

PRESS REPORTs 1950 – 1977 (Cliff Willetts)

Press Report Circa 1950

Sayings of the week

As far as I am concerned, this office will have no effect on me as a person and I shall still be one of the people. – Councilor C. Willetts, on his election as Mayor of Halesowen.

Press Report Circa 1950

Mayor makes history at little Chapel

Halesowen chain maker, Mayor Cou. C. Willetts, has held his second Civic service and for the first time in its history a modest little chapel at Cradley was the venue.

The Mayor and Mayoress, born next door to each other have attended Two Gates Ragged School since they were children.

When Coun. Willetts became mayor he decided to hold a civic service at the chapel, but in agreement with the wish of the council another service was held at the Halesowen Parish Church.

The chapel received its name when built in 1867 to accommodate poor people. There was an extension 40 years ago, but the original school did not cost a penny to build.

Bricks and material were given by local brickworks.

The mayor became a teacher when he was 16, and has been a Sunday school superintendent there for 25 years.

His 19-year old daughter is following in his footsteps as a local preacher.

Whenever Coun. Willetts cannot fulfil his preaching engagements his daughter deputises. The organ used at the chapel belonged once to a private house and was given to the school “to make room” in the house.

The service was conducted by the vicar of Cradley the Rev. R. W. Yaxley, and the address was given by Cannon J. T. Davies, rector of Halesowen.

Press Report Circa 1950

NUMBER-BUT NO ‘PHONE

Mercury Staff reporter

The day after his election as Mayor of Halesowen, Coun. Willetts applied for a telephone at his home at 46 Clent view road, Colley Gate. That was late May.

Now, in the middle of September the Mayor has a number (Cradley Heath 137), but still no telephone.

If he wishes to get in touch with the council house he has to leave his chain-making factory in Cradkey Heath and telephone from the library.

Press Report Circa 1950

“Joys” of office

Halesowen Mayor’s strenuous week

The Mayor of Halesowen (Cllr. C. Willetts, J.P.) is no doubt wishing that there is a Mayors union, governing the number of hours chief citizens are allowed to work.

When the “County Express” rang the Mayor on Thursday evening for a report of his activities for the week, he said, sadly: “I haven’t had a bite to eat since 2.15.” he had just returned after being engaged on Council and borough affairs.

This week parcels from overseas have been distributed to the Darby and Joans of the borough through the clubs, and the Mayor and Mayoress (Mrs. Willetts) have attended most of the distributions. On Tuesday afternoon and evening they were at the Halesowen and Hill And Cakemore clubs and on Thursday at Cradley Library watched the old people receive there gifts.

On Monday the Mayor was at Council comities (General Purposes and Finance). On Tuesday as well as his two visits to the Darby and Joan clubs, he attended he attended the meeting of the Highways and Town Planning Committee and later presided at the U.N.A. meeting at the Council Chamber. On Wednesday, he and the Mayoress attended the golden wedding celebration of a Mr. and Mrs. Spencer which was held at Colley Gate Darby and Joan Club. On Thursday he saw the parcels distributed, rushed back to the Council House to talk business with his secretary, then he interviewed six applicants for a council position, and then back to Cradley Library for a house allocation sub-committee with other members of the ward, which lasted for nearly four hours.

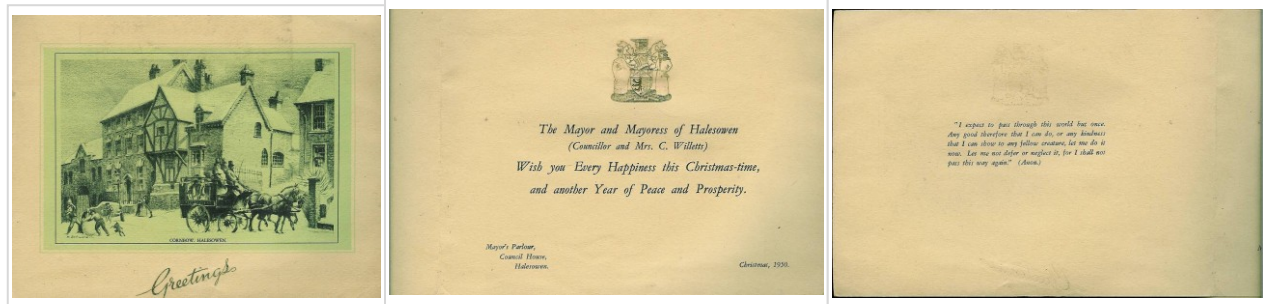
Last night he and the Mayoress were guests at the Shenstone Club annual dinner and dance at the King’s Highway.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

Last Duty as Mayor

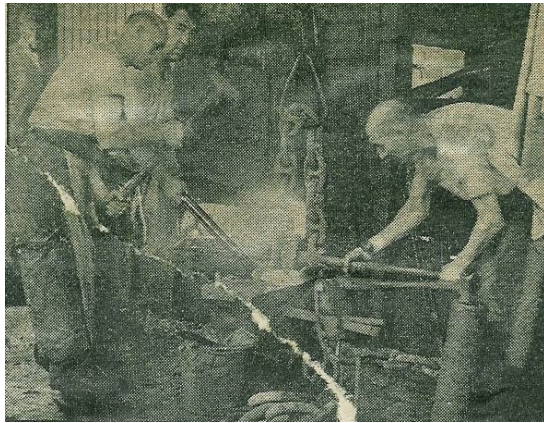


The Mayors Christmas Card 1950



Press Report Circa 1951

The past year's Mayor of Halesowen (Cllr. C. Willetts) had the best attendance at meetings of the Town Council and its committees.



Summoned to 111 Meetings, he attended no fewer than 108. second best was that of Cllr. F. D.

Woodall, who missed only four out of a possible 64. Cllr. P. Timmins was third on the list with 105 out of a possible 111 meetings, and others who missed fewer than 10 were Cllr. F. Higgs. (attended 86 out of 93) Ald. W. Hodgetts (92 out of 106).

Ald. H. J. Cox the "father" of the council (92 out of 100) and Cllr. Mrs R D Grove. (69 out of 78).

Photo Caption

A team of chainmakers at work in a factory at Cradley. On the left is the Mayor of Halesowen (Councillor C. Willetts). The manufacturers and workers association are considering the introduction of an apprenticeship scheme.

Councillor C. Willetts a chainmaker for 20 years, says that although, owing to the exacting nature work he would hesitate recommending young men to enter the trade. If he had his time over again he would not do anything else. "My father and mother were chainmakers, and I used to marvel at the incredible skill and craftsmanship," he added



April 1970

Freeman will challenge his former party

Two Halesowen aldermen whose terms expire this year, will be fighting for seats as councillors in next month's borough council elections.

Alderman Karl Kirton, leader of the councils labour group, is to fight 1

Liberal-held Cradley. In the neighbouring Belle Vale Ward, Alderman Cliff Willetts is challenging the defending Labour councillor.

A freeman of the borough, alderman Willetts has been on Halesowen Council for 35 years – joining when it was still an urban council. Aged 73, he split from the Labour Party six years ago.

All three Labour councillors are standing for re-election. The Tories are defending five seats, and the Liberals one.

There are nine contests in the eight wards because Tory councillor Ken Sawyer has resigned with a year of his term remaining. This means there will be two seats at Hill ward.

Belle Vale Ward- D. Skelding car worker (Lab) C, Willetts. Retired chain worker. (Ind)



Our illustration shows the Mayor of Halesowen, Councillor D. C. Herbert, J.P., with the town clerk, Mr. J. B. McCooke, and (l. to r.) Aldermen W. Hodgetts, F. L. Rose, C.B.E., J.P., and L. Harper, the medical officer of health (Dr. R. L. Corlett, M.D., Ch.B., D.P.H.) and Alderman C. Willetts after their admission as honorary freeman of the borough. All the aldermen are ex-Mayors of the borough, and their service with the council since the incorporation of the borough totals 116 years. Dr. Corlett has served in his present capacity since 1938.

From THE MUNICIPL REVIEW

November 1963



JANUARY 1976

HE CAN STILL DO IT

Proving recently that he hasn't forgotten the art of chainmaking was Councillor Cliff Willetts of Clent View Road, Cradley, when he visited the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings at Stoke Prior. There is a hearth and chain shop at the museum of the kind familiar to these parts, when the chainmaking industry was in its heyday. "I was asked to demonstrate how women used to make chain." Councillor Willetts said last week. "I spent 45 years chainmaking

at Cradley. I had a big hammer and used to make up to 1.1/2in stud. When I was mayor (of Halesowen) they came down from London to take a photograph of me at work. I have still got the photograph. They put it in the paper under the heading: 'Not only wears the chain, but makes it too!'" while he was at Avoncroft, Radio Birmingham made a recording of him describing how chain was made as he did the demonstration. Councillor Willetts is much in demand for his talks on the Black Country and his reminiscences of life and conditions 50 and years ago. "I like to be given threequarters of an hour so I can do justice to the subject," he remarked

Who rescued Cliff from the blizzard? January 1980

Caught in Monday's blizzard when on his way to the New Horne Colliery site at Haysech, intrepid walker 83-year-old Councillor Cliff Willetts realised he was not on the right rout as he found himself at Clancey's Belle Vale, Halesowen.

