

LOCKED IN THE HOMES AND HEADS OF WOLVERTON AND NEW BRADWELL

Wolverton is famous for 'piano and herrings', 'Bonsor's pea soup in the mess room', 'the Pinfold boys in striped suits setting up 100 pints and more on the bar of the Engineer pub on a Friday lunchtime with change for a pound made up ready in paper bags', 'for the xx whitsun sports days when a shop in the works was decked and bars set up for the balls held in the evenings.'

Members of Stantonbury Campus Documentary Theatre Group have been piecing the story of Wolverton together using local records and archives but we are sure that there are important additions that are only to be found in the homes of Wolverton and New Bradwell people.

Old letters, a photo or two, perhaps a diary. These may be in your possession. They could be of vital importance in helping us to fill in the missing parts of the story. Perhaps you remember experiences of your parents or grand-parents that have been passed onto you or incidents in your own life that will help us.

The canals and railroads often run close together. No more so that at Wolverton where the railroad had to cross the Grand Junction Canal. The canal company's trade was threatened and the employees livelihood was at stake when the bill was passed giving the London and Birmingham Railway permission to build their railway. How could the canal people fight the coming of the railway? As far as we can ascertain, they fought it by preventing the railway gaining access to the land where the railway was to cross the canal and there are even allegations that the boatmen fought the navvies who were building the railway and destroyed some of the bridges over the canal built for the railway. How the boatmen must have laughed when the railway embankment was discovered on fire: Can anyone fill us in on these incidents?

As we searched in the writings about the Wolverton Works we discovered that Wolverton had been the centre for building the most technically advanced locomotives in Great Britain. They were designed by McConnell who was the then superintendent at Wolverton. Some of his engines produced in the 1850s were called 'Bloomers', And they are said to have outclassed anything else built in the country at that time. Can anyone tell us more about this man McConnell and the engines he built? Why is it that the London and North Western Railway Company sought to suppress all mention of McConnell and his famous engines in their records after 1862? What led up to the removal from Wolverton of all locomotive building and the replacement of work there by carriage building? Perhaps a member of your family moved to Crewe or came to Wolverton at that time? Can you tell us anything about them? What was it like to be in Wolverton at this time caught up in the reorganization of a large, powerful company?

The London and North Western Railway was a prosperous company. It was called 'The Premier Line'. In the 1880s a new superintendent was appointed at Wolverton.

A Mr. C. A. Parks, we are told 'He raised Wolverton to new heights of industrial efficiency'. During this time new royal coaches were designed and produced at Wolverton. What were the changes then that Mr. Parks introduced? Do you remember talking to him or hearing stories about him? This was the time of the height of the Railway Company's prosperity and the height of the railway era. But how did the people of Wolverton and New Bradwell view these times? What can you tell us about living and working at that time?

The First World War brought 'regional reorganization' of the railway companies and after the war the LMS was formed incorporating the LNWR. Mr. Parks lost his position. Do you remember the occasion? A new management was brought to bear on Wolverton. We have been told they said, 'Wolverton works is 50 years behind the times.' What changes they must have sought. What do you remember X of the time when Parks was superintendent, of the changes involved in war work and of the changes xx introduced by the new management of the LMS? What did you think of working in the works during those times?

Could you help us answer some of these intriguing questions that have been thrown up by our researches so far? We are sure the answers are to be found in the homes of Wolverton and New Bradwell. If you have any information please send it to us c/o Margaret Broadhurst, Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes.