

Sedgley Urban District Council press cuttings 1947-66

A selection of press cuttings compiled by Sedgley Urban District Council from 1947-1966, now in Dudley Archives.

A trip to Dudley Archives in Coseley in April 2013 revealed three volumes of press cuttings originally salvaged from destruction by former employee **Mr Mervyn Law of Sedgley**, when Sedgley Urban District Council was abolished in 1966. He donated them to the Black Country Museum, who passed them on to Dudley Archives, where they can now be viewed by the public on request.

The collection reveals matters that were of concern to the authority, in the days when government was truly local and there was a far greater feeling of belonging to a community than there is today. Reports of council meetings, cycling proficiency schemes, road safety, council house building, the level of council rents, highways, local council elections, and latterly, the reorganisation of local government (that led ultimately to the authority's abolition in 1966), all figure prominently in the collection.

But the cuttings also reveal some prevailing national issues, eg the role of women in politics - and attempts to improve the nation's air quality through smoke controls.

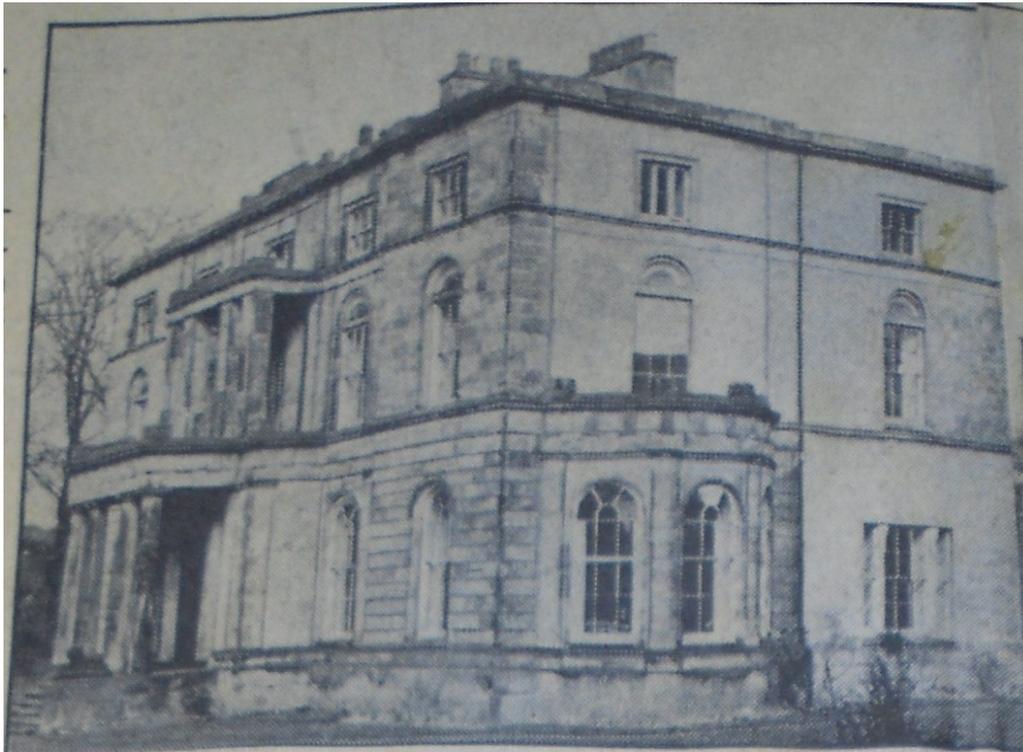
While, as might be expected, secular issues are the main themes of the collection, there are mentions of All Saints' church and its role in the village. Here is a selection of cuttings from the collection.

(Missing image - to be re-inserted)

Climbing the tower on Ascension Day. The tradition was clearly being carried out in the early 1950s. It would be interesting to know who 'little David' and his 'father in the choir' were - **older choir members** or Sedgley residents may be able to tell us!

Kennedy Slater tells us that in **Revd William Sargeant's** day in the 1950s, the choir and clergy only would ascend the tower, fully robed.

During **Revd Stanley Lloyd's** tenure in the 60s the tradition lapsed, to be revived when **Revd John Linford** took over in the 70s. By this time however the choir were joined by parishioners and robes were not obligatory for the choir.



