situation between the various companies involved had become acrimonious and complicated. Initially, the S&BR had formed an alliance with the London and Birmingham Railway (L&BR). The latter saw the new line as an alternative to the GJR's monopoly on the route north and to compete with bitter rivals the Great Western Railway (GWR) who were advancing north with their broad gauge<sup>154</sup> Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton line with the intent of also building a station in Wolverhampton. When the Act was passed, the L&BR merged with the GJR, who had obviously realised the folly of not running through the centre of Wolverhampton and formed the London & North Western Railway (LNWR). Much legal wrangling and political manoeuvring followed between the various companies which delayed the opening of the new line to freight until

<sup>152</sup> Whitehouse, J and Dowling, G, British Railways Past and Present: No 5, The West Midlands, p. 27

<sup>153</sup> The Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway Act 1846, Wolverhampton City Archive, DX-665/1/7

<sup>154</sup> Broad gauge track had a width of 7ft 0¼ in and was developed by I. K. Brunel and used almost exclusively by the GWR. The 1846 Act of Parliament required all track in Britain to have a standard gauge of 4ft 8½in. Broad gauge could continue as long as lines were converted for joint operation. The GWR finally converted all its track by 1892. Bradley, The Railways, pp. 31, 263, 273

1st of February 1852, with passenger workings following from 1st of July.<sup>155</sup> As a result of these disputes, the S&BR was effectively frozen out of operating on the new line and ended up merging with, and then absorbed into, the GWR.<sup>156</sup>

When the new town centre station was opened by the LNWR in 1852, it was christened ‘Wolverhampton Queen Street’ as the now three-year-old entranceway sat opposite the opening of Queen Street.<sup>157</sup> In 1855, the second of Wolverhampton’s stations was opened allowing the GWR access to the town, officially being named ‘Low Level Station’ from 1856 as it was situated below Queen Street Station at the bottom of Canal Street, now Broad Street.<sup>158</sup> When the S&BR joined the GWR, the Great Western used the Queen’s Building as its goods department offices. This continued until 1859 when the GWR sold its half share in the Queen Street Station buildings to the LNWR to concentrate all its services from the Low Level Station.<sup>159</sup>

### Tramway

In August 1870, Parliament passed The Tramways Act.<sup>160</sup> It was designed to give local authorities some protection from intended tramway operators as well as encouraging participation with them. It also gave authorities an absolute veto on plans they did not like and the power to

<sup>155</sup> Hitches, M, *Wolverhampton Railways Through Time*, p. 3

<sup>156</sup> Parker, B, *Rails in Wolverhampton: The Early Years* (2018)

<sup>157</sup> OS Map Staffordshire 1886, National Library of Scotland, LXII.NE

<sup>158</sup> Wildsmith, O, *Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History*, p. 8

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> The Tramways Act 1870, [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>161</sup> Challoner, *The Tramways of Wolverhampton*, p.10

make compulsory purchases of tramways within 10 years after opening or after 21 years of operation.<sup>161</sup> In 1876, the newly incorporated Wolverhampton Tramways Company Ltd proposed three routes which were confirmed in the July of 1877:

1. West from Queen Square to the Tettenhall boundary at Newbridge.
2. East from Queen Square, via Dudley Street and Queen Street, to Willenhall.
3. South East from Five Ways, connecting with (2), to Bilston.

The proposal for trams to be mechanically powered<sup>162</sup> was opposed and rejected resulting in cars being horse-drawn and run on a track constructed to a gauge of 4ft 8½in.<sup>163</sup> Horses hauling cars on steel rails provided a far more efficient method of transporting people around town. A wheel running on steel rails encountered less friction than a cartwheel on the poorly maintained Victorian roads allowing more passengers to be conveyed with just one or two horses.<sup>164</sup> Construction began early in 1878 with the first commercial operation leaving from Queen Square to Newbridge on the 1st of May 1878. The Willenhall route was completed in mid-May, opening on 6th of June, with the Bilston line following in July and an extension to

<sup>162</sup> The Wolverhampton Tramways Company originally intended to operate its lines by steam power. This was rejected due to local opposition. In 1880, a six month steam powered trial was granted along the Tettenhall route, Wolverhampton City Archive, WOL-D-CE/5/9/6. Although successful, the council refused to allow steam trams and operation stopped in November 1881, Wildsmith, pp.10 & 14

<sup>163</sup> Wildsmith, *Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History*, p. 10

<sup>164</sup> Williams, N, *Trams in Wolverhampton* (2018)



*Horse-drawn tram on Queen's Square 1885. Image courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives*

Moxley completed in August 1879. The system's total length was just under 10 miles and cost £70,000 to construct which was mostly made up of single track with passing loops.

Although all the routes converged on Queen Street, the track along it was never used for normal through-service workings.<sup>165</sup> Instead, Queen Street acted as a town centre terminus for two of the routes and provided access to the tramcar depot situated on Darlington Street. Being immediately opposite the Queen's Building entranceway to the station complex, tramcars stopping in or near Queen Street provided a convenient mode of transport to and from the

station. Willenhall cars arrived just inside Queen Street and loaded in Horseley Fields except in the evenings when loading and unloading was done in Queen Street. The Bilston service terminated opposite Queen Street Chapel moving slightly nearer to Dudley Street in the evenings. Newer cars and the better horses were used on the Tettenhall route, partly for the inward climb uphill to Queen's Square and possibly on account of a more 'elite' passenger, while older horses tended to be used on the Willenhall route.<sup>166</sup> Two horse double-deck cars were used on these routes which came from the Darlington Street Depot to Queen Square then along Dudley Street and Queen Street to gain access to the

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 101

<sup>166</sup> Wildsmith, *Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History*, p. 14

lines.<sup>167</sup> The service frequencies from Queen Street for the Bilston route was every 15-20 minutes (8:30am - 11:00pm. Sunday 1:20pm - 10:20pm) while for Willenhall it was every 30 minutes (9:00am - 11:00pm. Sunday 1:30pm - 10:00pm) with crews working up to 16 hours a day and half a day on Sundays.<sup>168</sup>

### *Station Expansion and Tram Relocation*

During the 19th century, Wolverhampton continued to grow. In 1801, the population was 12,565 and by 1901, it stood at 94,185.<sup>169</sup> With a tramway efficiently linking the suburbs to the town centre and the railways taking the majority of inter-town traffic, it became apparent during the 1870's that the lack of facilities in Queen Street Station had become inadequate for the

large number of passengers using it. The shared booking office and refreshment room, lack of waiting rooms and low narrow platforms were problematic. Plans for enlargement were drawn up by the LNWR in 1876 although, due to opposition by the GWR over access to their Low Level Station, the improvements to Queen Street Station did not take place until 1885.<sup>170</sup> As part of this expansion, the main approach to the station was shifted to a junction with the newly widened Lichfield Street becoming the primary thoroughfare to the front of the station. The area behind the former entrance, the Queen's Building, was given over to an extended goods yard.<sup>171</sup> With the Queen's Building now not used as the entranceway, Queen Street Station was officially renamed Wolverhampton High Level Station on 1st June 1885.



*Low Level Station 1908. Image courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives*

In 1888, the ten-year option for the council to purchase the Wolverhampton Tramways

Company elapsed with the council deciding against it. In November 1895, four years before the 21-year 2nd option, the Company advised the council that if it deferred purchase for a further seven years the company would extend its line from Queen Square through

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>169</sup> Wildsmith, Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History, p. 6

<sup>170</sup> Parker, Wolverhampton High Level Station (2018)

<sup>171</sup> OS Map Staffordshire 1903, LXII.NE

Lichfield Street to the Five Ways junction while giving up the Dudley Street and Queen Street lines.<sup>172</sup> Since Lichfield Street was now the main thoroughfare towards the High Level Station, it made sense to have trams travel to the new entrance straight along there rather than taking a dog-leg along Queen Street to an entrance that was no longer used. Instead of deferring, the council decided to acquire all the systems within the borough with notice served on Wolverhampton Tramways Company in 1898.

At the same time, the British Electric Traction Company (BET), who had acquired many of the Black Country's tram operators, also attempted to purchase the Company. After hard negotiation and the involvement of a Board of Trade arbitrator, a price of £22,500 was agreed on. The council acquired all lines in the town centre in May 1900, including the Willenhall, Bilston and Newbridge routes with some borough boundary restrictions.<sup>173</sup>

The newly formed Wolverhampton Corporation Tramways Department made the purchase with the intention of narrowing the gauge of the track to 3ft 6in and electrifying the system. The Corporation was eager to have this modernised system installed and available for the prestigious Wolverhampton Art and Industrial Exhibition due to open in May 1902.<sup>174</sup> A debate ensued as to which method should be employed to power the network; overhead or surface contact

electrical pickup. Initially, an overhead system was preferred with tenders invited to supply equipment in November 1900, however, the Chairman of the Tramways Committee, Alderman Charles Mander and supporters, lobbied successfully for the Brown surface contact system manufactured by the Lorain Steel Company.<sup>175</sup> This decision was, at the time, a bold move as this system had never been extensively tested elsewhere and remains the only use of its type in the world.<sup>176</sup> The first stretch of the new electric service was opened on 1st May 1902, the same day as the opening of the Exhibition. Operating from the High Level Station to New Hampton Road, it provided a one of a kind, modern transport link to the Exhibition.

By 1909, the basic corporation tram system was complete with all of their routes constructed with the Lorain surface contact system. All that is apart from the small sections of Queen Street and Dudley Street which were not electrified and fell into disuse having become superseded by Lichfield Street.<sup>177</sup> By 1921, the entire system was converted to overhead collection.<sup>178</sup> Despite the overhead cabling being new, the track and rolling stock were fast approaching the need for replacement. The solution was to replace the tram network with trackless trolleybuses which could utilise the overhead equipment. By 1928, the changeover was completed when the Bilston tram service was withdrawn on the 26th August.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Wildsmith, *Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History*, p. 19

<sup>173</sup> Challoner, *The Tramways of Wolverhampton*, p.18

<sup>174</sup> Wildsmith, *Wolverhampton: The Town and its Early Transport History*, p. 28

<sup>175</sup> Challoner, *The Tramways of Wolverhampton*, p.42

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.7

<sup>177</sup> Challoner, *The Tramways of Wolverhampton*, p.44

<sup>178</sup> Harvey and Hughes, *A Nostalgic Tour of Wolverhampton*, pp. 13 & 14

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

### *The Queen's Building*

Situated on Pipers Row, opposite the opening of Queen Street, the Queen's Building stands as a lone Victorian sentinel in front of a short modern retail corridor and flanked, to the right, by a steel and glass bus station. The large two storey, buff coloured brick edifice, which was Grade II listed on 3rd of February 1977, currently houses a branch of a large coffee shop chain, however its architecture and relative position betrays the building's original purpose. Opened in 1849, three years before the main station itself, the Queen's Building served as the grand entranceway and booking hall for the station.

Designed by local architect Edward Banks for the Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway (S&BR), it was the first completed building of the Wolverhampton High Level train station complex. The still present, although now glazed, archways can still be seen on the front and rear aspects. The larger two arches gave carriage access to the station forecourt while the smaller two, on either side of the latter, were for the use of pedestrians. The large forecourt lay beyond the entrance with the station building sited some 200 yards away.