He was determined to get to the old colliery site where a planning site inspection had been arranged and it was this point that a lady whose name he would like to know came to his rescue.

She herself set off in the blizzard to walk the mile or so distance to contact anyone on the site in the hope they could provide some transport for the stranded councillor.

The lady found Councilor David Swaysland who promptly drove to Belle Vale and picked up his colleague.

Unknown to the two Councillors, the planning inspection visit had been cancelled at the last minute owing to the bad weather.

They waited around for 40 minutes before they decided to get back out of the cold.

Now, Councillor Willetts wants the lady who was such a Good Samaritan to get in touch with him.

"She went out of her way to help and I'd love to be able to thank her personally," he added.

Three-town merger is tragedy says retiring Halesowen alderman April 5th 1974

HALESOWEN BOROUGH Council's last meeting was marked by outspoken comments on the town's link-up with Dudley and Stourbridge, but criticism was tempered with confidence that Halesowen had an important part to play in shaping the future for the new Metropolitan District Authority.

Alderman Peter Scott in a speech that ended a career of 23 years' service on the council, described the three town link up "as a tragedy".

He told the crowded council chamber: "I do not believe that the re-organisation was either necessary or for the good of the people. I blame Governments for listening boffins who believe that theory is alright in practice".

Another member with 23 years' service to the council, Alderman Norman Garner (Liberal group leader) said it was the end of a momentous period during which Halesowen had grown all expectations,

Big changes

The face of the town had changed dramatically and he was proud to be associated with the development that had taken place.

"it is obvious that the progress that has been made in the town would not have been possible without the skill and foresight of the officers and the efficient staff we have been fortunate enough to have in Halesowen."

Alderman Garner said that many people were wondering what the future of Halesowen would be. While we are losing our identity as a town, I am sure we are not losing our identity or individuality as a community".

Halesowen had 12 elected representatives on the new Dudley District Authority, and he felt sure none of the three towns being merged would have cause to regret the link up.

NOT BETTER

On the same theme, Councillor Clifford Willetts (Independent Labour) who has served for 39 years in local government at Halesowen (he was a member of the urban district council a year before the town was granted its charter in 1936) said that he had asked if local government re-organisation was going to be a good thing.

“Speaking for myself, I have had to reply ‘no’ I don’t think that just because a thing is bigger it is better”.

Using a Black Country analogy, which he thought was appropriate, Councillor Willetts said: Rowley Rag is bigger than a diamond – but it is better”.

‘Listened to’

Councillor Gordon Bailey (Conservative) said the 12 representatives from Halesowen on the new Dudley Council had already made an impression. “Our opinions have been listened to – I know that as a member of the Joint Committee in the last 12 months”.

Councillor Jim Campion (Labour) agreed the new Halesowen was something to be proud of. But some things had been left undone that should have been done.

There was for instance a lack of facilities for the kind of work performed by Halesowen Operatic Society.

He hoped also the new authority would not make the mistakes that they had done like permitting office development which blocked out the parish church. “it will be the job of members of the new authority to see that Halesowen gets bigger and better and more enjoyable”.

Councillor Ashley Neale (Labour Group’s Leader) said he wanted to see Halesowen culture transferred to the new Dudley Authority.

Alderman Ken Johnson (Conservative) said they were lucky to have so many of their officers going to the new District Authority staff.

Councillor William Green (Labour) said that instead of eight representatives for Halesowen (at county level) there would be only two on the Metropolitan County Council. They all realised the size of the task ahead of them.

PRESENTATIONS

The honour of presenting the Mayor and Mayoress (Councillor and Mrs. Frank Price) with their past Mayor’s badge and past Mayoress’s brooch, went to Councillor Willetts as senior past mayor.

The councils ‘best thanks’ to Councillor and Mrs Price for their services to the borough over the past 10 months was moved by Alderman Garner, seconded by Alderman Dai Herbert.

There was a special presentation to mark the 26 ½ years’ service of Mrs Nan Bennett, a member of the Town Clerk’s staff, and Mayor’s secretary.

The Mayor handed to her on behalf of all past mayors a solid silver cream jug.

April 1974

Mayor-making ‘gets new council off on wrong foot’

In one of the most controversial Mayor-making ceremonies seen in Dudley Council Chamber, a Halesowen councillor claimed bitterly that the new Dudley Metropolitan Borough Authority was getting off on the wrong foot, by its election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Clifford Willetts, a representative of the Belle Vale and Cradley Ward, told the crowded chamber that he felt it was a bad start that the two chief citizens of the new authority

should both come from the old Dudley County Borough, leaving Stourbridge and Halesowen in the cold.

After the council had unanimously approved the election of Mrs. Mary Pargeter as their first Mayor, they were called upon to make their observations on the nomination of Councillor J. T. Wilson as Deputy Mayor.

It was then that Councillor Willetts, an Independent Socialist made his point.

He said he had nothing against Councillor Willson personally, and had, for a long time admired his work.

However, he felt the new Council was getting off on the wrong foot by electing both of the first citizens from Dudley.

There were a number of people in Stourbridge and Halesowen, he said, who had the ability to carry out the duties of Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

Councillor also protested that nine of the 11 standing committee chairmen also came from the old Dudley County Borough, while only two came from Stourbridge and Halesowen.

Councillor Mrs. Catherine Graham, a former Mayor of Halesowen also registered a protest and said that she felt the Conservatives had not.....

The retiring chairman of the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, which has run a shadow authority for the past 10 months, Councillor C. E. Clarke, was presented with a set of silver goblets on a silver tray to mark the work he has done.

The presentation, which was a complete surprise to Councillor Clarke, was made by the new Mayor,

Saturday, Jan 13 1963

Points of View

LOCAL PRIDE

Local pride is a fine thing, "Cradley Heath people are interested in breeding Whippets and Staffordshire bull terriers, while we in Cradley specialise in growing beautiful flowers. Such as roses and chrysanthemums" said Cradley born witness at the Boundaries Commission inquiry last week.

The powers that be will interfere with the basis for such local pride at their peril. Cradley folk, who "pride themselves on being Worcestershire people," and Cradley Heath folk who for other reasons, are proud of their Staffordshire origins, should be encouraged in this feeling for their own roots.

Properly channelled it can lead to a genuine growth of civic responsibility, a desire to serve the community and an awareness of the rights of others.

March 20th 1970

TWO UNAPOSED

At Halesowen two Conservative held seats – at Lapal and Central – are unopposed and Alderman Clifford Willetts (Ind Lab) also has a walk-over in Belle Vale.

October 30th 1965

Letters to the Editor

Sir,- Your article on the re-organisation of the local government boundaries, prompts one to recall the historic struggle Halesowen made for its independence as a borough, and to pay homage to those marshalled the human resources of the borough into a dynamic thing which made its impact on the legislative assembly of our land.

One remembers the spontaneous reaction of the people when news was received that Halesowen was to be incorporated in a new County Borough, with Rowley, Oldbury and Smethwick:- A fund to wage the fight was over subscribed, largely by small amounts contributed by great numbers of people; a public meeting in the Borough Hall was attended

by the largest number of people ever assembled in the borough for any purpose; a postal ballot was held and nearly all the papers were returned with almost 100 percent against the proposal; nearly every organisation in the borough wrote letters to the ministry, everyone against the proposal.

Later when the commission sat at Wolverhampton I was present most of the time and I recall Mr. Jack Somers, the spearhead of Halesowen's contingent. giving evidence. While learned council talked about conurbations, Mr. Somers pleaded for people. Ald. Garner emerged with triumph through searching cross-examination by these professional advocates. The officers of the County Council and Borough Council, how they fought for our borough! Only those who saw and heard could have a full conception of their accomplishments.

I recall too, the deep sense of relief when we heard that the Minister had decided that Halesowen would keep its present status. A Labour Minister of Local Government, with a completely unbiased mind, decided that we were right after all. Some paid a heavy and unnecessary price for their convictions and their consolation now must be in the knowledge that they believed they were right and had the courage to say so fearlessly. One wishes that Mrs Hans Swarts could add this final chapter to her book "the Halesowen Story."

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Cradley.