Ellowes Hall, one of the most stately private residences in Sedgley. It is on the site of a building of similar name known to have existed in the reign of King Edward I. The present hall was built by an ironmaster and has since been the home of many prominent families.

Ellowes Hall before demolition. This rare view of Ellowes Hall in the 1950s appeared in a bigger article about Sedgley's history. The building was knocked down in the 1960s and the site was eventually developed into Ellowes Hall secondary school.



Sedgley Bull Ring in the 1950s. At the time, the site on the corner of Dean Street where Oliver Twist Hairdressers now is was Egginton's Pharmacy, and next door Egginton's the entrance to Egginton's restaurant/coffee bar (I'm told this may have been upstairs). Note the telephone box outside and the trolleybus wires in a complex arrangement around the roundabout. Apparently the trolleybuses frequently came off their lines here.



Councillor Hickling's pipe organ. A cutting from November 1953 reveals the pipe organ that Councillor A.J.R. Hickling bought and restored to working order for his home, Dormston House.



Archway to Coronation Gardens. Councillor Timmins presented this ornamental archway to the village to mark the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The archway to the gardens is still in situ - prior to 1936 the gardens belonged to Eliza Tinsley's former home, The Limes.

Everyone on this Sedgley farm has a record of long service

By ALLAN WEIR

(Our Agricultural Correspondent.)
It is 46 years since Miss May Simner first went to Brownswall Farm, Sedgley, owned in those days by Mr. Fred Wilkes. A year later a lad named Henry Fullwood started work on the farm training to become a waggoner at a wage in the region of 14d. a day.

Forty years ago they were joined by Miss Simner's brother, William, who began to look after the cattle for 15s. a week, and George Slater, rather younger than William, who also helped with the cattle at a weekly rate of between 7s. and 8s.

BUSY WOMAN

Today, if you call at Brownswall Farm, you are sure to find Miss Simner, now its owner, busily directing operations, and with her will be her only two workmen, William Simner, a young looking 26, and George Slater, an active 53. And until a week or so ago you would also have found Henry Fullwood, but he has now retired from farm work.

It is, indeed, a wonderful long



Seen discussing plans for the day's work at Brownswall Farm, Sedgley, are (left to right) Mr. William Simner, Mr. George Slater and Miss May Simner.

service record for any group of agricultural folk, and to commemorate such a record, Miss Simner recently presented the three men with a gold watch apiece.

As might be expected, things have changed considerably since those early days, and the farm, unfortunately, is now very much smaller than it was.

Just after the first world war, the late Mr. Wilkes, who died in 1942, had three farms in Sedgley, but at the time of his death there was only one, Brownswall, which then sported 170 acres. Miss Simner took over ownership, but the trouble was that Brownswall was in an area where building was a number one factor. Gradually, as a result of private sales and compulsory purchase orders, Miss Simner's land has now been whittled down to a mere 46 acres.

DAIRY HERD

Of these, 21 acres are down to corn, eight to potatoes, and the remainder provides grazing for a dairy herd of 15 head. And Miss Simner, with the help of her brother and George Slater, is determined to farm these remaining acres as long as it is humanly possible.

Equally determined to give of their

best in this respect are William and George, though, as they see more and more houses springing up around them, they sometimes wonder where it is all going to end.

And they look back on what they are pleased to call the good old days, when they had over 200 head of cattle to attend, both dairy and beef; to the times when they used to drive them to and from the market in Wolverhampton at all hours of the day and night along the then quiet roads between Sedgley and its rather larger neighbouring borough.

But they are easily adaptable, these two. This was proved when, in 1942, Miss Simner decided that tractors should be used on the farm. Though he had had no practical training with these machines before this, it fell to George to deal with the problem of working them. So, in his steady thorough manner he set about his task, learning as he went along.

Today there is little you can tell him about tractor work. That is the spirit that exists at Brownswall today. It is a spirit that has existed for many years. That is why the farm has such a fine record in the way of long-serving employees.

*Express and Star
 Wednesday September
 1956*

Brownswall Farm 1956. This cutting reveals something of the history of Brownswall Farm, now demolished. The building of the Brownswall Estate is referred to - although at this time it was still a working farm. It says in the article that the farm only consisted of 46 acres, from an original 170 acres farmed in 1942. May Simner and her brother William joined the farm around the time of the first war, when it was owned by George Wilkes. May later went on to own and run the farm after George Wilkes' death.