The first floor of the building was initially used as a boardroom for the S&BR and was used as railway office space until the nationalisation of the railways in 1948. The building was closed in 1961

<sup>180</sup> Parker, Wolverhampton High Level Station (2018)

<sup>181</sup> Queen's Building Refurb 1989, Wolverhampton City Archive, P/3043

and purchased by West Midlands County Council. Four years later, the High Level Station was demolished and replaced with the current buildings.<sup>180</sup> This left the Queen's Building as the last surviving element of the first of the town's stations. In 1989, it was renovated by Royle & Stanley Ltd<sup>181</sup> and then used by West Midlands Transport Executive as a travel centre for the bus station.<sup>182</sup>

Although currently a coffee shop, the Queen's Building has taken on an element of its original role. Today, it fronts the pedestrianised walkway that leads to Wolverhampton Station and sitting to the right, when viewed from Queen Street, is the modern bus station. As a result, Queen Street has once again become the transport gateway for Wolverhampton and with the proposed redevelopment of the drab and tired 1960's-built railway station, it will look onto a modern transport hub.



*Queen's Building as BR Goods Office 1961. Photo courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives*

<sup>182</sup> Queen's Building 1990, Wolverhampton City Archive, P/1595



*Queen's Building Blue Plaque Feb 2018. Photo author's own.*

## Chapter 10

### 43a Queen Street: The Mechanics Institute and Athenaeum



By Danielle Oakley

**I**N 1827 WOLVERHAMPTON opened its first Mechanic's Institute in King's Street, creating opportunities for the town's working-class people to attend free lectures on a range of technical subjects and to borrow books. The idea for the Mechanic's Institute originated in Glasgow in 1799 when Dr. George Birbeck, a physician and pioneer in adult education, offered local people free lectures on a variety of trade-related subjects. These institutions proved extremely popular amongst the working class as they were free of charge and lectures were conducted in the evenings so that workers were available to attend them.

The Mechanic's Institute in King Street was increasingly popular and soon struggled to accommodate the expanding

library and growing demand for lectures. In 1835, eight years after Wolverhampton began offering free lectures, a committee was formed made up of affluent and prominent Wulfrunians. The task of funding and erecting a new building for a bigger Mechanic's Institute began in earnest shortly after.

In April of the same year, the committee purchased a plot of land<sup>183</sup> for the sum of £220 from a Mr Ward<sup>184</sup> and entrusted William Walford, a trustee of the committee and timber merchant by trade, to prepare the plans of the new premises.

The new building at 43 Queen Street was completed in 1836, located on the south side amongst other prestigious buildings similar in style.<sup>185</sup> The building contained four main sections comprising of a library, reading room, and accommodation for the caretaker and librarian. It has been difficult to prove exactly what lectures took place during this time due to lack of archival evidence but it is safe to claim that the Institute enjoyed a period of success in providing the working class with lectures and reading material.

By 1845 the Institute had entered financial difficulty and was struggling to function after a decline in membership.<sup>186</sup> The librarian was the only remaining member of staff and cost-saving measures included hiring out the main rooms for meetings and gatherings. The town's first Freemasons are known to have used the building for their consecration ceremony in August 1846.<sup>187</sup> Later that year, the Mechanic's Institute closed. Local clerks and shopkeepers proposed various ideas for

<sup>183</sup> Release re a piece of land in Queen Street Wolverhampton April 1835, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-69/3

<sup>184</sup> Roper, *Historic buildings of Wolverhampton*, p.61 and Jones, *Literary Institutions of Wolverhampton*, p.42

<sup>185</sup> Roper: *Historic buildings of Wolverhampton*, p. 62

<sup>186</sup> Roper, *Historic Buildings of Wolverhampton*

<sup>187</sup> Consecration meeting took place on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1846 in the presence of 8 or 9 founding brethren: Lodge of Honour 526 History

developing the now vacant building. According to an article in the Wolverhampton Chronicle dated 1897, a meeting took place at The Star and Garter Hotel on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1847 to discuss the future of the town's adult education provider.<sup>188</sup> Shortly after, 43A Queen Street was reopened with a new title; The Wolverhampton Athenaeum and Mechanic's Institute.

Like its predecessor, the newly named Athenaeum enjoyed a period of success offering library services as well as a varied programme of lectures. Unfortunately, this success was short-lived and the Athenaeum soon recorded poor membership levels, perhaps due to the nature of the lectures which were considered too academic for the working class. In January 1854, records reveal rooms in the building were still being let out for hire. A political meeting took place at the Athenaeum to discuss the electing of MP's.<sup>189</sup> In 1862, it was agreed that the lecture room would be used for hire for public worship on Sundays.<sup>190</sup>

The Athenaeum continued to operate and plans were even drawn up to add a retiring room to the first floor in 1858.<sup>191</sup> Lectures were still scheduled throughout the year<sup>192</sup> despite poor attendance, and the library opened from 12pm-3pm and then again from 7pm-10pm under the care of librarian Benjamin Robinson.<sup>193</sup> All of these services continued to be free for members.

By 1869, however, the Athenaeum was no longer able to continue as a place of adult education and the premises was handed over to the local authority known as The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of Wolverhampton.<sup>194</sup>

No. 43 Queen Street was eventually occupied by Wolverhampton's Workmen's Conservative Club in 1872 who seem to have remained there for the next few decades. The only archival material that exists in relation to the Workmen's Conservative Club is in the form of club meeting minutes spanning from 1893-1899.<sup>195</sup>

By 1921 The Army Recruiting Office were in residence and in some form continued to occupy the premises to this day.<sup>196</sup> Today it is listed as the Army Careers Information Office and has a blue plaque in commemoration of George Wallis, an industrial design artist who was thought to have lectured at the Mechanic's Institute in 1838.<sup>197</sup> 43a Queen Street has also been a listed building since 16<sup>th</sup> July 1969 when it was granted grade II status.

Since its origins in 1836, 43a Queen Street has predominately been used as an adult education establishment. It appears that the building has always been destined as a place to provide the local people with the information and resources they need to enable them to thrive in their career. Even today, it continues to provide specialised career advice for those wishing to pursue a career in the Armed Forces.

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<sup>188</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1897

<sup>189</sup> Address, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-584/6/2

<sup>190</sup> Agreement for hire of the athenaeum, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-ATH-7

<sup>191</sup> Proposed alteration plans to the athenaeum, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-69/4

<sup>192</sup> Programme of lectures, Wolverhampton City Archives, D-ATH-3

<sup>193</sup> Post Office Directory of B'ham, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, Wolverhampton City Archives, S91

<sup>194</sup> Transfer of Shares, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L374/21

<sup>195</sup> Wolverhampton's Workmen's Conservative Club, Wolverhampton City Archives, FM/79

<sup>196</sup> Kelly's Directory of Wolverhampton 1964 & 1965, Wolverhampton City Archives, L91

<sup>197</sup> See Rebecca Taylor's Essay on George Wallis

# Chapter 11

## 46 Queen Street: The Public Dispensary



By Sally Burrows

AT THE END OF the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dispensaries were a growing phenomenon in urban areas. The rapid growth of population in towns and cities, caused by the Industrial Revolution, resulted in overcrowding and poor sanitation for the new working class who were very poorly paid, had little job security and lived with the constant threat of destitution. After the French Revolutionary Wars 1792-1802, there was a period of peace and "Government orders for iron were slackened or suspended ... Masters were obliged to discharge their workmen ... Thousands of workmen were reduced to pauperism".<sup>198</sup> By 1815-16, "considerable derangement and stagnation took place among the large ironworks and coal mines in the neighbourhood of Wolverhampton".<sup>199</sup>

<sup>198</sup> White, William, 1834, History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire, p.175, Wolverhampton City Archives, S19

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p.174

Ill health, due to appalling living conditions, injuries caused by lack of health and safety in the home, street and the many factories and mines, and the lack of money to pay for medical care, became of increasing concern to wealthier, compassionate individuals in Wolverhampton.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1820, John Freer Proud, a surgeon practicing in Wolverhampton, wrote a letter to the editor of the Wolverhampton Chronicle advocating the establishment of a Dispensary in the town "for the preservation of the health and strength of the sick poor" having witnessed the situation of those individuals destitute of all the comforts that contribute to good health.<sup>200</sup> In April 1821, 'highly respectable inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood' met and, acknowledging the benefits of dispensaries in other towns, resolved that it would be highly desirable to open one in Wolverhampton.<sup>201</sup> Donations and subscriptions raised sufficient funds for a committee to draw up a plan, devise regulations, provide a house and appoint a resident surgeon and apothecary for the Wolverhampton Public Dispensary.<sup>202</sup> A month later, at a meeting chaired by Joseph Pearson, a local brass-founder, the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Dudley and Ward was appointed President of the Institution, with six Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, two Physicians, two Surgeons, and a resident House Surgeon, Mr E H Coleman, formerly an assistant surgeon in the East India Company's Naval Service.<sup>203</sup> At this same meeting, thanks were proffered to William Hollins, a Birmingham architect, for offering to

<sup>200</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 4 January 1820

<sup>201</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 11 April 1821

<sup>202</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 9 May 1821

<sup>203</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 19 May 1824

provide designs for the Dispensary free of charge.<sup>204</sup>

The Wolverhampton Public Dispensary opened its doors to ten patients on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 1821 with physicians, Dr. J Dehane and Dr Mannix and surgeons, Mr Fowke and Mr Proud, offering their medical skills free of charge.<sup>205</sup> Since such a short period of time had elapsed since it was announced that sufficient funds had been raised, it seems that the committee had provided a pre-existing house for use as the dispensary for a rent of £24 6s per annum.<sup>206</sup> Oral tradition suggests that the original site was located at 47 Queen Street but this has proved difficult to verify.<sup>207</sup> By December 1824, the committee had published a favourable report into the expediency of erecting a new building “to promote and extend the usefulness of the ... institution and ... be a public ornament to the town”.<sup>208</sup> On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1826, the Wolverhampton Chronicle announced that “the building of the new Dispensary... is now nearly complete”.<sup>209</sup>

It seems that this is the building that still stands at Number 46 Queen Street. A dispensary typical of this era consisted of a dispensing room, waiting room, consulting room, and examination room on the ground floor, with a committee room and the resident medical officer’s living accommodation on the upper floors. The Wolverhampton Dispensary also had a ward containing six beds, although it is not known where this was in the building.<sup>210</sup>

In 1821, medical diagnoses depended on the ancient theory of maintaining a

healthy balance of four bodily humours and many treatments were based on purging to restore equilibrium using emetics and laxatives. This could include doses of poisons such as antimony, arsenic and mercury, blistering of the skin with hot irons and blood-letting. However, many compounds dispensed by apothecaries included herbal remedies not unfamiliar today, for example, senna, ginger and cinnamon for digestive conditions; hemlock and opium were given for pain. These compounds were blended by the apothecary according to an individual’s symptoms using liquids and powders kept in bottles and boxes on shelves or in labelled wooden drawers, measured or weighed out using scales and mixed in a pestle and mortar.<sup>211</sup> One imagines that the Queen Street Dispensary would have been similarly equipped.

has prevailed on ©Wolverhampton City Archiv

**THE CELEBRATED AMATEUR**  
to appear (for this Evening only)  
*AS THE PRINCE OF DENMARK.*  
Tickets to be had of the MANAGER, and at Mr. SMART's  
Bookseller, where Places for the Boxes may be taken.

**Wolverhampton Dispensary.**

THE Committee for carrying into Effect the building  
the new Dispensary, respectfully inform the Su  
scribers, that it is now nearly completed, and they mo  
earnestly request those who have not yet paid in their Su  
scriptions, to do so, without Delay, to the Treasurers,  
JOHN WROTHESLEY, Bart. and Co., as the Contract for Pa  
ment is at Lady Day next.  
JOS. PEARSON, Chairman.