Cradley broadstone perpetuated

A link with Cradley's past will be commemorated as a result of approval having been given at Wednesday's meeting of Halesowen Town Council to name of Broadstone Avenue for a cul-de-sac off Foxcote Lane. Ald. Cliff. Willetts who has lived in the district all his life, gave his full support. A broadstone near to Foxcote Lane was once a landmark, but it has now been obliterated owing to the resurfacing of the land. Ald. F. W. Scott said it was an excellent idea to "perpetuate the culture of Cradley."

Cllr. A. Whithouse (the Deputy Mayor), who represents the Ward was also in full favour of a name which had local significance. "We have Spring Street and the springs have dried up, hills and the hills have been levelled out,- I hope now the name will be relative to the street" he remarked.

August 28 1970

Letters to the Editor

Under-occupied houses

Sir,- I am sure Mrs. Beasley means well but there are other aspects to the problem of under-occupied dwellings.

To compulsorily move people may be economically advantageous but the human misery and heartbreaks it can cause are incalculable. A review of the 64 dwellings in this locality built in 1937 shows that there are 35 pensioner tenants and 22 on the threshold. About 40 are original tenants which means they have occupied these dwellings for 33 years. Their children were born there and have left and now these people spend their twilight years with their memories. I know of only one case where the tenant wishes to move and this is for purely domestic reasons. Uncultivated gardens are not confined to these people. Last year a gentleman in his 80' won the premier award for an immaculately kept garden.

Mrs. Beasley dose have a point about baths but modern medical aids are are making it easier for them to be used. May I respectfully sugest that the tag "old people" be dropped. It is used no fewer than seven times in her letter. Perhaps a more dignified phrase like "people in their golden years" would be more in keeping with modern life.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Cradley

Evening Mail

March 1974

God help you: council father

God help all those who suffer under the new Dudley District Council, the “father” of Halesowen Council told members of the public.

Councillor Clifford Willetts, a freeman of the town and a member of the council since Halesowen Became a borough in 1963, (1936) was speaking at the last meeting of Halesowen Council.

Halesowen disappears on Monday under local government reorganisation and will be replaced by the new Dudley District Council.

Coun. Willetts said: “No one wanted local government reorganisation, but we have got it.”

He likened the start of the new council to the launching of a new ship when someone says “God Bless Her and all who sail in her.”

“but what I am saying is God help this authority and all who suffer under her.” He said.

But another Halesowen Councillor, Gordon Bailey told members of the council and the public at the meeting that already Halesowen ‘s voice has been heard on the new authority.

Evening Mail

January 4th 1968

Why ‘old aged’ pensioners? asks jubilant alderman

Alderman Clifford Willetts, the 71-year “young” senior member of Halesowen Borough Council returned home from a Council meeting the jubilant victor of his first round battle in support of fellow-pensioners.

He had persuaded the Council to drop the title, “old age”, in a committee reference to pensioners, and substitute the word “retirement.”

GIVING THE LEAD

Today just before he set out for another busy session of meetings at Worcester, the former Halesowen Mayor said; “Now I have given the lead I hope other pensioners will follow suit. We want this reference to us being “old aged” dropped from our language.”

He went on “Why inflict these two words on people who are pensioners? What about the sprightly women who qualify for pension but who are anything else but “old-aged.”



Ald. Willetts

Ald. Willetts, who has served on Halesowen Council continuously since 1935 lives at Two Gates Lane, (sic) Cradley.

Until retirement he worked all his life as a chainmaker and is still one of the busiest men in the area. Apart from his local Council and Worcestershire County Council work, he sits on numerous committees, and is Superintendent of Two Gates Ragged School.

The only point against Ald. Willetts’ suggestion came from Alderman Peter Scott, he said the words “old aged” had been put in for a sound reason. Some pensioners, for instance those coming out of the armed forces were young.

THE CIRCULAR

August 1972

Dear sir,

The photograph of Quarry Bank Labour Club bowlers brought back memories to many people, myself included. The photograph of the members of Cradley Labour Club, met Quarry Bank in the final of the Jack Penn Cup. This was the second time Cradley Labour Club won it and made it their own property. There were seven bowlers on each side.

Cradley's team was Cllr. C. Willetts, E. Homer, W. Griffin, H. Stokes, W. Lipton? (Tipton), S. Cooper and Sam Willetts. The latter is not included in the photograph owing to illness. He was last on to bowl with the scores equal.

He won his end comfortably against Jack Round (in the Quarry Bank Photograph). Thought this might be of interest to your ever increasing number of readers. I respectfully send my good wishes to the success of your paper, which I am sure, is being read with pleasure over the Black Country. It all helps to keep the Old Black Country in the picture. Long may it remain. Yours sincerely, Cliff Willetts. Councillor, 46 Clent View Road, Cradley, Halesowen, Worcs.

This photograph was taken in 1928, Clifford Willetts was still seven years away from being a councillor. B.G.W.



February 1974

Marbles trophy for Two Gates team

Revived in 1970 Halesowen's traditional battle of the marbles was enacted in a Lutley country lane on Shrove Tuesday morning, when the contestants were Cradley Caslon Primary School and Two Gates Ragged School.

For the last three years, Cradley Caslon Primary School have been the winners – this year it was Two Gates Turn.

There was no prouder man than Councillor Clifford Willetts when his grandson, eight year old Glen Willetts, captain of the Two Gates Ragged School team, received the trophy from Mr. Wesley Perrins, the umpire.



The contestants played with large ball-bearings- still, however, not of the diameter that corresponded to the original "iron Bunters" which were used by the marble players of 60 and 70 years ago.

The shrove Tuesday marble match was revived through the efforts of Councillor Willets, Mr. Frank Billingham (of Hasbury) and Mr. Wesley Perrins, who all have a deep interest in Black Country tradition and history. There was also the customary pancake race in which the participants were Mrs. G. Hackett and Mrs. A. Postles.

Among the supporters was Mr. Dennis Turner, the Labour candidate for Halesowen and Stourbridge, with him was Councillor Stan Swinson.

There was a sad note however owing to the death last week of Mr. Jess Smith, of Lutley Lane who had showed interest in the event in past years. A minute's silence was observed in his memory

July 1992 The bugle

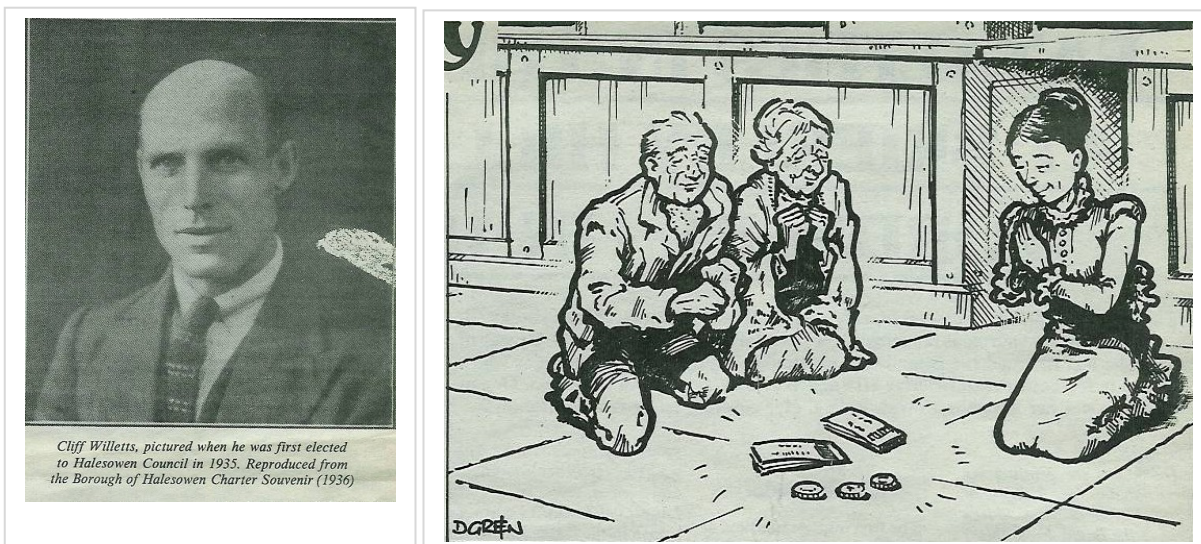


This picture was taken on Cliffs 80th birthday at one of his favourite places, Caslon Primary School. Surrounded by some of his favourite people. The children

Looking back on a Cradley & Halesowen Boyhood.

This was an article retelling the stories Cliff. Had put into his books, 'When I was a boy' 1, 2. & 3. 11 years after his death.

The photograph reproduced here was take from the '*Charter Souvenir*' (1936) one year after he had been elected To the Halesowen Urban District Council.