Councillor Mrs E.E. Williams. Many of the early press cuttings in the collection refer to Mrs Edith Williams who was quite remarkable in her day. In the late 40s she was chairman of the Housing Committee, until a battle on the council over the building of council houses led to her being deposed in 1948. She later re-emerged to become the leader of the whole council in 1951. In this 1961 article she has stepped down from council work (although she did stand again later) and asks why more women don't come forward to serve the community.

Extra Star 30/9/61

Sedgley doctor and his bride



DR. PETER JOHN BEKENN, of Sedgley, and Miss Judy-Gay Peat, step-daughter of Mr. K. E. Millard, managing director of a group of Midland companies, were married today at St. Chad and All Saints Church, Sedgley.

The bridegroom is the younger son of the late Dr. C. H. G. Bekenn, and Mrs. M. Bekenn, of Bloomfield House, Sedgley. Before taking over his father's practice at Sedgley, where he is in partnership with his uncle, he held posts at The Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton, and St. Bartholomew's, London, where he qualified.

Educated at the Oratory School, Woodcote, he is now surgeon to the Sedgley police division and medical officer of the Sedgley branch of the British Red Cross Society.

The bride is the only daughter of the late James Maxwell Peat, of Glasgow, and of Mrs. K. E. Millard, of Duntally, Compton. She is a niece of the late Sir George Peat, of Glasgow, and the Cayzer Shipping Line.

She was educated at Bartrum Gables, Broadstairs, Kent, and St. Andrew's University, where she studied modern languages.

FAN-SHAPED TRAIN
Given away by her step-father, the bride wore full-length sheath dress of shell pink satin, with a long fan-shaped train falling from the waist. Her head-dress was a coronet of pearls.

The two matrons of honour were Mrs. Angelina Wilkinson and Mrs. Aida Woodthorpe, and the bridesmaids were Miss Vanessa White and Miss Jane...

Dr Peter Bekenn. In September 1961 Dr Peter Bekenn married at St Chad's Catholic Church in Sedgley. In partnership with his uncle, he ran the GP practice in Sedgley that is now The Ridgeway surgery.



Cycling Proficiency. In the archive there are plenty of cuttings relating to the cycle training schemes run by the council at local schools, particularly at Dormston. The Head Girl of Dormston, Rosemary Chesworth is featured in this 1961 picture, along with Miss E Boville, the headmistress.

Dudley Herald
30/1/65

Historical farmhouse to be demolished



Coseley's oldest remaining building, the 17th century High Arcal farmhouse, which is to be demolished.

HIGH ARCAL Farmhouse, Coseley, believed to have sheltered Royalist troops during the siege of Dudley Castle in the 17th century, is to come to a very undignified end—by order of Sedgley Council.

At its meeting on Tuesday, the Council agreed that the 300-years-old building should be demolished, although it is listed as of architectural and historical interest.

The condition of the farmhouse has been deteriorating rapidly over the past few years, but

more particularly since its last tenant, 89-years-old Mr. Walter Parker, died two years ago.

Woodworm and dry rot have been eating their way into the ancient timbers for years but vandals have done even more damage while the building has been vacant. It now stands a virtual ruin.

Mr. K. R. F. Newton, Clerk of Sedgley Council, said this week that Ministry approval had been given for the demolition of the farmhouse, purchased by the Council just before the war, as

the only practicable course left open.

The question of restoring the farmhouse had been fully explored, but it was found that the building had deteriorated to such an extent that the cost would have been tremendous. All the planning authorities and the Ministry had agreed that demolition was the only solution left.

The possibility of transforming the stone-built farmhouse into a country club had been considered but cost of restoration caused the idea to be shelved.

30/1/65

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Demolition of High Arcal Farmhouse The council's decision to demolish High Arcal farmhouse is covered in this cutting from January 1965.

Express 25/8/64



OLD GRAVEYARD SETS A POSER

A GRAVEYARD, closed to further burials more than a century ago, is posing a problem for Sedgley Urban Council and the parish church. Today Councillor A. J. R. Hickling described the graveyard as "a depressing wilderness, useless alike to the living and the dead."