**J. GILBERT,**  
AUCTIONEER, APPRAISER, LAND SURVEYOR  
*Accountant and General Agent,*

*Article from the Wolverhampton Chronicle in 1826 – Wolverhampton City Archives*

<sup>204</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 6 June 1821

<sup>205</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 6 & 13 July 1821

<sup>206</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 3 July 1822

<sup>207</sup> Wolverhampton's Listed Buildings,  
[www.historywebsite.co.uk>listed.lbs](http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/listed.lbs), Accessed 8 January 2018.

<sup>208</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 8 December 1824

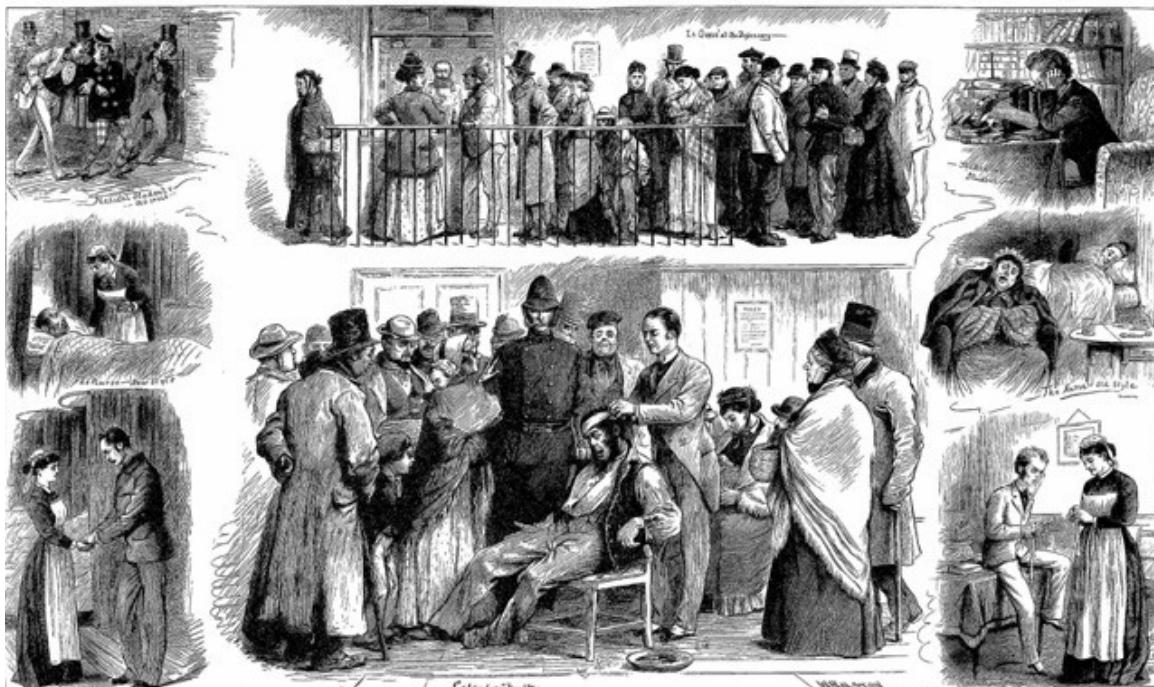
<sup>209</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle: 8 March 1826

<sup>210</sup> Squires, Frank, Only Six beds for the Poor, Black Countryman, Vol.3, No. 1, p.20

<sup>211</sup> Victorian Medicine,  
<http://www.simplehistory.co.uk/time-travel/victorian-medicine>, Accessed 10 February 2018

The aims of the Dispensary were “to afford Medical and Surgical Relief, with the Benefit of Vaccination to those poor Persons who are unable to purchase Medical Advice for themselves”.<sup>212</sup> Living conditions meant that infectious disease such as cholera, small pox, typhoid, typhus fever and tuberculosis were rife. Without immunisation or antibiotics, survival depended on the resilience of the individual and hence, many children died from measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough and diphtheria.<sup>213</sup> Between 1824 and 1825, the Dispensary vaccinated 114 children.<sup>214</sup> The Dispensary did not admit people with extremely contagious diseases, but the house-surgeon may have treated them in their own homes.<sup>215</sup>

In order to receive treatment for illness potential patients had to obtain a recommendation in the form of a ticket which were issued to a Minister of the Church, a subscriber to the Dispensary, Overseer of the Poor or Officers of Friendly Societies.<sup>216</sup> In 1838, a donation of £100 would lead to the receipt of 40 tickets.<sup>217</sup> This rule may have been devised to ensure that only deserving cases benefitted from this charitable institution. Initially, it seems that many were unaware of this rule as, on the day that the Dispensary opened, at least ten people were turned away for ‘want of recommendation’.<sup>218</sup> However, poor individuals who were involved in accidents could receive ‘casual’ relief, without a ticket or being admitted onto



*Illustration taken from the 27th December 1879 issue of The Graphic. The illustration depicts various scenes from a typical Victorian Dispensary. Image courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive.’ © British Library Board*

<sup>212</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 12 July 1826

<sup>213</sup> Edward Jenner and the History of Small Pox, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1200696>, Accessed 25 February 2018

<sup>214</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 12 July 1826

<sup>215</sup> Fox, N, 1997 A History of the Royal Hospital. p.8 Wolverhampton City Archives L3621

<sup>216</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 3 July 1822

<sup>217</sup> Wolverhampton Dispensary Committee Minute Book 1837-1848, Wolverhampton City Archives, NHS-RH/2

<sup>218</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 13 July 1821

the books, and thus were recorded as 'casualties'. In October 1824, an appeal for donations of linen rags was made due to the high numbers of casualties being brought in for treatment.<sup>219</sup>

At this time, the medical profession was divided into physicians, surgeons and apothecaries; each had a different status in society. Physicians were university educated and only examined patients, diagnosed and prescribed. Apothecaries compounded, supplied and sold drugs and were allowed to offer medical advice and prescribe. They typically learned their trade through apprenticeships, had to be 21 years old and were of the lowest rank. Surgeons performed operations and dealt with accidents and skin disorders. They were considered skilled craftsmen but, as they also undertook an apprenticeship, of lower status.

Surgeons, but not physicians, could also hold an apothecary licence.<sup>220</sup> Mr Coleman, House Surgeon-Apothecary to the Dispensary received a salary of £100/annum and he would make home visits on horseback within one mile of Queen Street;<sup>221</sup> the individuals thus treated were recorded as home, or 'out', patients.<sup>222</sup>

Without blood transfusions, anesthetic or antibiotics, surgery was hazardous. There was no knowledge of the role of bacteria in the spread of infection and 'bad air' was thought to be the cause so surgeons' hands, instruments, and the rags used to clean wounds were washed

<sup>219</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 27 October 1824

<sup>220</sup> Nineteenth Century Medicine, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jonsmith/19cmed.htm>, Accessed 10 February 2018

<sup>221</sup> Fox, N, p.8

<sup>222</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 3 July 1822

<sup>223</sup> The Medical Adviser & Guide to Health and Long Life (1824)

infrequently. Accidents causing burns and scalds or wounds to the skin quickly became infected, however, one recommended treatment for burns was vinegar and water which, fortuitously, has antiseptic properties; the treatment for a compound fracture of a limb was amputation but patients frequently died of shock or gangrene.<sup>223</sup> In 1824, Mr Coleman, House Surgeon, resigned to set up a practice in Salop Street and was replaced by Mr Benjamin Bellin.<sup>224</sup> Mr Coleman went on to be the first surgeon in Wolverhampton to undertake an amputation using general anesthetic in King Street in 1847.<sup>225</sup>

In its first year, the accounts show that the Dispensary was £218 in credit having admitted 1,452 patients of which:

*644... cured*

*216... time expired*

*50... died*

*420... relieved*

*14... irregular* <sup>226</sup>

Expenditure for the year was £642 4s 9d which included initial start-up costs. Of ongoing running costs, the biggest expense was for drugs at £212 19s 6d - the equivalent of £18,921 in 2018 values.<sup>227</sup> An annual ball was held to raise funds and was usually organised by the Hon. Lady Wrottesley, wife of the treasurer, and Mrs. Littleton, wife of an MP, and held at the Public Library.<sup>228</sup> By December, there were sufficient funds to

<sup>224</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 7 January 1824 & 21 April 1824

<sup>225</sup> Parker, Bev, Wolverhampton Dispensary, [www.historywebsite.co.uk>health>Dispensary](http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/health/Dispensary), Accessed 14 January 2018.

<sup>226</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 3 July 1822

<sup>227</sup> Money Sorter, [www.moneysorter.co.uk](http://www.moneysorter.co.uk), Accessed 13 January 2018

<sup>228</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 7 January 1824

build the new Dispensary.<sup>229</sup> In 1833, casualty wards for an additional sixteen patients were built behind the main building costing £711.19s and the Institution became known as the Wolverhampton Dispensary and Casualty Hospital.<sup>230</sup>

In 1834, the Dispensary had a salaried house-surgeon, matron, surgery man and a servant. An additional expense that year of £24 16s 9d was for the sinking of a well and a pump; it was now only £15 18s 6d in credit.<sup>231</sup> However, the running costs continued to rise steeply and by 1842 there was consternation on the committee that the Dispensary was exceeding annual subscriptions.<sup>232</sup> To try and reduce costs, Mr Lewis, House Surgeon, was ordered to remonstrate with one drugs supplier for overcharging and it was decided that Druggists would now have to tender for a contract to supply the Dispensary.<sup>233</sup> For the first time at this meeting, closure of wards was discussed due to lack of funding.<sup>234</sup> ‘Bed blocking’, which was unsurprising considering the conditions that the patients were often returning to, was becoming a problem so the Committee also resolved to challenge any patient stay of over one month.<sup>235</sup> It was decided that hernia patients, who were many as

it was a common complaint for those involved in heavy manual labour, be required to pay a shilling for a single truss and two shillings for a double truss as well as producing a ticket of recommendation.<sup>236</sup> In addition, the Committee was increasingly suspicious that the Dispensary was admitting wealthy patients as ‘casualties’.<sup>237</sup> In August 1842, a Mr Walton, travelling on horseback from Birmingham, was hit by an empty omnibus in Queen Street, broke his thigh in two places and was carried into the Dispensary.<sup>238</sup> The Committee allowed him to remain but, due to his station in life, expected him to remunerate the Dispensary for expense and trouble.<sup>239</sup> Inappropriate admissions continued to be an issue and it became necessary to draw up formal regulations for admittance onto the casualty wards.<sup>240</sup>

In January 1843, the committee resolved that every patient admitted onto the wards be required to bring six tickets instead of four. It was also agreed that Wolverhampton needed an Infirmary and, in April, Mr Thorneycroft donated £100 towards establishing a General Hospital in the town.<sup>241</sup> Mr Lewis, House Surgeon, resigned having been directed to “pay more attention to the patients, be

<sup>229</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 8 December 1824

<sup>230</sup> White, William, History, p.187

<sup>231</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 2 July 1834

<sup>232</sup> Wolverhampton Dispensary Committee Minute Book 1837-1848, Wolverhampton City Archives, NHS-RH/2 & AGM 27 June 1842

<sup>233</sup> Mr Bailey’s tender, which included 16s/100 leeches, was successful. Leeches were used for reducing swelling, headaches, nervous fatigue and other ailments. They were collected by sending women to wade in rivers and then picked off their skin. They were stored and sold in small cages or boxes, to doctors and chemists who kept them in jars. A leech could live for up to a year after feeding, Victorian Medicine, <http://virtualvictorian.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/leeches-and-bloodletting-in-victorian.html>, Accessed 8 January 2018

<sup>234</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle cited in Smith, J,

<sup>235</sup> Accidents. Nineteenth Century Accidents in

<sup>236</sup> Wolverhampton, p.109

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 6 May 1844

<sup>239</sup> Fox, N, p.8

<sup>240</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle cited in Smith, J, Accidents. Nineteenth Century Accidents in Wolverhampton, p.109

<sup>241</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 5 September 1842

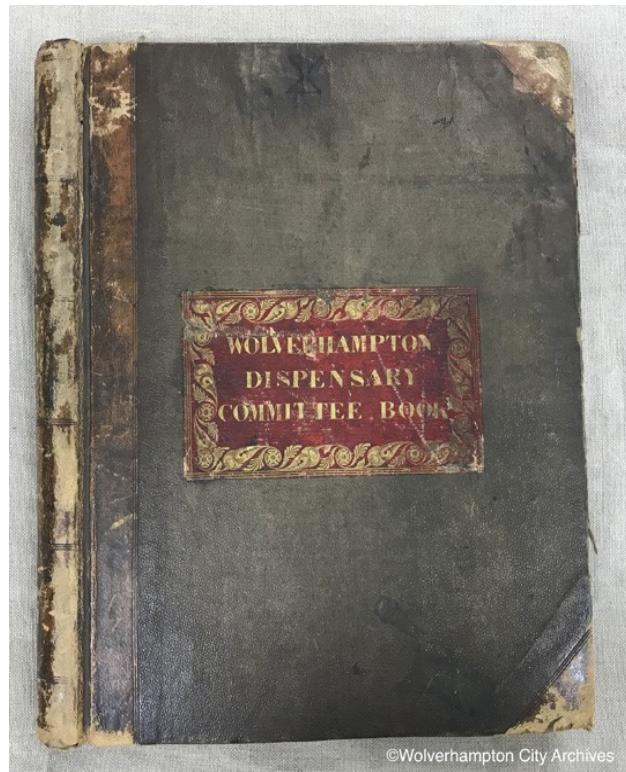
<sup>242</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 1844

<sup>243</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 2 January 1843; 3 April 1843; 4 January 1843

more guarded in his language to them and ... keep the Home Patients book in a more decorous manner”, an admonishment which he felt defamed his character and his profession.<sup>242</sup> In June, the post of surgeon became vacant and, amongst those who applied, were Mr E.H. Coleman and Mr E.F. Dehane.<sup>243</sup> The latter was the brother of Dr. John Dehane, who had been one of the original physicians at the Dispensary, and also the great-grandfather of Sir Henry O’Neil de Hane Segrave, holder of the world speed records in 1929-30.

In 1845, George Briscoe, merchant and sometime magistrate, proposed that “steps be taken to erect an Infirmary ... to afford ample accommodation and

assistance to this densely populous mining and manufacturing district”. Later that month, surgeon J.T. Cartwright, noted that the “funds afforded by the town and neighbourhood for keeping up the present dispensary are inadequate”.<sup>244</sup> Plans for a hospital continued, however, and, by 1848, £1800 had been raised.<sup>245</sup> On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1848, it was recorded in the Minutes that the Dispensary was about to be transferred to the Staffordshire General Hospital.<sup>246</sup> The following year, the Staffordshire General Hospital opened its doors for the first time.<sup>247</sup> The hospital catered to medical needs for almost 150 years before closing in 1997.



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*‘Unfortunately, there is only one Minute Book from the Dispensary available at Wolverhampton City Archives. Any others are presumed lost or destroyed.*

<sup>242</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 3 April 1843 & 1 May 1843

<sup>243</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 7 June 1843

<sup>244</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 9 April 1845 & 16 April 1845

<sup>245</sup> Fox, N, p.9

<sup>246</sup> Minute Book, Wolverhampton City Archives, 7 August 1848

<sup>247</sup> Fox, N, p.10

# Chapter 12

## 46 Queen Street: The Orphan Asylum



By Sally Burrows

**S**AMUEL TRESSELLE<sup>248</sup> had just turned eight years old when his father, John, a brass founder, was buried at St John's church, Wolverhampton. It was January 1849, and John Tresselle was a victim of cholera that was about to rage through the town that year. Samuel lived in Pountney Street with his mother, Mary Ann, his two brothers, John and Charles, and three sisters, Emma, Maria and Eliza. John had been the main breadwinner for the family and his death left a wife and four children under the age of eighteen, unprovided for.

It wasn't until the end of 1849, after the deaths from cholera of 720 inhabitants of Wolverhampton, that John Lees, a wealthy hardware factor and merchant,

<sup>248</sup> Also recorded as Trussell and Tressell. The spelling above was chosen because this is how Samuel signed his name on his marriage certificate.

<sup>249</sup> Asylum in this sense means a haven or place of safety

decided to try and help. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children who came from a family where only the father had died and not necessarily both their parents, were classed as orphans. John Lees perceived that he could help such children by opening an Orphan Asylum,<sup>249</sup> similar to those already in existence in other parts of the country, to "afford suitable relief to destitute orphans or fatherless children to preserve them from the walks of vice and profligacy ....".<sup>250</sup> In December 1849, he approached the Trustees of the Blue Coat School in Berry Street with an offer of £2000 towards the building and endowment of the proposed Asylum if they would discontinue their day school and turn their attention to the running of an Orphanage.<sup>251</sup>

This proposal was not approved, however, two weeks later, the Public Dispensary at number 46 Queen Street transferred to Cleveland Road (becoming the South Staffordshire General Hospital), and John Lees seized the opportunity to continue the charitable purpose of a building erected by voluntary contributions to fulfil his aspirations by renting it. He paid for three years in advance and provided the funding for alterations to the property to create suitable accommodation for the Wolverhampton Orphan Asylum.

The aim of the Orphanage was "to maintain, clothe and educate orphans of between 7 and 11 years old".<sup>252</sup> Samuel was the only child in his family who met this stipulation although regulations stated that a maximum of two children from the same family could be admitted. At the time of the founding of the

<sup>250</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 19/12/1849 and 03/04/1850, and Steward, F L 1850

<sup>251</sup> Kelly's Directory 1851 p.373, Wolverhampton City Archives, S91

<sup>252</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 19/12/1849 and 03/04/1850, and Steward, F L 1850

Institution. Children “whose parents had once been in respectable circumstances”<sup>253</sup> could be elected for entry. Samuel’s mother provided her marriage certificate, John’s death certificate and evidence of Samuel’s age and good health since no diseased, deformed or infirm child would be accepted. Samuel was duly offered a place as one of thirteen successful boys.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1850, the day of the opening, Samuel was perhaps taken upstairs to one of three dormitories where he would have had a bed to himself with a horsehair mattress, and new clothes - a long, blue, belted coat, knee breeches, neck bands and chocolate brown stockings, which was to be the uniform of the Orphanage modelled on that of Christ’s Hospital boys in London and purchased by Mr Lees. The bedrooms of the school master, Mr Thomas Sale, and his wife, Elizabeth, who was appointed Matron, were also on this first floor with their apartments below. The Sale’s had recently had a baby son, William, and Elizabeth’s sister, Maria Ward, was to live there as his nurse; there was also a servant, Mary Owen.

An opening ceremony was held at 2 o’clock in the schoolroom, reached by crossing a gravel yard behind Number 46 with a rear entrance in Castle Street, to which a highly respectable assemblage of ladies and gentlemen, several clergymen, and the mothers or friends of the boys were invited. John Lees gave a speech in which he stated that his intention was to “engender habits of industry, to train [the orphans] up in the paths of religion and virtue agreeably to the formularies of the Church of England

....”<sup>254</sup> He also reassured those present that the most scrupulous care had been taken to ensure the proper ventilation of the living accommodation (at this time it was believed that Cholera was spread by ‘bad air’) and that Dr Topham and Mr Edwardes were to provide free medical care for the children. His speech was met with loud applause and the mothers and friends warmly thanked Mr Lees for his great kindness and benevolence at the end of proceedings.

Samuel’s day would have started early; he would have gone to wash in the ‘commodious lavatory supplied with hot and cold water’ at the back of the building, dressed, and then entered the dining room for breakfast, also on the ground floor at the back. One of the older boys, perhaps James Clark or James Evans, read a portion of Scripture and invoked “blessings on and return(ed) thanks for, the meals taken” using the reading desk that was there for this purpose. After breakfast, it would have been time for lessons. At this time education<sup>255</sup> focused on reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. The teacher’s desk would have been on a podium at the front of the class with children sitting in rows at desks that had bench seats attached. Discipline was strict with the cane being the ultimate sanction. Neatness, cleanliness, earnestness and tractability would be expected in all things with lassitude and disorder being cause for reprimand.

Teaching was very formulaic and regimented. Children of lower ability would start learning to read by having letters written on an easel, the teacher would give the name of each letter and

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 19/12/1849 and 03/04/1850, and Steward, F L 1850

<sup>255</sup> Elementary Education in Staffordshire, Local History Source Book, No.7, Staffordshire County Council Education Dept., 1970,

‘Armitage School 1840’ Wolverhampton City Archives, S372 and Victorian Schooldays, Staffordshire Study Book 13, Log book of Eccleshall National Boys School April 1863-64 Wolverhampton City Archives, S37

its ‘sound’ for the children to repeat and then test each child about what they had learned. The same procedure was followed for learning numbers. Writing would be done on slates using slate pencils which scratched the surface but allowed it to be wiped clean. The session would start with commands: “Clean Slates – show slates clean – lay down slates – hands down”. On command, the children then had to copy letters or numbers from the blackboard followed by “hands down – show slates”. Copperplate handwriting was taught at this time.

Since the children at the Orphanage had come from homes with a wage coming in it may be that they had already attended school and so were at a higher level. They would have had portions of the Catechism, stories from the life of Christ, or texts on the faith and duty of a Christian to read aloud in turn around the class. More skilled writers would copy sentences into a copy book using a pen with a nib that had to be dipped in ink, but paper was expensive and not to be wasted with careless work. Clearly, Samuel acquired a neat copperplate style as can be seen in his signature on his marriage certificate in 1868.

Arithmetic progressed to saying tables, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, Imperial weights and measures, money and accounts. Again, it seems that Samuel learned his lessons well for he went on to run his own business in later life. For the highest abilities there would also be history, geography, dictation and grammar but all lessons were teacher led with a great deal of spoken repetition, learning by rote and committing information and religious tracts to memory.

There would have been a break in the middle of the morning and afternoon which Samuel and the other boys could spend in the yard or in a playroom

adjoining the school room in wet weather, and a lunch break. It may be that the boys also had some type of physical education since the opportunity for exercise was curtailed by living and learning on the same premises. Prayers would again be said at the start of afternoon lessons and at the end of the day.

Regular inspections by the committee were to be expected to assess the standard of learning to ensure that donations and subscriptions to the Orphanage were not being wasted. The boys would be quizzed on the content of their lessons and may have had their copy books inspected.

The boys would have attended church, possibly several times on a Sunday, as well as on Saints’ and Holy Days, and spent the rest of the day on Bible study. It is not known which church they attended. The Reverend Dalton, vicar of St Paul’s in Penn Road, was a trustee but that was quite a distance from Queen Street. Their walk down Queen Street would have taken them past Mr Solomon’s Clothing & Hat Mart, Mrs. Dallow’s milliners shop which stocked bonnets made from various materials, gloves and hosiery as well as ribbons, flowers, feathers and lace which could be used to refresh and restyle last year’s hats, Mr Sutton’s drugstore with its coloured bottles of tinctures and lotions on display, and Mr Jackson’s sweetshop where, no doubt they would have liked to linger despite it being closed on Sundays.