The cartoon depicts one of Cliffs stories about the introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1909 when half a million people aged over seventy received a pension for the first time. A married couple received 38p per week, the equivalent to 37 pence today.

Letters to the Editor

August 1967

Sir. – Wesley Cooper's otherwise excellent contribution is marred by an error which, unfortunately, has prevailed for many years and as evidenced by his letter, still does. There are not two Cradley's in Worcestershire. The Cradley near Malvern, is in the County of Hereford. Why those responsible inflicted the "Staffs" upon us, must remain a mystery. I cannot speak for any other denomination but the two Gates Ragged School will be in Cradley, Halesowen, Worcs. Correspondents need not worry about not getting their mail, as the Post Office is a very competent organisation. I had a card this week from one of our scholars addressed to "Mr. C. Willetts. Clent View Road, Worcester." It went first to Malvern but arrived alright.

Incidentally, will you please confirm about the Cradleys, particularly as a person, in Mr. Cooper's presence some two weeks ago wanted to wager £5 with me that I was wrong. He can be grateful that I don't bet.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS Cradley.

Alderman Willetts is correct. Cradley near Malvern is in Herefordshire. The reason Cradley, Staffs., was adopted as the correct postal address is that all letters to and from Cradley are dealt with at Cradley Heath and delays in delivery are thus eliminated. Ed.

7 March 1970

'Stamp out mail snag' at Halesowen

Similar street names cause confusion

Ald. Clifford Willetts told Wednesday's meeting of Halesowen Council that recently he had had more complaints of misdirection of mail in the Cradley area than he had ever known before.

The confusion was caused by street names that were alike – Beecher Street, Beecher Road and Beecher Road East, said Ald. Willetts

Of five letters delivered to a man in Beecher Street, four should have gone to other addresses. There was also a lot of confusion caused by the similarity of Two Gates and Two Gates Lane, he said.

A friend of his had had her groceries taken to Beecher Road East instead of Beecher Road - and she never saw them again, “She went down but it was no use” remarked Ald. Willetts, causing some amusement.

Some others

Cllr. W. c. j. Ray, who is the mayor elect, lives in St. Kenelm’s Avenue, Halesowen – and he said there had been instances of mail being delivered in his road instead of St. Kenelms Road Romsley.

Ald. Willetts provided yet another example – mail being delivered to Clent View Road, Cradley, instead of Clent View Road, Norton.

The Mayor, Ald. A. Brodie, said it would help if Ald Willetts could collect the information and pass it on to the Borough Surveyor.

For 30 years

A committee report mentioned a request from Halesowen Chamber of Trade for the name of either Stuart Road or Stuarts Road to be changed the Borough Surveyor had told the committee that both street names had been used for over thirty years with no previous complaint.

Cllr. C. N. C. Graham said she was disappointed that the committee had decided to take no action.

12th March 1970

Lion in a den of Daniels

Halesowen Borough Council alderman, Mr. Cliff. Willetts travelled from Cradley to Lapel last night – and said he felt like “a lion in a den of Daniels”

For he was standing in for the local borough Councillors, all busy elsewhere at a Conservative dinner.

“It is said that I am from a different party.” Alderman Willetts, the councils sole independent, told members of Lapal Residents Association at their Annual meeting.

But I don’t belong to any party, although I am still a socialist.

March 11th 1967

Deputy Chaplain

Ald. C. Willetts, Father of Halesowen Council and a lay preacher, deputised for the Mayor’s Chaplain (the Rev. K. C. Perry) at the start of last week’s Council meeting, Ald. Willetts not infrequently finds himself called on to open the monthly meeting with prayers a duty he performs with simple dignity and humility.

9th April 1969

He takes all in his stride

Council meetings and preaching engagements often take Alderman Cliff Willetts far from his native Cradley, but the 72 year-old Alderman takes it all in his stride – he walks everywhere. He can be seen striding out from his home at 46, Clent View Road to Halesowen Council meetings.

A life-long Methodist. Alderman Willetts’ preaching engagements take him out tree times a week on average. That;s excluding Sundays, when he is always at the nearby Two Gates Ragged School Church.

He thinks nothing of walking to Dudley, Segley, Wordsley and King swinford in all weathers.

“I have always walked, no matter what the weather is like” says the alderman. “I can honestly say the weather has never stopped me carrying out an engagement.”

A freeman of Halesowen, Alderman Willetts has just completed 34 years on Halesowen Council.

He is a relative newcomer to Worcestershire County Council – he has been a member for only 14 years.

“I’ve always been a walker,” he says. He has never owned a car. “I’ve never owned a car. I’ve always “I’ve always had good health, which is something you really should not boast about. This winter I’ve been the only member of my family not to catch a cold.” Alderman Willetts makes only two exceptions to his “walk everywhere” rule.

If he is pushed for time, he’ll accept a lift or catch a bus, and for County Council meetings at Worcester, he walks as far as Hagley before catching a bus.

July 1971

Charges for bus passes to stay

A plea to drop the 50p charge for concessionary bus passes for old folk and issue them free failed at Halesowen borough council’s meeting.

Less than a quarter of the people believed to be eligible for the pass shave in fact applied for and received them.

This said Councillor Cliff. Willetts last night was for two reasons.

“Firstly, they have great difficulty in finding 50p out of one weeks pension, and secondly I am informed, rightly or wrongly, that a neighbouring borough issues the passes free. This causes a lot resentment.” He said.

Councillor Frank Price suggested considering reducing the price.

Other authorities did issue free passes but With restrictions, said Councillor Len Hughes chairman of the amenities committee.

Alderman Peter Scott said the scheme should be left to run its full year.

Letters to the Editor - September 26th 1969

Flame of Methodism

Sir, - The bicentenary of John Wesley’s visit to Cradley, will be on March 19, 1970. I feel this historic occasion is worthy of commemoration, especially by the Methodist community in the district.

It could be a reminder of those men and women, who for 200 years , have kept the banner of Methodism flying and to whose memory we could pay our homage. I respectfully suggest that the officers of our churches give this early consideration, with a celebration. If this is done and it is felt that such an event should be commemorated, I will, if there is sufficient response. Undertake to convene a meeting for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements.

It may be recalled that Wesley, writing in his journal, referred to his visit to Cradley with the words “The air was as cold as I had almost ever felt but I trust God warmed many hearts.”

That memorable day at Dungeon Head in High Street, lit a flame which has never gone out and I trust our hearts may be warm enough to remember the visit of the founder of Methodism.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Cradley.



Ald. C. Willetts

The 'Lonely' Socialist pioneer of Halesowen

The wheel of fortune has turned almost full circle for the Halesowen Socialists. Their loss of one seat on the Town Council means that have only two representatives left. Al. Clifford Willetts of Cradley, and Coun. Dia Herbert, of Hasbury. Only a few years ago the Socialists with seven members. And 100 per cent representation in two wards, were challenging strongly for control of the council. Now, apart from Coun Herbert they have only the man who was their sole champion in the council chamber from 1934 until 1945 when, in company with the rest of the country, the Halesowen Socialists' cause began to flourish.

The Local Government boundaries question has had much to do with their decline. Throughout the controversy they stuck doggedly to their advocacy of Halesowen amalgamating with Smethwick, Oldbury and Rowley Regis to form a new county borough. Halesowen people, on the other hand have shown themselves overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the town's independence.

Honorary Freedom

Though the party itself may be at a low ebb the opposite is true of the senior survivor on the council, Ald. Willetts. His stock has never been high; he is about to receive with four others, the highest honour a town can bestow – the honorary freedom.

How different this is from the early part of his career in public life. At seven successive elections from 1928, the people of Cradley rejected him. In 1934 he lost by six votes after four recounts. When finally, he won a seat on the old urban council, a year before Halesowen became a municipal borough he topped the poll by one vote.

To-day Ald Willetts, who refused to toe the party line over amalgamation and has fought strenuously for Halesowen's independence, is respected on all sides of the council chamber. He a past mayor, and is chairman of the Public Health Committee.

A draft copy of Cliff Willetts letter to the Borough Labour Party. B. G. W.

The Halesowen Borough Labour Party insists, that candidates should support the amalgamation of Halesowen with Rowley, Oldbury and Smethwick. This I have refused to do, as I believe the people of Cradley wish to remain within the County of Worcester. I was in formed that my candidature would not be endorsed and I have therefore, very reluctantly, had to withdraw

February 6th 1965

Comment:- The reference to Cliff Willetts in this article was a very brave gesture by Arthur Moyle. Referring to his friendship that went back many years before Cliff was expelled from the Labour Party, and was not a sentiment that was shared by officers of the local party.