The graveyard is a forest of elderberries, brambles, and willow herb fronting two busy main roads.

Councillor Hickling said he had suggested the church authorities close the churchyard completely and have it levelled and returfed.

The stone vaults that remained, he said, could be used as architectural features, "and what is now mere desolation could be transformed into a delightful oasis."

He alleged, however, that all attempts to tidy up the graveyard was met with stubborn resistance by four or five families who still retained their family vaults there.

The vicar of All Saints' Church, Sedgley, the Rev. G. S. Lloyd, suggested that a solution could be found only by a meeting between the urban council, the parish church council and the Bishop of Lichfield's secretary.

LEGAL RIGHT

He said: "The churchyard was closed to further burials more than 100 years ago, but people who have family vaults have a legal right to be buried there."

"I have no right whatsoever to resist further burials in these vaults. Only the Home Secretary has the power to do this."

He agreed that the graveyard was in a "shocking" state, but stressed that it was a task too great for voluntary churchworkers to undertake.



Despite the overgrown condition of the rest of the graveyard, fresh flowers were found on this family vault.

Entering the overgrown graveyard at Sedgley.

Express by Star 1/9/64

Reply to M.P. on reorganisation

Vicar Street Graveyard. In this article from August 1964, the former All Saints' graveyard is seen with its gates still in place - the places where its top hinges were located can still be seen today, filled in with cement. By this time there had been no new burials for 100 years and the graveyard had become overgrown and derelict. The council was proposing that it should be levelled and turfed - which is essentially what has become of it although some memorials are still preserved in the new public park.

1/1/64. Express & Star.



END OF MANOR HOUSE

THE Manor House, Sedgley (above), which was originally scheduled as a building of architectural and historical interest, is coming down. Shopping redevelopment is proposed for the site.

Built, it is believed, about the middle of the 18th century, the Manor House has stood empty for two years since the departure of Dr. F. Chand, who had practised there since 1923.

Approval of proposals for a supermarket, about nine shops and maisonettes put forward by a Birmingham firm of developers, Newland Securities, Ltd., is being recommended by Sedgley Urban District Council's buildings and town planning committee.

An original scheme, considered last September, was turned down because it was felt that it could prejudice the central redevelopment of Sedgley, and possibly prevent or interfere with the proposed ring road.

The amended application is recommended for approval sub-

ject to demolition of the Manor House within three months, land being made available for the improvement of the adjoining footpath and the widening of High street, and the development being started within six months of planning permission.

B'hm Post

Sedgley Manor House The end of Sedgley Manor House that stood in High Street is documented in this cutting from January 1964. The house was the home of Dr Chand who had used it for his GP practice since 1923. The land was used to develop the shopping arcade that now stands there.

Dudley Herald 18/1/64

NEW EXCHANGE WILL MEAN MORE PHONES AND A BETTER SERVICE

BETTER telephone services and in the not-too-distant future more telephones. These are the bright promises of the G.P.O. for residents and businessmen covered by the Sedgley telephone exchange.

In the next few weeks, probably towards the end of March, the present exchange in Turl Street, Sedgley, will give way to a brand new exchange built at the rear of the present premises.

For some time the G.P.O. have received complaints from residents in Sedgley and other areas covered by the exchange about the delay in installing new telephones.

The simple and only answer to the complaints has been that the present exchange is "bursting at the seams" and not one more line could be added.

The old exchange was built about 25 years ago—the length of time which an exchange was expected to last—and was designed originally for about 800 subscribers. Later the exchange was enlarged to cater for 1,500 subscribers and has continued to grow ever since until the saturation point of 2,200 subscribers has been reached.

CHANGES IN NUMBERS

At the moment G.P.O. workmen are busily preparing for a big change-over day from the old exchange to the new.

Cables at present going into the old exchange have to be diverted with as little inconvenience as possible through the new exchange and back into the old so that on a given day the connection between the old and the new exchange can be severed and no inconvenience be felt by subscribers.

A spokesman for the G.P.O. said that a few people would have number changes but only in a minority of cases.

This would mean sending lists of new numbers. Anyone who rang a changed number would automatically be told to consult the list.



Above ground . . . G.P.O. technicians test circuits at a switchboard inside the new building. The workers are Alan Westwood and Bernard Frankham.



New telephone exchange. The construction of a new telephone exchange in Turl Street at the back of the existing exchange's building, to accommodate the expanding number of subscribers, is covered in this cutting from January 1964.



PC Alfred Tennant. In September 1964 PC Alfred Tennant of Sedgley Police received an award for his work in promoting road safety from the council's Road Safety committee - he expanded the local 'cycle trials' scheme from 50 to 500 children. When David Melhuish arrived at Sedgley in 1973, Arthur was Scenes of Crime Officer.

Express
Star 16/6/65

PRIEST'S ANNIVERSARY



PARISHIONERS at All Saints Church, Sedgley, packed the church hall last night at the end of a day in which their vicar, the Rev. G. S. Lloyd, celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination as a priest.

The vicar is pictured above with his wife and the Bishop of Stafford, the Rt. Rev. R. G. Clitherow, at last night's ceremony.

Mr. Lloyd, who came to Sedgley eight years ago, had earlier

conducted an evening service, at which the preacher was the Bishop of Stafford.

After receiving a cheque from parishioners, Mr. Lloyd cut the first slice of an anniversary cake, made by members of the church's social committee, which organised the evening.

Among the visitors were parishioners from Coseley, where Mr. Lloyd was once a curate, and the Rev. John Carr, who was best man at Mr. Lloyd's wedding 22 years ago.

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Revd Stanley Lloyd The 25th anniversary of Revd Lloyd's ordination as a priest was marked by a service at All Saints' in June 1965. By this time he had been vicar for 8 years, having taken over from Revd William Sargeant in 1957.

Thud, bang—then Awful Truth dawned...

DEMOLITION men worked with a will to bring the gable end of the old house crashing to earth in a cloud of dust.

The roof sagged wearily, rafters were left gaping to the sky, and part of the solid square building was reduced to a heap of rubble.

In a couple of hours hard work the demolition men, it seemed had done a good job.

But when Sedgley council officials were told about the work the Awful Truth dawned . . .

For the demolition men had been to the wrong building — and torn down the gable end and part of the front facade of an 18th century farmhouse noted for its historical and architectural value.

The demolition squad moved in at Gospel End House, which is the subject of a preservation order.

Planning permission has been

given to Castle Properties, Ltd., owners of the premises, to convert the farmhouse into a country club, following an assurance they would retain the dressed stone front.

But the demolition men of Clearway, of Wednesfield - road, Willenhall, should have gone to Sedgley Hall Farm, which is at the bottom of a lane nearly half-a-mile away.

Mr. A. Smart, principal of Cherrington and Smart, the Dudley firm of architects acting as agents for the company, said today: "A third of the fronting stonework has been damaged. Whatever we do now will be a patchy job."

LEGAL POSITION

At the moment the legal position was being investigated, said Mr. Smart.

A director of the demolition firm said today that it had been an "unfortunate chapter of coincidence."

He pointed out some of the coincidences which fate had played.

Both were farmhouses of about the same period and with somewhat similar design.

Both had barns and outbuildings.

Neither had nameplates.

Gospel End House, with its cracked and boarded windows

easily been mistaken for the job, and even the original price estimate had been for the wrong building.

A Sedgley Urban District Council official said the demolition contractors had been new to the area, and some sympathy could be felt for them.

He felt, however, the council was not in any way to blame.

A spokesman for Staffordshire County Council said there could be no question of Gospel End House being ordered to be knocked down without an inquiry being held by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.



Gospel End House — partly demolished by mistake.

Exposed after

Demolished 'in error'. The day another historic local building was destroyed is captured in this article from March 1966. Sent by the council to demolish Sedgley Hall Farm, the contractors demolished Gospel End Farm instead.

Compiled by Martin Jones, April 2013 – updated January 2016

Three volumes of press cuttings covering 1947-66, compiled by Sedgley Urban District Council, can be found at Dudley Archives, Tipton Road, Dudley, DY1 4SQ, Tel 01384 812770 - by the Black Country Museum - and may be viewed in the Search Room on request. Please note that the Archives are open till 7pm on Thursdays, and closed on Sundays and Mondays.