Queen Street was a main thoroughfare in 1850s Wolverhampton and would have been a bustling, busy street on weekdays with the smells and sounds of horses and the jangle of their harnesses pulling carriages, coaches, omnibuses and carts. The street was not paved at this time and, during summer months, people were employed to ‘water’ it to

## *Sally Burrows*

keep down the dust<sup>256</sup> but the air would have been full of smoke and smuts from the nearby foundries and swarms of flies attracted by the horse manure.

There is no record of whether the boys who still had family in Wolverhampton, were given the opportunity to visit them. Samuel's sister, Maria, married Joseph Porter, an Iron Brazier from Brickkiln Street, at St Paul's Church in August 1849 but we don't know if he was able to attend.

Eventually, two more boys and four girls were admitted to the orphanage and it remained in Queen Street until 1854/5. Samuel would have stayed there until he was 13 years of age in 1854, or possibly he may have had to leave in April 1853 when his mother remarried as this rule is included in later versions of Asylum regulations in 1899.<sup>257</sup> He would have been called upon to be of good conduct as he was given a Bible and a Prayer Book and a set of new clothes on his departure with the hope that he would become 'a useful member of society and a devoted and consistent Christian'.

On leaving Queen Street, Samuel went to live with his mother and stepfather, William W(h)essell, his little brother Charles and stepbrother Benjamin in Paradise Street. Samuel married Ellen Richardson in 1862 and they had a son, Ernest. However, Ellen died in 1866 aged 34, when Ernest was 3 years old. In 1868, Samuel married Keziah Humphreys and in 1871 they are living in Cleveland Street with Ernest and three younger children. Samuel's career progressed from coach painter to coach builder and by 1891 he has a coach building business in Dudley Road, Wolverhampton, and eight children. Samuel died in 1917 at the age of 76.

It was always John Lees intention that the building in Queen Street would be a temporary location for the Orphan Asylum as 'the foundation of one on a more extended scale'. In his inauguration speech, he declared his plan for a building large enough to accommodate sixty children within three years. In March 1852 he purchased two and a half acres of land at Goldthorn Hill, a Building Fund raised £6,500 and a Foundation stone was laid on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1853. The new orphanage could house 50 boys and 30 girls and was opened in June 1854; it is now The Royal Wolverhampton School.

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Wolverhampton Chronicle 03/04/1850

Find my Past Census records:  
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

<sup>256</sup> Wolverhampton Chronicle, 9 January 1850

<sup>257</sup> Wolverhampton Orphanage Report 1899, p.27, Wolverhampton City Archives, L373

# Chapter 13

## 46 and 55 Queen Street: The Post Office & Development of the Postal Service



By Janet Lowe

BY 1855 THE TRADE Directory for Wolverhampton lists a Post Office operating from 46 Queen Street with Henry Elwell serving as Post Master. Postal services in Wolverhampton did not originate in Queen Street but when Rowland Hill's postal reforms began to gain ground, Queen Street became the home to Wolverhampton's main post office.

The postal service was transformed over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Charles I established a postal service for public use in 1635. In those days, mail was typically transported by mail coach and the recipient paid postage rather than the sender. The cost depended on how far

the letter had travelled and the number of sheets of paper used. It was often extremely expensive. In 1898, W B Paley wrote an article for *The Gentleman's Magazine* in which he looked back on how costly postage had been.<sup>258</sup> In 1837, the cost of sending a 'single' letter 400 miles (e.g. from Edinburgh to London) was 1s 1d which is about £3.67 in today's values. A 'single' letter contained only one sheet of paper and weighed up to  $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce.<sup>259</sup>

Postage costs were often further increased, and delivery times lengthened, by the way in which the Post Office planned its routes.

*"... two letters, the one addressed to Highgate, and the other to Wolverhampton (120 miles further along the same coach road), and both posted in London at the same hour, the Highgate letter would be delivered last. .... letters between Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill were carried by a cross-post passing through Dudley. If a letter went the whole way, the postage was 1d.; but if it stopped short at Dudley, 4d. was charged."*<sup>260</sup>

Some Queen Street residents and business owners may have been so poor that they could not afford to pay the postage and the postman would be turned away without delivering the letter. The service was also open to abuse as Postal Historian Mike Bament explains;

*"Some families that were parted had simple pre-arranged codes that they would build into the address panels of their letters. Perhaps a "doubled-crossed" tee would mean that all the family were well; perhaps an "under-lined" word or an extra name slipped into the address*

<sup>258</sup> 'The Post Office and the Public in 1837', WB Paley, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, July-December 1837,

<https://archive.org/details/gentleman>, p. 590, accessed 7 November 2017.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Smyth, Eleanor C, Roland Hill; *The Story of a Great Reform* 1907, London, p. 50

*would impart some meaningful piece of news to the person reading the address panel. Having gleaned those little scraps of news about their loved ones, the recipient would simply hand back the letter to the carrier saying “Sorry, but I can’t afford it.”<sup>261</sup>*

In 1652, MPs voted themselves the right to receive or send letters free of charge. This privilege became the subject of widespread abuse. During the early 1830s, it was estimated that this abuse amounted to £36,000 per annum.<sup>262</sup> In summary, the postal service of the 1830's was beyond the means of many people and often unable to collect the revenue to which it was entitled even from those with the ability to pay. Reform was vital and was to be championed by a school teacher, Rowland Hill. Roland lived for a short time in Wolverhampton where he met his wife, Caroline Pearson.



*Rowland Hill – photo public domain*

<sup>261</sup> *Free Post*, The British Postal Museum and Archive Blog, Postal Heritage, <https://postalheritage.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/free-post>, accessed 7 November 2017

The two were married in St. Peter’s Church, Wolverhampton in 1827.

A decade later, having moved to London, Rowland Hill produced a pamphlet, ‘Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability’ which proposed numerous changes to the postal system. Most famous of these proposals, was that postage should be pre-paid by the sender at a rate of one penny for all letters weighing up to one ounce.

The proposals were placed before a Select Committee. Initially, it was unconvinced by the argument that cheaper postal costs would lead to more letters being posted and so prevent a loss in revenue. However, the press and public were much more supportive of the plan. On 5 April 1839, The John O’Groats Journal urged that petitions be sent ‘from every city, hamlet, and parish in the kingdom’, echoing the views of many up and down the country. Writing in April 1840;

*“The plan of Mr Rowland Hill of a uniform penny postage, is one which, on being properly considered, we find it no easy matter to find any valid objections against. Without a single exception, the evidence given by every witness examined before the committee seems to have been in favour of such an arrangement. An increase in correspondence, if the postage were fixed at a penny each letter, would more than counterbalance a reduction on the present rates, and would give the system that fair trial which the plan recommended by the Postage Committee, of two pence never can.”<sup>263</sup>*

In all, 320 petitions supporting the introduction of the penny post were received over the course of the parliament.<sup>264</sup> Ultimately, public option

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> John O’Groats Journal, Friday 5 April 1839, p. 29

<sup>264</sup> Bradford Observer, 4 April 1839

held sway and a uniform rate of one penny was approved on 15 August 1839. Under the new arrangements, residents of Queen Street could either buy a stamped letter sheet or a stamp.

In her book, Rowland Hill, the Story of a Great Reform, Eleanor Caroline Smyth, Hill's daughter, explained how her father evolved his idea for a stamp;

*"Rowland Hill's first proposal in regard to the postage stamps was that they and the envelopes should be of one piece, the stamps being printed on the envelopes. But some days later the convenience of making the stamp separate, and therefore adhesive, occurred to him; and he at once proposed its use, describing it, as we have seen, as "a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with glutinous wash..."*<sup>265</sup>

The stamp was to become known as the Penny Black. It was designed by William Wydon who based it on a medal that he struck to celebrate Princess Victoria's first visit to London in 1837. In making the medal, he used a sketch by Henry Corbould which depicted the princess aged 15. The dyes for the stamp were engraved by Charles and Frederic Heath.<sup>266</sup> The design made no reference to the name of the country because at that time Victoria was herself a representation of Great Britain.<sup>267</sup>

The letter sheet and the Penny Black were introduced on 6 May 1840. Stamps signifying paid postage for a letter weighing up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce anywhere inland were sold in sheets of 240 at the cost of £1. There were initial concerns

expressed in the press that the stamp would be liable to forgery. In the event the black ink of the stamp absorbed the red ink of the postal frank opening the way for the stamp to be re-used. A little more than a year later, in August 1841, the frank was changed to black, the penny black discontinued and replaced by a penny red.<sup>268</sup>



In the early 1870s, the Post Office at 46 Queen Street relocated further up the street to no. 55. In 1872, an article in the Birmingham Daily Post announced the

opening of a new Post Office.<sup>269</sup> The article confirmed that the original building numbered 55, had been "the residence of the late Mr Dehane, Surgeon...". It was designed by architect James Williams, who had designed many other post offices around the country. The Birmingham Daily Post described the architectural style as "bold Graeco-Italian" with an elevation of 60 feet, a very serviceable basement and service desks of polished mahogany.<sup>270</sup>

Early photographs of 55 Queen Street reveal the presence of a Victorian post box. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Rowland Hill explored various ways of make posting letters easier. He wanted to find a way which did not require people to take their letters to either the nearest post office or post inn for dispatch. Hoping to find a way forward, he sent

<sup>265</sup> Smyth, Eleanor C, Roland Hill; The Story of a Great Reform 1907, London, p. 50

<sup>266</sup> The World Encyclopaedia of Stamps and Stamp Collecting (2005)

<sup>267</sup> The Penny Black; the turbulent history of the short-lived stamp,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/>

11576260/Penny-Black-the-turbulent-history-of-the-short-lived-stamp.html, accessed 8

November 2017

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Find My Past

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

Anthony Trollope, Surveyor for the Western District, to the Channel Islands to find a solution. It is believed that Trollope may have first seen pillar boxes used in Europe and concluded that they would also provide the solution in Britain. The first pillar box in Britain was introduced to the Channel Isles on 23 November 1852 while the first main land pillar boxes was installed in Carlisle the following year.

Initially the shape, size and colour of pillar boxes varied but in 1874, pillar boxes in London were painted red and this colour applied to pillar boxes across the country over the following decade. The design of the pillar box on Queen Street provides clues as to when it was located there. The royal cipher 'VR' is inscribed on the side of the box and the words 'POST OFFICE' appears on either side of the horizontal letter opening. We know that cylindrical shaped boxes began to appear in 1879 while the royal cipher was introduced into the design in 1887. Consequently, it is believed that the Queen Street pillar box dates from c. 1890.<sup>271</sup> Today, a post box still sits outside the Express & Star buildings, although not in its original position.

In 1897, the post office relocated to Lichfield Street and 55 Queen Street became a wine and spirit stores run by Henry Plant & Sons. No. 55 housed various occupants over the years until it was purchased by the Graham family in the 1960s. The property was eventually incorporated into the Express & Star building, covering numbers 51 to 55. The Lichfield Street post office operated as Wolverhampton's chief office from 1897 until the 1960s when it was sold and refurbished as offices and teaching rooms.<sup>272</sup> Today, the Lichfield Street

building bears a blue plaque honouring the legacy of Sir Rowland Hill.



*Photo authors own*

<sup>271</sup> Whitehouse, S, WOHER 8626

<sup>272</sup> See Jackie Harrisons Essay on 51-55 Queen Street in this Publication

## Chapter 14

### 49 Queen Street: Henri Gascon's Photography Shop



By Michelle Nicholls

**H**enri Membrey Gascon was a celebrated local photographer who occupied number 49 Queen Street during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>273</sup> The spelling of his name varies according to the source. He is sometimes recorded as 'Henrie' and in 1900, a trade directory references a 'Mr Gasconi'.<sup>274</sup> The surname implies French ancestry, but this has proved tricky to verify.