Presentation to ex- M.P.

Mr. Moyle as Halesowen Labour Party peace-maker

Hopes of a reconciliation between Halesowen Labour party and Ald. Clifford Willetts of Cradley, were expressed by Mr. Arthur Moyle, former M.P. for Oldbury and Halesowen when presentations to mark his 19 years' service as the local Member were made to him at a large gathering at Halesowen Club yesterday week.

Mr. Moyle commented, "Now that Cradley is cradled in the deep of Worcestershire let us lay the red carpet and hope that in due course the Cradley Rovers including Two Gates and Colley Gate, will come to play for the Oldbury and Halesowen political team as of old."

Mr. Moyle who first won the old Stourbridge Division in Labour's "landslide" of 1945 and afterwards held Oldbury and Halesowen until his retirement at the last election, said how deeply he appreciated the good work Ald. Willetts had done through the years.

Ald. Willetts was expelled from the party some years ago and now sits on Halesowen Borough Council as an Independent Labour member. He claimed that his expulsion was due to his views on amalgamation – he was in the forefront of Halesowen's successful campaign for independence, whereas the Labour Party favoured amalgamation with Smethwick, Oldbury and Rowley Regis.

Speaking of the way the party had rallied round him through the years, Mr. Moyle said the secret of it all was toleration. "In the party we have a right to our own point of view: we are all Socialists but there are different roads along which to achieve Socialism." He commented.

He expressed pleasure at seeing M. F. J. Somers there.

The presentations (a set of pipes and a pouch, and a cheque for about £100) were made by Ald. Fred Goode, of Oldbury who at 83 is the oldest member of the constituency Labour Party.

Joining the tributes to Mr. Moyle were Mr. John Horner, who succeeded him as M.P. for Oldbury and Halesowen and Mr. Karl Kirton chairman of the Halesowen Borough Labour Party who presided



Comment:-

In 1918 Mary MacArthur was the Labour candidate for the Stourbridge and Halesowen constituency. B. G. W.

Letters to the Editor 14 February 1969

Mary MacArthur

Sir, -In your report about the name of the new development in Cradley, You state that Mary MacArthur was born in the area. This of course is not so. She was born in Glasgow. She did visit Cradley, but the centre of her work on behalf of the women chainmakers was, Cradley Heath.

The Workers' Institute in Lower High Street was built, I believe, as a monument to her work in the area. I spent quite a lot of time with her and Margaret Bondfield, during the memorable 1918 election. Not the least of my memories was when she addressed a meeting in High Street, Cradley. She was howled down, believe it or not, by chainmakers.

She was very distressed and broke down in tears. Later that afternoon, however, she was compensated by other chainmakers, who, lead by a well-known local tenor, sang, "kind was my Mary." A popular song of that era.

That same night, George Bernard Shaw addressed a meeting in the Town Hall, Stourbridge G.B.S was subject to heckling throughout his speech, particularly when he declared we should either “Hang the Kaiser” or “Make Germany pay” popular slogans in the election, it was a day to remember and though half a century has passed, the events remain very vivid in my memory

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Halesowen.

Letters to the Editor Friday 26 1977

MEMORIES OF THE GREAT STRIKE

Sir,- May I make some observation son the latter part of Wesley Perrins’ letter. The outpost referred to was Cradley, I was present and would like to see the record of what happened put right.

The meeting was at Dungeon Head in the High Street. It was on the same spot where John Wesley preached on March 19th, 1770. Mary was persistently heckled from the moment she began to speak. The spearhead of the hecklers were two chainmakers both of whom had public positions in Cradley. The following are two examples of the heckling, spoken in Black Country dialect. “Why do yer goo back wum an clane the grate” and “Who’ll look after yer babby while you’m in parliament.” They refused to let Mary speak and she collapsed in the seat of the car in tears.

Margaret Bondfield was at her side and with a shrill penetrating voice silenced the hecklers. Then a chain maker Adam Cook, who was in the audience, went into the car and although he had never before made a speech spoke with astonishing oratory and eloquence. Adam had an intimate knowledge of the chain trade and the helers were again subdued to silence. It was on this occasion that the phrase used by Wilf Williams, “She was one of God’s angels,” was coined. This speech was reported the following day in the national press. Adam was later elected to the Parish council.

We moved from there to Lyde Green. It was there, near the Vine Inn, that the memorable occasion referred to by Mr. Perrins took place. Margaret Bondfield began to speak, she only said a few words when the women left their chain shops still wearing their aprons, with their sweat cloths round their necks and cloth caps on their heads. Soon the whole populace of Lyde Green assembled. It was Will Ashmore, a well known local tenor who lead us in the singing of “Kind, kind and gentle was she, kind, kind was our Mary.” Mary was again in tears but for a different reason. One of those present was Emma Hill whom Mary recognised as one of the women who took part in the strike eight years previously. At night, George Bernard Shaw addressed a meeting in support of Mary, at Stourbridge Town Hall.

I was there and can say with the poet, “though lost to sight, to memory dear.”

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Halesowen.

March 11 1967

Halesowen due for entire new council

POLITICAL parties in Halesowen are getting primed for there biggest election campaign for local government office in years. A completely new Council has to be elected in May as a result of three new wards being formed. Adoption meetings for the County Council elections on April 13 have been taking place in recent weeks. They will be followed by the municipal elections on May 11. All 15 councillors at Halesowen have to seek election this year.

Both county and local elections will be for the first time on an eight ward basis. When the annual meeting of the Council takes place on June 7 the new Council will have 24 councillors. Two of the present aldermen will still be in office – Ald. N. Garner and Ald. Miss

E. M, Bridge – but another six aldermen will have to be chosen resulting in further by-elections.

ALDERMANIC PACT

Last week a signed statement by the three group leaders- Ald. P. W. Scott (Con), Ald. Garner (Lib) and Cllr. J. G. Campion (Lab) – was issued to the effect that the parties had agreed that the election of aldermen on the enlarged Council should be proportionate to the number of seats held by each party after the municipal elections.

The strength of the parties at present is: Conservatives 10, Labour 5, Liberals 4, and Ind. Lab. 1.

Explaining how the agreement would work, Ald. Scott told the County Express on Monday, that if a party gets 11 councillors returned (and not 12) they will be entitled to four aldermanic seats, it however, it gets 10 councillors returned they will hold three.

Ald. Scott who is one of the three retiring aldermen, is an odds on favourite for another aldermanic term. Modestly, he puts it this way: “If the Conservatives get three seats, I should be entitled to one of the aldermanic vacancies”

Ald. A. Whitehouse (Lib), and Ald C. Willetts (Ind. Lab.) are also due to retire.

NOT SHOWN RESPECT

AS Ald. Willetts who is “father” of the council, is not covered by the agreement, he will be standing as a council candidate in May.

At one time the only Labour member, he was expelled from the local Labour Party because at the time of the local boundaries issue he was one of the leaders in the fight for Halesowen’s independence, whereas the party supported amalgamation with neighbouring boroughs.

Commenting on the party agreement Ald. Willetts said he only heard about it indirectly after last week’s council meeting through a reporter who ‘phoned him at his home.

Criticising the party groups for their apparent secretiveness, Ald. Willetts remarked, “You would have thought out of courtesy they +ould have said something to me +ut it appears they have treated me with the respect +++++ have expected.”

++++ Ald. Willetts has +++++ continuous +++++ authority.++++ :- The report was torn.

B.G.W.

May 17 1967

EXPRESS AND STAR, WEDNESDAY

Tories give up seat to ‘grand old man’

Halesowen Tories have given up one of their chances of an aldermanic seat and offered it to “the grand old man” of the council, independent Socialist Cliff Willetts.

He said he “I shall be happy to accept it.”

The composition of the enlarged borough, which was elected last Thursday, is: 15

Conservative, six Socialists, two Liberals and one Independent Socialist.

Under a three party-pact, announced earlier this year, the Tories are entitled to nominate four aldermen, and the Socialists two.

Two others, the mayor-elect, Liberal Alderman Norman Garner and Tory Alderman Miss M. E. Bridge, kept their seats and will make up the total of eight aldermen.

The Tory group decided on their nominations at a weekend meeting and announced them last night.

As well as Councillor Willetts, Tory councillors Ken Deurden and Albert Brodie will be elevated to the aldermanic bench.

Group leader, Peter Scott, who was an alderman on the last council, will become one again.

This will mean by-elections at Belle Vale to replace Councillor Willetts, at Hayley Green to replace Deurden and at Cakmore to replace Councillor Brodie.

Mr Scott did not stand at last week’s elections.

NEAR RECORD

He said "Alderman Willetts has been on the council for many years and we all felt that, politics apart, he should again be an alderman.

Mr. Willetts has been on the council for a near record 30 years. For the past nine years, up to last week's elections, he was an alderman.

He is also a freeman and former mayor of the borough.

He came top of the poll of eight candidates in Belle Vale ward last week and last month was re-elected a member of Worcester County Council for the same ward.

He said: "this is a very nice gesture by the Tories. I was hoping against hope but I did not go cap in hand."

Seventy-year-old Councillor Willetts regularly walks the eight miles from his home in Clent View Road, Cradley, to meetings at Kidderminster.

April 3rd 1970 A repeat of 1967?

'I fight to make sure of re-election'

Support uncertain, so senior Halesowen Council member will contest Belle Vale

ALD. Clifford Willetts, who is the senior member of Halesowen Town Council, has decided to fight Belle Vale Ward in May – to make sure he retains a seat on the Borough council.

There is an understanding in existence which allocates one aldermanic seat per three seats held by each political party.

But as an Independent Labour member, Ald Willetts can rely on no party backing – Conservative, Labour or Liberal.

After the last ward re-shuffle in the borough, Ald. Willetts' long service to the local authority was recognised by his being appointed alderman – although the Conservative-controlled council could easily have filled all the vacant aldermanic seats with Conservative members.

"I must fight"

This year - to date – he has heard nothing from the Conservatives as regards his chance of being offered a further a further term as being an alderman, he says.

"I only know I must fight if I want to remain on the council." He told the County Express this week.

He represents Belle Vale Ward on both borough and county councils and is unopposed for the County Council elections on April.

There are possibilities however that he could be involved in a three-cornered fight in the municipal elections in May, probably standing against Labour and Liberal opponents.

A former Chairman of the Public Health Committee at Halesowen, Ald. Willetts serves as a committee member on the Health and Housing committees. He is also a member of the County Finance and General purposes Committee as well as various other Committees at Worcester concerned with administration of the National Health services.

May 1970

Council's senior member loses seat as Alderman

Mr. Clifford Willetts 73 year-old senior member of the borough council at Halesowen with 35 years' unbroken service, lost his seat as an Alderman at last night's annual meeting of the council.

He remains a member as councillor for the Belle Vale Ward where he stood as an Independent Labour candidate at this month's election and had a majority of more than 900 over the official Labour candidate.

Mr. Willetts said after the meeting: "No one has told me why I was voted out as alderman. It seems a strange thing that the council was prepared to make a freeman of the borough but it is no longer prepared to have me as an alderman.

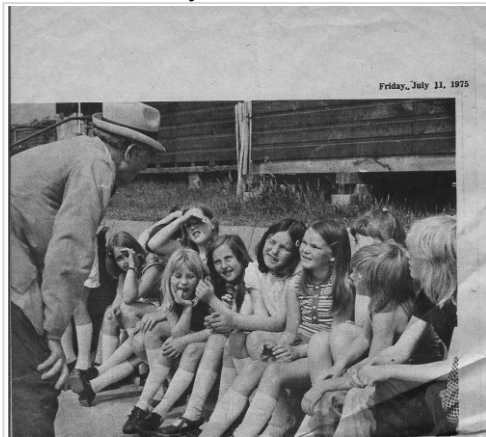
But I am content with the confidence the people of the ward expressed at the poll. Mr. Karl Kirton, former leader of the Labour Group also lost his seat as alderman. The council elected the new Mayor Cllr. John Ray (Conservative) and councillor B. J. Shaw (Liberal) as aldermen and re-elected retiring aldermen, Miss E. M. Bridge (Con), and Ald. Norman Garner (Lib).

Ald Ray in his first speech as Mayor referred to the town's continuing housing problem. With 700 names on the waiting list and another 40 a month coming in the list was likely to lengthen, he said.

Priority was being given to old peoples bungalows. An estate of 21 would be completed in St. Paul's Drive this year and others were planned for Hurst Park Road. and the Howley Grange area. Designs were being prepared for 151 houses to be built at Cradley next year.

Friday July 11 1975

Caslon Primary School



'Games' treat for children

A demonstration of games played by children in the Black Country fifty years ago was staged at Caslon Primary School, Cradley Last Wednesday.

There was five jacks, knock peg (tip-cat), top spinning, hop scotch bunters, clappers, Jews harp, hoops (known as bumpers in Lye, said Councillor Cliff Willetts) – and after a two hour morning session, and an hour and a half in the afternoon, time ran out with still plenty more of the traditional Black Country games to be introduced.

The different classes had come out on to the play ground in turn, first to watch how the games had been played, and then to 'Have a go' them selves.

The demonstrators included Councillor Willetts, who is chairman of the school Governors, his daughter Mrs. Hazel Clifton, Mr. Frank Billingham, a local historian and Mr. William Tallis. They were backed up by Mrs. Mary Genner, Mrs. Morton, Mrs. Lee. Mrs. Billingham and Mrs Willetts.

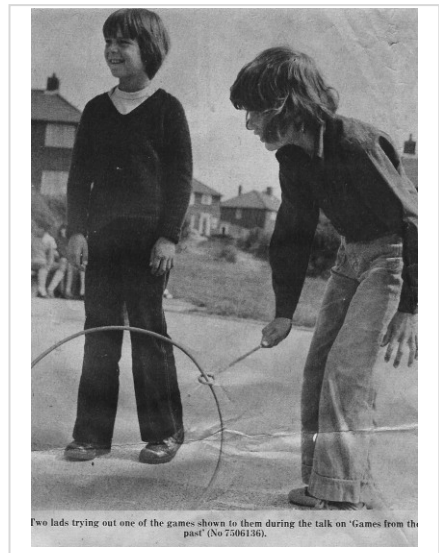
After the morning's session, there was a batch of letters from the children telling Councillor Willetts how much they had enjoyed playing these almost forgotten Pass-times.

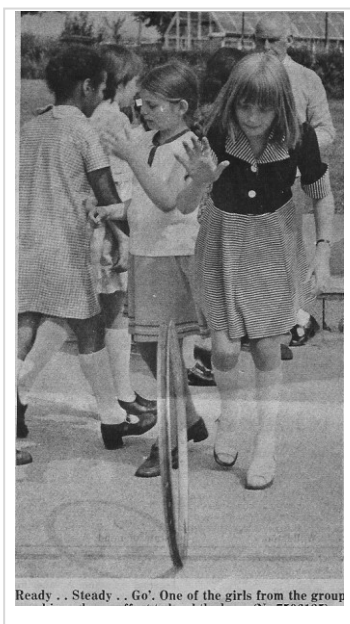
A typical reaction came from Lynn Allen (lass 5) who wrote: "I liked all of the games brought for us to play with. Some I had never seen before."

Rebecca Clements found hoops her favourite.

There were two hoops in use for demonstration – one had been made specially for the event by a blacksmith in Old Hill. In the old days it was traditional for hoops to be made in the Blacksmith's fire. Similarly, five jacks – the stared, or spike variety, were made in local industry, otherwise a piece of roofing tile did the trick (not as good as the metal ones, it was agreed

So besides the games demonstration, the children were given an insight into aspects of local social history.





Mr. Billingham told the County Express: “ The children’s eyes have lit up with these games. The letters they have written aptly describe their feelings.”

Inside the school, Mr. Wes Perrins, who has a deep knowledge of Black Country customs, told the children of the sort of things that they would have seen in a typical Black Country home 50 or 60 years ago, the sort of furniture it would have contained, and common-day articles such as a bed warmer (it used to be a firebrick”).

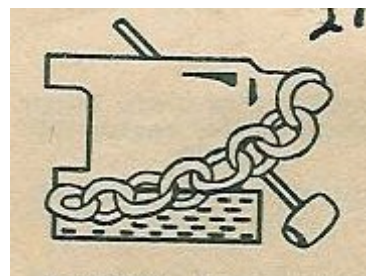
“We are hopping to revive this each year on similar lines. We have a wealth of information these things and we want to pass it on to the younger generation. We would be prepared to go to other schools,” said Mr. Billingham.

Councillor Willetts said they were grateful for the co-operation of the Headmaster Eric Humphries.

21 March 1969

Notes

A party of 35 children who attend Caslon Primary School, Cradley, will be received at the Council Halesowen by the Mayor (Ald. K. W. Johnson) this (Friday) afternoon. The party will be in charge of Alderman Clifford Willetts, a past mayor, and chairman of the school governors, and the children will be shown the civic regalia and the Council Chamber also accompanying the children will be Mr. E. Humphries, the headmaster.



May 1969

Ald. Willetts Honoured

At the annual meeting of the Worcester City and County Home Safety Committee last week, Ald. C. Willetts, of Cradley, was elected vicr-chairman. He succeeds Ald. W. R. Amphlet (Worcester) who has resigned owing to illness.