Henri married Ellen Cecelia Brennan, affectionately known as Nellie, in 1893.<sup>275</sup> The couple went onto have several children including Dorothy

Helena Gascon in 1894 and Henri Lucian Gascon in 1897.<sup>276</sup>

Between 1896 and 1898, Gascon ran a photography business from 41 Darlington Street. From 1900, Gascon is recorded as trading from 49 Queen Street where he remained until 1906.<sup>277</sup>

The family leave England for the US on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1907 and they appear in a passenger list for that year for the White Star Line's R.M.S. 'Baltic'.<sup>278</sup> The captain of The Baltic was none other than E J Smith who went on to captain the Titanic. In 1910, the US Federal Census, lists Henri as owning his own photography business in the state of Kansas.<sup>279</sup> Henri continued to reside in Kansas until his death in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>273</sup> This is his full name provided in 1893 on the England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915.

<sup>274</sup> 1900 Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire, Ancestry Website.

<sup>275</sup> England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, 1893, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, Vol 6b, Page 898, Ancestry website.

<sup>276</sup> England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915, 1894, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, Vol 6b, pp. 546 & 772, Ancestry website.

<sup>277</sup> 1900 & 1906 Red Book, Ancestry Website

<sup>278</sup> Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960, Ancestry Website

<sup>279</sup> US Federal Census, 1910



# Chapter 15

## 51-55 Queen Street: The Express and Star



By Jackie Harrison

THE EXPRESS AND STAR newspaper was co-founded by Thomas Graham and fellow Scot and steel magnate Andrew Carnegie in 1884.<sup>280</sup> During the 1860s and onwards, Graham, who was by then living in Wolverhampton, became a successful businessman and was heavily involved in civic affairs. Both Graham and Carnegie were strong liberals and Graham was agitated by the rather timid conservative line taken by the Wolverhampton newspaper, The Evening Express. So, in 1882, his friend Carnegie and a fellow liberal, Samuel Storey, bought an existing Wolverhampton newspaper called the Evening Star in order to promote a counter point view.

<sup>280</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

The new Star was a success and so the following year Carnegie, Storey and William Horton created the Midland News Association (MNA), buying up and/or investing in a number of other local newspapers.<sup>281</sup> In 1884, the MNA bought out the Evening Express for £20,000 and in July of the same year, the Evening Express and the Evening Star were merged into a single newspaper called the Evening Express and Star. By 1902 Carnegie had pulled out of the Wolverhampton venture and over time, Graham paid off other MNA partners to become printer, publisher and sole proprietor of MNA.<sup>282</sup>

Today, the Express and Star offices cover 51 to 55 Queen Street. All the individual buildings that make up the Express and Star were originally dwelling houses, as can be seen from the inhabitants recorded in various census records. It has proved difficult to discover exactly when each of the buildings was first erected, primarily because property deeds relating to original builds are not publicly available. All that can be said for certain, is that the first building erected on the south side was the Congregational Chapel in 1812/13.<sup>283</sup> A map, depicting sewer planning dated 1852, reveals that by that time, there were no vacant plots on the south side of the street thus indicating that numbers 51 to 55 must have been completed by then.<sup>284</sup> The buildings all came up to the pavement line and the aforementioned map and photographic evidence reveal

<sup>283</sup> Queen Street Congregational Chapel Manual, Wolverhampton City Archives, DX-286/6

<sup>284</sup> Sewer Planning Map, Wolverhampton City Archives, MAP/388a

the existence of rear gardens and railed-off frontages.<sup>285</sup>

Initially, the Express and Star headquarters operated from a late-Georgian-style building numbered 51 Queen Street. Sometimes quoted as being at both numbers 51 & 52, it seems likely that number 52 was not incorporated into the business until around 1920. The evidence for this can be found in census records and trade directories which indicate mixed residential and professional/office usage for number 52 up to that year.

The ten-yearly censuses from 1841 to 1881 sometimes record numbers 51 and 52 individually and sometimes bracket them together as a single address. The main residents over this period were a merchant family, surnamed Lewis, and several different medical practitioners. By the time we get to 1916, rates records show the owner(s) of number 52 as being "Grahams Representatives" but the occupants were Henry Pearson & Frederick Nightingale, whom the trade directories confirm as having been accountants.<sup>286</sup> Pearson later became the General Secretary of the Bilston Provident Building Society at the same address.<sup>287</sup> Strangely, the final residents recorded in the 1881 census do not fit the 'professional' profile for that side of the street at all, being a general labourer from Stourport and his wife.<sup>288</sup>

From 1884 onwards, the references identified at Wolverhampton City Archives for number 51 all relate to the Express & Star or the MNA, except for several in the 1960s which record Doctor G I Braine at number 51a. Number 53 shows the same mix of residential and

business use as numbers 51 and 52 in its pre-Express & Star days, the trades associated with it ranging through millinery, medical, legal, photographic, stationery and loans.

Around 1928, or shortly afterwards, the Express & Star was firmly operating across numbers 51 to 53 and those numbers became, and still are, the Head Office address for the newspaper. These buildings were all adapted late Georgian-style houses, but in 1934 they underwent a complete change of both their interiors and exteriors. Inside, the buildings were re-engineered to provide more work space suitable to a modern and ever-expanding business enterprise. The re-design included a showpiece library with bound volumes and photographic blocks, together with a telephone room and a pneumatic-tube messaging system.<sup>289</sup>

Externally, the buildings were redesigned to blend the three original facades into a single design. The design was that of local architect Henry Marcus Brown, of 45 Queen Street, and the building contractor was Wilson Lovatt, of another local firm. The crowning glory of the design was a tower with an arched tympanum containing a winged figure of Mercury, messenger of the gods. It was produced as a single piece of cast stone from a model by renowned sculptor Robert Jackson Emerson who reputedly used the son of a local doctor as his model.<sup>290</sup> Emerson's Mercury sculpture stands over a cornice supported by 2 Ionic columns. A dado of black granite runs the length of the 1934 construction and a bronze clock was mounted on the front of the building. Emerson had been

<sup>285</sup> Photograph, Wolverhampton City Archives, P/6030

<sup>286</sup> Rates, Wolverhampton City Archives, FM90

<sup>287</sup> Spennells Directory, Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire, Staffordshire Directory, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>288</sup> Census, Various

<sup>289</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

appointed to the Wolverhampton School of Art in 1910 and was to become a good friend of Norvall (known as Norrie) Graham. In 1941 Norrie built Emerson a studio at the rear of the Express & Star premises in Queen Street with access from Castle Street.<sup>291</sup>

although the 20<sup>th</sup> century appears to have been characterised more by business references than residential ones. Number 55 had the distinction of being Wolverhampton's main Post Office when it relocated there from number 46 Queen Street in the early 1870s.



*Photo : Express and Star.*

**FOR OUR NEW OFFICES.—**Mr. R. J. Emerson, R.B.S., at work on the symbolical design which will occupy a prominent position over the main entrance to the new head offices of the "Express and Star," now in course of construction in Queen-street, Wolverhampton.

*Emerson making the Mercury Frieze, Express and Star July 3 1934 – Photo courtesy of Rebecca Taylor*

It wasn't until 1962 that the Graham family sought to incorporate numbers 54 and 55 to the Express and Star premises. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century these properties followed the familiar pattern of being both residential and business addresses for professional people – e.g. merchants, medical practitioners and solicitors,

It remained the main Post Office until 1897 when that institution moved to Lichfield Street.<sup>292</sup>

An article in the Birmingham Daily Post of 26 October 1872 announced the opening of the new Post office.<sup>293</sup> The article confirmed that the original building, numbered 55, had been the residence of the late Mr Dehane, a

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> The Book of Wolverhampton,  
Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>293</sup> Find My past

## *Jackie Harrison*

surgeon. The building was designed by architect James Williams, who had designed many other post offices around the country, and the Birmingham Daily Post described the architectural style as “bold Graeco-Italian” with an elevation of 60 feet, a very serviceable basement and service desks of polished mahogany.<sup>294</sup> Reminiscent of its time as a post office, a Victorian post box is still situated outside the Express & Star buildings, although not in its original position. Unfortunately, it is sealed off and no longer in use.

A later and better known long-term occupier of no. 55 was W Butler & Co Ltd. In 1961 the building was briefly the home of Wolverhampton Corporation

Transport Social Club and the Wolverhampton & District Entertainers Club.<sup>295</sup> The Graham family purchased no. 55 in 1962. A new building was erected and opened in 1965 with a marble lined hall.<sup>296</sup> The Express & Star newspaper is the longest enduring business enterprise in Queen Street having been there in one form or another from 1884 to the present day – a grand total of 133 years.



*The Express and Star – Photo courtesy of Rebecca Taylor*

<sup>294</sup> British Post Office Architects, <http://britishpostofficearchitects.weebly.com/1872---queen-street.html>, Accessed 25 June 2018

<sup>295</sup> Kelly's Directory of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>296</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

# Chapter 16

## Queen Street and the Wolverhampton Suffragettes



By Michelle Nicholls

THE NATIONAL UNION of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), otherwise known as the Suffragists, was founded in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century to advance the rights of women through peaceful and legal means. From 1904, a Wolverhampton branch was known to exist and chaired by Clara Winifrede Graham who happened to be the wife of Thomas Graham, owner of the Express and Star Newspaper which operated from 51 Queen Street. It is well documented that the women of Wolverhampton played an important part in the story of women's suffrage. It is less known that Queen Street acted as a vibrant hub of suffrage activity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Annual reports, housed at Wolverhampton City Archives, reveal that in 1909, a total of six meetings were

held at 52 Queen Street. The 6 meetings are described as 'at home' meaning that the premises probably belonged to someone within the branch although this has proved difficult to confirm due to gaps in the historical record.<sup>297</sup> We do know that by 1916, no. 52 was owned by the Graham family. Therefore, it is possible that the property came into Graham family ownership slightly earlier and the space subsequently loaned to the group by Mrs. Graham who held the prominent position of 'Vice-President' within the Wolverhampton branch.

Although the annual reports tell us when and where these meetings took place, they reveal little of the women who attended the meetings. Who were they? What inspired them to join the suffrage movement? Did they attend marches and other national events? Did they meet with any prominent suffragettes such as the Pankhursts? Though we may not be able to answer these questions, it is fascinating to think of the women from the Suffrage Society meeting at 52 Queen Street and playing their part in the fight for women's suffrage.

The iconic Wolverhampton suffragette photograph was originally thought to have been taken in Queen Street although further research has revealed that this is now unlikely.<sup>298</sup> The image captures members of the Women's Freedom League which were a militant splinter group within the suffrage movement. Wolverhampton residents may be familiar with the story of Emma Sproson or 'Red Emma' who was a prominent member of this group.

The 1918 Representation of the People Act, which extended the right of suffrage to women aged 30 and above (with a

<sup>297</sup> Annual Reports, Wolverhampton City Archives

<sup>298</sup> Photograph, Wolverhampton City Archives

*Michelle Nicholls*

property qualification), introduced 8.5 million more voters into the system. Sadly, Mrs. Clara Graham passed away in 1923, five years before the Equal Franchise Act which extended the right to all women over the age of 21. This Act increased the number of women eligible to vote to 15 million and most importantly, gave them the same voting rights as men.