Ald. Willetts has been chairman of the Halesowen Home Safety Committee since it was formed in 1964.

29 September 1971

Cllr. C. Willetts

disappointed at not being invited

Shortly before Mr. Harold Wilson visited Cradley Labour Club Last weekend, 74-year old Cllr. Clifford Willetts spoke of his disappointment at not being invited to meet the leader of the labour Party.

Speaking to a reporter at his home in Clent View Road, Cradley , Cllr. Willetts, who is an independent Labour member on Halesowen Council said “It has been my life’s ambition to meet Mr. Wilson. He is the one Labour leader I have never met.

I am still a Socialist at heart and I would have liked to be associated with Mr. Wilson’s visit because of the large number of people I represent.” Said Cllr Willetts.

Former Mayor

Cllr Willetts who is a freeman and past Mayor of Halesowen was secretary of Cradley Labour club for 10 years after the club was formed in 1928.

But he was not invited to the official opening of the new club in 1968 – and the present club secretary, ex-Ald Karl Kirton, a past leader of the Labour Group on Halesowen Council – made it clear that Cllr Willetts' name had never come under consideration for the invitation list for Mr. Wilson's visit.

"He is the last person we would dream of inviting." He commented. If we invited all the people who had been members of the club we should have about 20,000 here not 300. Cllr. Willetts walked out many years ago and has not been a club member since." Added Mr. Kirton.

February 1977

The chains of long tradition

Veteran Dudley councillor Cliff Willetts wants to stop The Black Country Museum opening the restored Mushroom Green chainshop to visitors on Sunday . . . because of tradition.

Former chainmaker Cliff. Who is 80, says he and his mates never worked on a Sunday because it was a tradition of the industry to have the day of rest.

"That was our way – Sunday was Sunday and a day of rest. Religion had very little to do with it" he said.

Museumkeeper of social and industrial history, Mr. Stuart Holm, said today he agrees – but research shows that more people visit museums on Sundays than any other day.

He said that it was proving difficult to persuade chainmakers to demonstrate their skills on Sundays although one has agreed.

Councillor Willetts has asked the recreation and amenities committee to discuss the matter on February 22, but as he is not a member he cannot speak at the meeting.

Letters to the Editor

20 June 1969

Gas consumer complaints

Sir, - With reference to Mr. Horner's proposal to compile a dossier of complaints against West Midlands Gas Board, may I respectfully point out that the local authorities appoint people to represent consumers and that these members deal with any complaints reported to them.

The names and addresses of these men and women are prominently displayed in gas show rooms and post offices. I have represented the Halesowen Borough on No 2 committee of the gas consultative committee for many years and have never missed a meeting. I have dealt with many complaints with satisfactory results. For example, a consumer reported to me on Christmas Day, that the meter was blocked and within the hour the meter was attended to and the turkey suffered no ill effects.

My personal experience tells me that the Gas Board have nothing to fear and I have no doubt they will have an answer to any charges that are made. Meanwhile perhaps Mr. Horner will bear in mind that the local representatives are the people who should be contacted, and only when they fail should he step in.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS.

Cradley

May 1973

Lone voice poll topper claims right to committee places

a lone protest was made by Councilor Clifford Willetts (independent Labour) at last Thursday's Halesowen mayor-making that he was being left off the Borough Council's policy and public relations committee. Cllr. Willetts who topped the poll in the Cradley – Belle Vale ward in the Dudley District Council elections, claimed that he should be automatically considered for the committee as "representing the fourth political party on the council."

Councillor Willetts's protest came towards the end of the formal proceedings when Councilor Frak Price had been installed as the new Mayor. There had been many tributes to the retiring Mayor Councillor Mrs. Catherine Graham.

Councillor Willetts said he was sorry to intervene at this point, but the leaders of the three main political parties were members of the policy committee – and he felt justified in making his claim to join that committee.

"I have never been pushed out and never shall." Said Councillor Willetts, who has served on Halesowen Council since 1935.

'RIGHT TO DEMAND'

Referring to his election victory on May 10 when he topped the poll at Cradley – Belle Vale with 2,161 votes. Councilor Willetts said "that gives me the right to demand that I should be a member of the five standing committee."

He will serve on two of the main committees – housing and public health.

In his inaugural speech the new Mayor looked ahead to the time when Halesowen joins Dudley and Stourbridge to form the new District authority.

He was disappointed that they would be losing borough status but Halesowen was "still in Business" for another ten months – and he pleaded for the town's new role in local government on April 1974, to be made a joyous occasion "in the interests of the citizens we serve today and tomorrow."

NOMINATION

COUNCILLOR Price's nomination as Mayor was proposed by Alderman Norman Garner (Liberal) and seconded by Alderman Dia Herbert (Labour).

Alderman Peter Scott (Conservative). Councillor Clifford Willetts (Ind. Labour and Ashley Neale, who has succeeded Councillor Price as leader of the Labour group, spoke in support, and the vote was carried unanimously.

Councillor Price nominated Councillor Mrs. Graham to serve as Deputy Mayor.

He also appointed the Rev. Gordon Wood (Methodist Minister) as his chaplain.

£5,000 RAISED

He presented a past mayor's badge to Mrs. Graham, and a past consort badge to Dr. W. E. Graham.

Tribute to the way both Councillor Mrs. Graham and Dr. Graham had carried out their duties over the past 12 months was paid by Alderman Albert Brodie, Alderman Henry Hitchins, Councillor Arthur Brown, Councillor Neale, Alderman Herbert and Councillor Willetts.

Replying Mrs. Graham thanked in particular the retiring deputy mayor (Councillor Brown) and deputy mayoress (Mrs. C. Herbert), the Mayor's secretary (Mrs. A. Bennett) and the Town Clerk (Mr. J. B. McCooke) and his staff, and members of the council staff.

Regarding her appeal for Project 77 – The Halesowen Society’s project to build a residential home for mentally Handicapped children. Councillor Mrs. Graham said the “people of Halesowen had been absolutely wonderful.”. The appeal raised £5,000, she announced.

12 January 1968

ANOTHER PUB AT CRADLEY?

Council accepts reference back proposal

Two spokesmen for the Cradley area joined forces at last week’s meeting of Halesowen council in protesting against a proposal to build a new licensed house at the junction of Tanhouse Lane and Two Gates – but for different reasons.

There were already three public houses within 300 to 400 yards of the proposed site, said Ald. C. Willetts, who is Superintendent of Two Gates Ragged School “I suggest that four public houses within 400 yards is not good for anybody.”

Alderman Karl Kirton, who is secretary of Cradley Labour club, said he supported Ald Willetts but his objection “had nothing to do with religion at all.” The roads were being more crowded as a result of new building of this kind going up, and in his view the proposed site was one of the worst in Cradley because the approach roads were so bad.

NO STRONG OBJECTION

RELJYING, Alderman K. Duerden (Housing Committee Chairman) said he had no strong objection to the reference back. He pointed out that there were two breweries involved and both had licensed premises in the area. The council had to remember that the Tanhouse Lane development would provide over 500 dwellings nearby. “Everybody has their own idea of priorities when it comes to housing development.” He added
The reference back was carried.

19 June 1970

Two years on.

Broadstone an appropriate

name for new Cradley pub

Ald, Clifford Willetts of Cradley, has promised a piece of The Broadstone for possible display use in the new public house of that name when it is built on the edge of the Tanhouse development. Once used as a parish marker, the stone has been preserved largely through the interest of Ald. Willetts, a local historian. Although a teetotaler he has had a big part in the brewery’s decision to name their new licensed premises at Cradley, The Broadstone.

HISTORY OF THE STONE

Eighteen months ago a representative of Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries met Ald Willetts by appointment and he was given the history of the Broadstone – how it was reckoned to be carboniferous period and 280 years old.

At last weeks Halesowen Court, when the firm successfully applied for a provisional new full “on” license, comment was made on the appropriate name of the new house.

Ald. Willetts said last week-end “I don’t mind perpetuating the name, so long as I am not asked to pull the first pint – or offer the prayers and blessing!” He points out that High Town Ragged School (Cradley) is the “home” for the stone on which John Wesley is reputed to have stood.

The Broadstone is embedded on the site of Two Gates Ragged School



Freemen of the Borough

In the same publication of the "MUNICIPAL REVIEW" showing the Halesowen Free men, is a photograph of Mr. Stanley Matews C. B. E. 'Footballer of the Year' being presented with an illuminated scroll admitting him as a Freeman of the city, Stoke on Trent,

Cliff felt honoured to share page space with such a sporting icon.