*The Women's Freedom League campaigning for votes for women in Wolverhampton. Courtesy of Wolverhampton City Archives*

# Chapter 17

## Queen Street and the Second World War



By Janet Lowe

WHEN WAR WAS declared on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, many of those living and working in Wolverhampton could still remember the Great War which had occurred no less than twenty-one years previously. Some may have recalled the dark night in January 1916 when a Zeppelin bombed Union Street, killing 14 people.<sup>299</sup> This new war would cause death and destruction on an unprecedented scale and for those living and working in Wolverhampton's Queen Street, wartime conditions would have a significant impact on their day-to-day lives.

### *Call-Up*

When war broke out in September 1939, thousands of young British men sought out their local recruitment office to enlist. In Wolverhampton, an Army Recruitment Office had operated from

43a Queen Street since 1921 and was conveniently located close to the centre of town. During the Second World War, Queen Street was likely a buzzing hub of wartime activity with many young recruits and army personnel passing through. The National Service (Armed Forces) Act immediately imposed conscription on all males between the ages of 18 and 41. By the end of 1939, more than 1.5 million men had been conscripted to join the British armed forces.

In 1941, a second National Service Act was introduced and widened the scope of conscription making all unmarried women and all childless widows between the ages of 20 and 30 liable to call-up. Men under the age of 51 also became eligible for military service and for National Service up to the age of 60. Conscription depleted many businesses of their male employees and left families without the support of their husbands, fathers and sons. The broadening of conscription also engaged new demographics in the war effort. For businesses in Queen Street, they had to learn how to adapt to these changes in the workforce if they stood any chance of surviving the war years.

### *Air Raid Precautions (ARP)*

After the First World War, military experts predicted that in any future war, there would be large-scale bombing of the civilian population. To prepare for this eventuality, an Air Raid Warden's Service was created in 1937, or Civil Defence as it was later known. ARP Wardens typically spent their time enforcing the blackout and helping people into the air raid shelters. Wolverhampton's ARP Committee divided the borough into 15 districts and

<sup>299</sup> The Birmingham Post,  
<http://www.birminghampost.co.uk/lifestyle/nos>

talgia/zeppelins-brought-death-destruction-black-7534416, Accessed 10 January 2018

appointed 258 ARP Wardens. Each district had a Chief Warden and they provided training on the topics of gas attacks, respirators and the importance of protective clothing.

ARP Committee minutes reveal that there were several air raid shelters located in Wolverhampton's Queen Street. The basement of no. 21 provided shelter for up to 60 people while further up the street, the front half of the basement at no. 30 and the whole of the basement at 31A could accommodate up to 260 people.<sup>300</sup> The Express and Star, situated at 51 Queen Street, had its own air raid shelter which it built at a cost of £587.<sup>301</sup> There is also some evidence to suggest that the Congregational Church planned a shelter large enough to accommodate up to 300 people.<sup>302</sup> Anderson Shelters were distributed free to householders who earned less than £5 a week. In February 1940, the Express & Star reported that the public were also able to buy their own air raid shelters:

*"Government ARP shelters can now be bought by Wolverhampton people who are not entitled to Anderson Shelters. They are available in sizes to accommodate 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10 people, and can be obtained on payment by instalments. The shelters must be sunk into the ground and covered in earth, and therefore only suitable for people who have gardens... A buyer will have to make their own arrangements for assembling the sections and erection of the shelter will be at his own expense."*<sup>303</sup>

In Shelters and Black Out, Wolverhampton Remembered, Lizzie

<sup>300</sup> Air Raid Precautions Committee 1937-42, Wolverhampton City Archives, WOL-C-ARP

<sup>301</sup> Rhodes, Peter, The Loaded Hour, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>302</sup> The History of Wolverhampton, the City and its People,

<http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.uk/people>

Attwood describes her experience of air raid shelters during the war:

*"The shelters in our area were musty and damp and we didn't feel safe in them despite the assurance of the local ARP. Dad made an underground shelter made from railway sleepers. He had corrugated sheeting above but he never made a drainage system so when it rained we all sat there with our legs deep in muddy water in winter time. We had a flower pot with a candle in letting out a bit of light through the whole."*<sup>304</sup>

#### *The Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard)*

In May 1940, the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden, sought volunteers between the ages of 17 and 65 to enrol in a new force, the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). Within six weeks of the appeal, 250,000 men had volunteered; ten times more than the War Office had expected. By July, nearly 1.5 million men had enrolled. This huge response meant that there were neither the uniforms nor sufficient weaponry for all the volunteers. It also meant that initial training was inadequate. On 23rd July 1940, the LDV's name was changed to the Home Guard and formal military training was introduced.

As the war progressed and the Home Guard's expertise developed, it became a crucial part of the country's civil defence. Units represented local residential areas or local employers which meant that the volunteers had excellent knowledge of the area and would recognise outsiders should the enemy seek to infiltrate the

/at\_war/ww2/home/shelter, accessed 30 January 2018

<sup>303</sup> Express & Star, 7 February 1940

<sup>304</sup> Shelters and Black Out, Wolverhampton Remembered, Wolverhampton City Archive, LS/0815

local community. The Express & Star, which was based in Queen Street, had its own unit. Over the course of the war, thirty members of the Express & Star served in the No. 7 Platoon of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Wolverhampton Battalion, led by the first editor of the newspaper.<sup>305</sup>

### *Preparing for Attack*

In 1939, drill exercises were organised to test Wolverhampton's civil defences. The Express & Star reported that among the incidents staged were three fires in the centre of town, damage to gas and water mains and wounded householders trapped under debris. Some of the incidents were quite spectacular and one imagines that the sound of 'exploding bombs' could be heard across the town.

According to the private and official schedule, two incidents occurred in each division totalling 36 overall. There were 17 'incidents without casualties', 18 places where 'unexploded bombs' were discovered and 19 'incidents' requiring ambulance men. One of the first 'incidents', at the junction of Queen's Square and Dudley Street, was visited by the Mayor and Mayoress. They were invited to observe the emergency response following an 'explosion' which involved numerous 'casualties'.<sup>306</sup>

### *Air Raids*

Although Wolverhampton fared significantly better than Birmingham or Coventry during the Blitz, it was not altogether immune to attack. The town's Register of Bomb Damage records bomb damage across the town however slight-

sometimes only logging the loss of one or two roof slates. It contains only one reference to damage having occurred in Queen Street. On 31 July 1942, the front plate glass window of Horne Brothers was broken at 3A and 4 Queen Street. The window was estimated to have been approximately 6 ft. 6 inches x 7 ft. 6 inches in size and the record confirmed no further damage beyond the broken window.<sup>307</sup>

### *Gas Attack*

A further concern for residents and businesses on Queen Street was the possibility of gas attack. At the beginning of the war, 140,000 gas masks were distributed across Wolverhampton. A further 2000 had been issued by February 1940, mainly because the face piece had become damaged by rubbing against the container or because of loss.<sup>308</sup> Children's masks were also distributed, although these were often brightly coloured to make them seem less intimidating. Minutes from an ARP Committee meeting reveal that around 2000 small respirators were issued to children between the ages of 2 and 3 years old in 1939. It was also noted that a further 250 were required to provide for all children within this age group.<sup>309</sup>

Like everyone else across the country, those living and working on Queen Street were encouraged to take their gas masks with them everywhere. Gas mask training and testing were on-going, and the practice could be especially distressing for young children. Lizzie Attwood recalls gas drills in Snow Hill,

<sup>305</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>306</sup> Express & Star, 27 November 1939

<sup>307</sup> Wolverhampton Council Registers of Bomb Damage 1940-42, Wolverhampton City Archive, DX-830/3

<sup>308</sup> Express & Star, 10 February 1940, p. 5

<sup>309</sup> Minutes, Wolverhampton City Archives, WOL-C-ARP

which is around five minutes' walk from Queen Street:

*"I remember having to stay at school for the gas drills and how I hated that experience. We would meet in the Community hut near Snow Hill and have hours of drill and gas mask practice. One of my school mates fainted since she couldn't breathe properly..."*<sup>310</sup>



*Photo © IWM (EQU 2706)*

### *The Fire Watch*

The incendiary bomb was of particular concern because it could cause extensive damage if not dealt with quickly and effectively. Government literature, distributed at the beginning of the war, explained how these bombs worked and

emphasised their ability to damage and injure:

*"When the fire bomb strikes a hard surface such as a tiled roof the impact operates a fuse which ignites the thermite core of the bomb. This burns at a very high temperature and quickly ignites the magnesium shell or casing which then burns fiercely with intense heat. There is some spluttering for about a minute during which burning metal may be thrown as far as 30 feet and will set fire to anything within reach."*<sup>311</sup>

The Air Raids Precautions (ARP) Act 1937, introduced the Emergency Fire Service Organisation (AFS). Fire watching posts were established and volunteers were trained and equipped to deal with fire outbreaks. By January 1941, all men between the ages of 16 and 60 had to register for part-time duty while women and youths below 16 were encouraged to volunteer. The following year, it became compulsory for women to enrol for fire guard duties.

Papers held at Wolverhampton City Archive pertaining to Nock & Joseland, a long established and reputable Estate Agents operating from 48 Queen Street, refer to two Queen Street residents. The first concerns a Mr N M Bates of 47 Queen Street. Correspondence reveals that in 1942, Mr Bates was exempted from fire watching duties at his employer's premises because he was already a Sub-leader in the residential district of Queen Street and nearby Bilston Street. The other

<sup>310</sup> 'Shelters and Black Out, Wolverhampton Remembered,' Wolverhampton City Archive, LS/0815

<sup>311</sup> Air Raids, What You must know, What You must do 1941, p. 15, Wolverhampton City Archive, DX-440/2/1-17

mention pertains to an Elizabeth Neeld of 48 Queen Street. Elizabeth happened to reside at the premises of Nock & Joseland where she was also employed as caretaker. Correspondence reveals that Elizabeth was exempted from fire watching due to her age which was 67.

The Express & Star also had fire watchers located on its roof. Wolverhampton was fortunate to escape the worst of the blitz, but this didn't make the role of the fire watchers any less important. In his book, *The Loaded Hour*, Peter Rhodes, observes:

*"Fire-watching on the roof of the Express and Star was a vital but uneventful business, although deeply depressing for those who took part. Night after night they witnessed the Dorniers and Heinkels throbbing northwards to tear the heart out of Liverpool and gazed impotently as a red glow in the sky marked the agony of Birmingham."*<sup>312</sup>

### First Aid Parties

It was recognised that in addition to ARP Wardens, first aid parties were also vital to minimise the adverse impact of bombing. On 24 October 1939, Wolverhampton's ARP Committee considered a letter from Arthur Mullins, of a Birmingham branch of the Civil Defence. In his letter, Mullins advocates building a reserve of trained first aid parties.<sup>313</sup> The Express & Star are known to have formed a first-aid party prior to the Second World War. They were reportedly so well trained, that they were nominated by the Civil Defence authorities as the official first-aid party in the area.<sup>314</sup>

### Blackout

The blackout began at sunset on the 1st September 1939 and ended on 23rd April 1945. Blackout curtains and blinds covered windows and brown paper was plastered over the windows to prevent light from escaping. Blackout rehearsals, to ensure the effectiveness of the blackout, were regularly held from 1938 until the outbreak of war. The blackout also resulted in street lighting being switched off and vehicle headlights masked so that they emitted no more than a crack of light. By the end of the first month of the war, 1130 road deaths were attributed to the blackout and pedestrians were encouraged to carry a newspaper or white handkerchief to make themselves visible.

The blackout was rigorously enforced in Wolverhampton and penalties were introduced to deter individuals from breaking it. On the 10th February 1940, the Express & Star contained the following warning to shopkeepers:

*"Another batch of local residents were summoned to W-ton today for failing to obscure lights during black-out hours, and fines ranging from 5/- to £1 were imposed. After hearing the evidence in one case against a shopkeeper who allowed the new regulation shop window light to be on after the shop had closed. Superintendent Crofts commented that numerous cautions had been given to shopkeepers on this point. ...Superintendent Crofts also referred to the vital importance of the black-out being strictly carried out in premises near such places as railways and power stations."*<sup>315</sup>

<sup>312</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>313</sup> Wolverhampton ARP Committee, Wolverhampton City Archive, WOL-C-ARP

<sup>314</sup> Rhodes, Peter, *The Loaded Hour*, Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/32

<sup>315</sup> Express & Star, 10 February 1940

Superintendent Crofts' last comment pertaining to the vital importance of effective blackouts near railways was particularly pertinent to Queen Street, which is situated just a short distance from the Wolverhampton Railway Station.

### *Rationing*

During the war, people learned how to live with shortages and the system of rationing. Bacon, butter, sugar, meat, tea, jam, cereal, biscuits, cheese, eggs, lard, and tinned and dried fruit were all rationed. There were also shortages of other food staples, including margarine. In 1941, clothing was also rationed. Coupons had to be collected before clothing could be bought and the spirit of 'make and mend' became the order of the day.

One can only imagine how retailers on Queen Street operated under such limited conditions, but census records reveal that a remarkable number of outfitters survived the war years. Freeman, Hardy & Willis ran a thriving boot and shoe shop during the war years from 41 Queen Street and many today will remember Snapes, which also managed to stay open during the war despite the rationing of tea.

In addition to rationing food and clothes, there was a need to control fuel consumption. On the 6th September 1939, the Express & Star reported arrangements for limiting fuel during the war:

*"Coal and lighting restrictions come into force tomorrow... Under the new order consumers will be allowed 75 percent of the coal, coke, electricity and*

*gas which they used in the corresponding quarter of the year ended June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1939. Ministry orders...gave local authorities powers to cut off gas and electricity where there are flagrant cases of householders using more than the 75 percent allowed."<sup>316</sup>*

Rationing was also applied to petrol. On 8 September 1939, The Daily Telegraph reported that petrol ration books were available on application from post offices and local taxation offices.<sup>317</sup> While it is perhaps unlikely that many Queen Street workers owned a motor car during the war, they likely felt the impact of fuel rationing anyway since suppliers may have struggled to ship their goods and deliveries may have been inconsistent as a result.

### *Leisure Time*

During the war, people of all ages and abilities were expected to participate and contribute in some way to the war effort. This placed certain limitations on leisure time and 'practical' hobbies were encouraged. Gardening became an increasingly popular past-time and a key aspect of the war effort. An article appeared in the Express & Star in February 1940 applauding the success of local allotment initiatives concluding that:

*"Every little helped, and although an allotment might be small the collective output was huge."<sup>318</sup>*

In winter months, the blackout no doubt deterred some people from venturing outside of the home after dark. Of course, there was no television in those days and so such hobbies as indoor photography and music making became popular.<sup>319</sup>

<sup>316</sup> Express & Star, 6 September 1939

<sup>317</sup> Daily Telegraph, 8 September 1939

<sup>318</sup> Express & Star, 27 February 1940

<sup>319</sup> Goodall, Felicity, Life During the Blackout, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/nov/01/blackout-britain-wartime>, Accessed 29 November 2018

When war was announced, several public places such as schools and cinemas were closed for a short time before 'normal' life resumed. Cinemas reopened in Wolverhampton on 9 September 1939. Two days later, ARP Committee debated the closure of cinemas in the event of an air raid warning. The Committee concluded:

*"...that to attempt to disperse the people during an air raid warning would mean, so far as the whole of the cinemas and places of entertainment were concerned, some 15,000 turned into the streets, and he [they] thought it better to take the risk of their remaining in the building."*<sup>320</sup>

This entry paints a picture of resilience in the face of unimaginable danger and a determination to continue as normal where possible.

In November 1939, the Express & Star reported on a dance held at the recently opened Civic Hall:

*"About 900 Wolverhampton people spent a brighter Saturday night last weekend than any since the war started. To the strains of a local dance band, they danced in the civic hall where the bright interior was in cheerful contrast to the outside gloom..."*<sup>321</sup>

Ultimately, Wolverhampton was very fortunate to avoid the horrendous bombing suffered by the likes of Birmingham and Coventry. For the most part, Queen Street emerged from the war largely unscathed but for those living and working in Queen Street, it would have been difficult to forget that a war was being waged around them. The presence of the Army Recruitment Office, the positioning of various air raid shelters and the location of the Express and Star newspaper offices made Queen

Street an important hub of wartime activity in Wolverhampton.

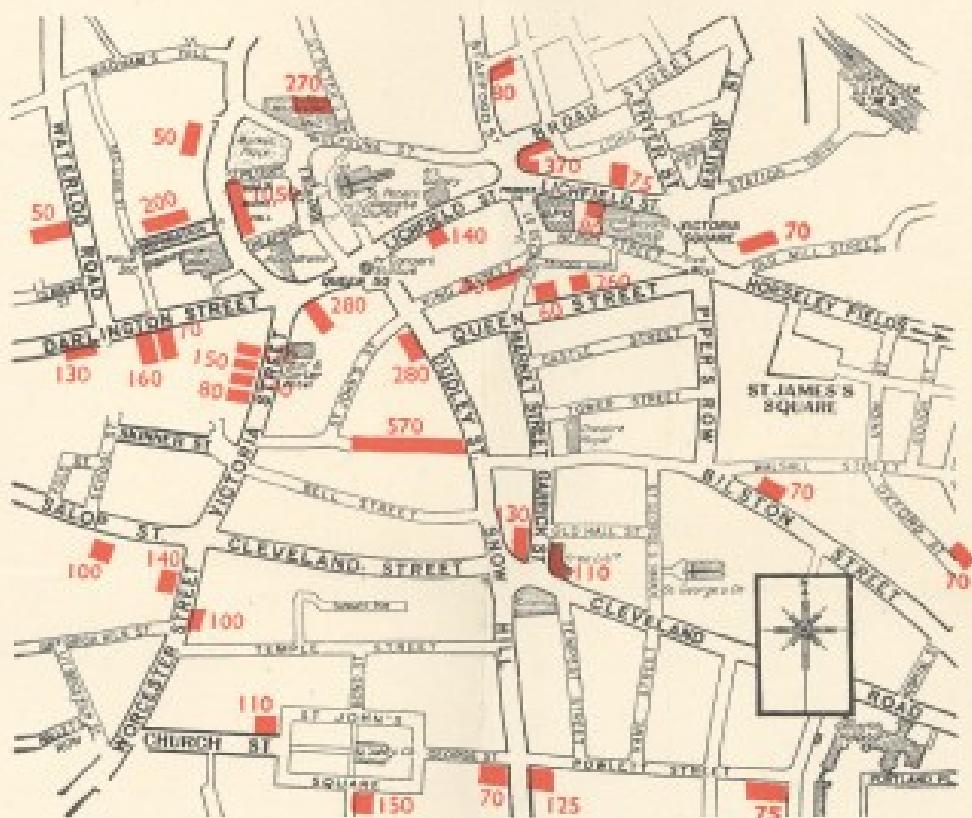
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<sup>320</sup> ARP Committee minutes 1937- 42,  
Wolverhampton City Archives, WOL-ARP-C

<sup>321</sup> Express & Star, 6 November 1939

COUNTY BOROUGH OF WOLVERHAMPTON.

**Position of Public Air Raid Shelters  
in Town Centre.**



Warnings of air raids will be given in town and suburban areas by sirens and hooters. The warning will be a series of short blasts, or a warbling or fluctuating signal which rises or falls every few seconds. The warning will also be given by Police or Air-Raid Wardens blowing short blasts on whistles.

Directly you hear any of these sounds you should take cover.

**REMEMBER — ANY SHELTER IS BETTER THAN BEING OUT IN THE OPEN.**

*Always carry this map with you so that you will have an immediate guide to the nearest Public Shelter in the Town Centre.*

E. TILLEY,  
*Controller.*

## Chapter 18

### 63 Queen Street: E F Allen and Sons – Piano Makers



Research provided by Jackie  
Harrison and Michelle Nicholls

**N**O 63 WAS PART OF the second phase of development of Queen Street. From 1869, the property was occupied by Edmund Allen who was described as a music professor and dealer. Allen appears to have occupied the site until around 1960. In 1961, Squires and Wells the furriers traded from the premises until they moved up the street to number 67, at which time, number 63 became a branch of the Home & Colonial Stores.

The following extract is taken from *A Business Review of Wolverhampton* published in 1897:

"An establishment which commends itself in no small degree to the music-loving public of Wolverhampton and the vicinity, is that of Messrs. E. F. Allen and Sons. This well-known and highly-popular firm has been before the public for upwards of half-a-century, and the

able and energetic manner in which, during this long period, the business has been conducted, reflects the highest credit upon the principals. At the chief establishment of the firm, 63 Queen Street, a huge stock of musical instruments is always maintained, the cosmopolitan nature of which gives to their numerous patrons a very wide choice.

Their Queen Street establishment is a very handsome one, comprising a shop of large dimensions with one good window, which shows to advantage the high-class nature of the instruments. Messrs. E. F. Allen and Sons are the sole agents for the celebrated pianoforte makers, Bechstein, Hopkinson, Ibach, Chappell, Challen, Rogers, Eavestaff, etc., and organs by such well-known houses as Estey, Karn, Clough and Warren, Bell, Smith, Mason and Hamlin, Kimball, Thomas, etc. Messrs. Allen and Sons' new style 18, a piano in Chippendale mahogany, is an instrument possessing artistic design, a rich and pure tone, perfect touch, and of the best workmanship. In this instrument obtains all the qualities which distinguish a really high-class piano from one of ordinary grade. A high-class piano at a low price is their style 13, which contains best front escapement, check action, pinned hammers, tone sustaining sound board, and every modern improvement.

Although we have singled out for especial mention these instruments, all the productions of Messrs. Allen and Sons are of the best English workmanship, unrivalled for tone and touch, and finished in every detail with the utmost care. In addition to these essential qualities, they are of special new design, in fact, they are the embodiment of an instrument which possesses all the best qualities and none of the bad. As an instance of the high esteem in which Messrs. Allen and Sons are regarded by the inhabitants of

Wolverhampton and the district, we could not do better than allude to their large and rapidly increasing patronage, a fact which speaks volumes for the satisfaction derived by their many clients. The instruments of this firm are found over a wide area, as may be surmised when we state that they have branches at Shrewsbury, Stafford, Birmingham, Cannock, West Bromwich, Walsall, etc. Their factory, located in Vane Street, Wolverhampton, where are also their commodious stables-accommodation for seven horses; besides being equipped with all the modern machinery requisite to the production of instruments of a high-class, find employment for a large staff of workmen, carefully selected for their skill in this particular handicraft. It affords us the utmost pleasure to give this representative firm a, brief notice in this Review of principal industrial and commercial concerns of Wolverhampton and the district, and the future welfare of the firm is fully assured."



The Queen Street Gateway Townscape Heritage Scheme is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the City of Wolverhampton Council.

The scheme provides grant assistance towards the cost of external repairs and enhancements to buildings of historic interest in Queen Street, and a programme of community engagement.

These booklets draw from research conducted by Friends of Wolverhampton Archives and Queen Street volunteers at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