Date

Stress cancer risk, says 50-year smoker

ALDERMAN C. WILLETTS, who claimed last night that he had smoked for half a century "with no ill effects" told Halesowen council that the town's medical officer of health was right to draw attention to the dangers of cigarette smoking and its association with lung cancer.

"Whether the advice is heeded or not is a matter of individual decision., but as the old saying goes: 'You have been warned.'"

Alderman Willetts was commenting on the recent Medical Officer of Health's annual report, and that of the Chief Public Health Inspector.

Pride, Satisfaction

To the later he said: "Here again it is with pride and satisfaction we read of year of outstanding progress in the sphere of public health.

"Slum clearance went on relentlessly, and he reports: 'Our worst sums have gone.' Houses were improved, not at the rate we would have liked, but there were 54 grants amounting to over £5,500."

He said that constant vigil by the health inspectors department ensured that food shops were cleaner. "He reminds us that a more thoughtful and vigilant housewife has emerged and is demanding that food shall be served without the touch of hand.

"This vigilance is shown by the fact they reported and bought into the department more than the usual amount of food they claimed was not of the quality demanded."

No fewer than 897 items of food were condemned by the Chief Public Health Inspector during the year.

SMOKE CONTROL

Talking of smoke control Alderman Willetts said many problems arising out of smoke control had been dealt with by the public health committee.

“The price of smokeless fuel is a matter of some concern. It does not come within the province of the your committee, but I have personally taken this matter up with the M. P.”

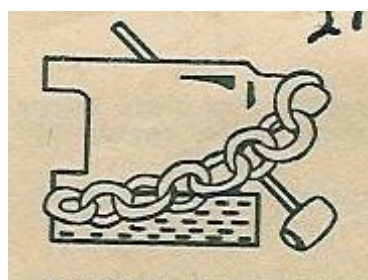
He said that the main concern in air pollution was from industrial premises. “The iron foundry is the main culprit, of which there are 18 in the borough.

“The solution, short of closing down, has baffled the best scientific brains in the world. Constant inspection takes place and advice is given to managements.”

5th June 1971

In lighter vein

When the outgoing Mayor Ald. W. C. J. Ray asked the Town Clerk at last Thursday's annual meeting of the Halesowen Council to read out the names of the retiring councillors, Mr. J. B. McCooke remarked to the amusement of the crowded Council Chamber: “I take it, Mr. Mayor, you mean councillors who have retired voluntarily and involuntary.” Another lighter moment in the mayor-making proceedings was provided when Cllr. Clifford Willetts claimed a unique record. He was following the spokesmen for the three main parties represented on the Council, who had spoken in support of Mr. Arthur Brown's nomination as Mayor. Cllr.



Willetts who was attending his 37th successive annual meeting of the Halesowen authority, claims that as an Independent Labour member he is entitled to be regarded as the fourth party. And the whole Council Chamber and guests were amused to hear him make the point which went unchallenged – “I am the only political party represented here tonight who has never suffered an electoral defeat !” Cllr Willetts told Cllr. Brown: I have supported no fewer than 27 mayors – you will be the 28th – and I also supported the chairman of the last U. D. C. at Halesowen.

5th October 1963

Councillor sees the flies

Flies swarmed everywhere in the homes of people living in Park Road and Park Lane, Cradley, Mr. W. Dickens told fellow-members of Halesowen Council on Wednesday.

“I have never seen so many in people's homes.” He said, “These residents do not dare open their windows and cannot even carry food about. It is quite disgusting.”

Complaints had been received by the Public Health Committee alleging that the nuisance resulting from the tipping of refuse by the Birmingham Corporation salvage department at the junction of Park Road and Park Lane. “The committee considered, however, that the tipping was being efficiently carried out. It was being regularly inspected by the public health department. Therefore it made no recommendation.

The Council decided, however, to refer the matter back to the Planning Committee and the Public Health Committee.

The Health Committee chairman (Ald. C. Willetts) said he had visited it and it was true there were flies on it. "But I counted only about 50 on the whole of the tip," he commented. "There has been justification for the complaint, but things are receding again," he said. "strict observation will be kept on the tip."

When the tipping is finished this will be a valuable piece of land and will tidy up that part of Cradley," said Mr. A. Whitehouse. "It is unfortunate that it is being filled up with this type of rubbish."

5th July 1970

An Ancient house to go



Councillor Clifford Willetts, who is a keen student of local history, has provided us with this short account of Park House, shown in our picture, which stands at the side of the busy main Stourbridge to Halesowen road at Cradley. The property is due for demolition and with it will go one more of the buildings that could tell a story rich no doubt in human drama – if walls could speak.

Mr. Willetts Writes: "The house gets its name from Cradley Park, which records show, was in existence in the year 1200. it comprised 180 acres and the trees were mainly oak. Scott the Stourbridge historian recalls that it had a remarkable sequestered character and was the resort of the nightingale in season. It was enclosed by the Lord of the Manor for hunting deer, which provided the Lord and his friends, not only with sport but fresh meat!

A HEADQUARTERS

"The Park House was built in 1682 and it is apparent that the house was used by the Lord of the Manor at that time as his home and headquarters. There is a long room called the Armoury, which suggests that guns were kept there.

"The Park, as such, lost its appearance at the middle of the last century, when Top and Bottom Park collieries were sunk. In 1672 a road was cut through the Park to carry the stage coaches.

"The turnpike, still called this by older Cradley residents, was at the end of Park Lane, where it joins Park Road. The road was taken over by the County Council in 1815."

Express and Star

Date ?

Readers Solve a Puzzle

this picture sent in by “Roundabout” reader **Mr. Peter Barnsley, of Colman Hill, Halesowen**, appeared in “Express and Star” editions on **October 28**. **Mr.**

Barnsley said passers-by were puzzled by the brick-built, tomb-like construction standing apart on waste ground behind **Cradley County Secondary School at**



Homer Hill. Now, today, two of our readers supply the answer to the riddle.

Sir – The picture which appeared in the October 28 “Express and Star” depicts a powder magazine for Homer Hill Colliery, which was about 500 yards away. It was built by my father, Mr. Richard Blount, in 1914. the owner was G. Evers and Son.

JOSEPH BLOUNT.

19, Netherend-square,

Mogal Lane, Cradley.* **

Sir – Mr. Barnsley is correct in his assumption that the brick building was used as a powder magazine for miners. They collected the powder on their way to work.

There is another variation of this at Oldnal Holloway. Cradley. This is set in rock and can be plainly seen. The miners picked up the powder en route to Oldnal Colliery.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

(Councillor).

46, Clent View-road.

Cradley.

6 January 1962

Cleaning up

Sir, - to imply that a grammar school boy should be commended for starting a business making a book is truly absurd. I would call it misguided talent, and suggest he join some organisation (St. John or the Boy Scouts), where his precocity could be diverted into more useful channels, and so gain additional and more realistic Knowledge to benefit him in later years.

The inference regards men who depend on others to find them a house and keep them does not deserve criticism, and can be dismissed as sour grapes.

The remarks about the meagre numbers who attend the churches and chapels of Cradley and that the churches and chapels should be swept away for all the good they do exposes Mr, Bishop's ignorance of the true picture. Does he know that Colley Gate Methodists are building a new church to house their growing family? Is he aware that well over 100 people attended the 8 a. m. Communion service at St. Peters and St. Katherine's , Cradley, on Christmas morning'. Does he know that Mr. Willetts at Two Gates Chapel had the mortification one Sunday a short time ago of not being able to find accommodation for all his scholars – and that school has a seating capacity of over 200?

L. TAYLOR.

Cradley.

Sir, - Just one or two observations on Mr. Bishop's letter. I can hardly follow his reasoning of depending on others to keep them. If the inference is to me, I can only say, with all modesty, that for some 40 years I was engaged in the chain-making industry. Not the easiest way of getting a living, and certainly not one of the most ruminative, so perhaps I made some contribution to the nations economy.

I have met, in my many spheres of activity, people like Mr. Bishop who have no time for places of worship. Yet, without exception, I find these same people use them for their convenience. They take their children there to be baptised, they go there to be married, then finally a church service when they are buried.

They never bother to find out what goes on between there visits. They care less who keeps finding the money or who keeps the doors open by faithful witness. They expect the resources of the church to be placed at their disposal on the few occasions in life when they need God's blessing and support and such service is never denied.

I don't think Mr. Bishop is a competent authority to say whether we do any good or not. Finally, I have with many others, devoted my Sundays to trying to shape the lives of children top a Christian way. Of the thousands of children in some 40 years of ministry, not one has ever said they regretted attending Sunday school. We do on the other hand have innumerable experiences of testimony from them I believe, too, that we do a lot of good, and we shall not be deterred by people like Mr. Bishop from casting our bread upon the waters.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Cradley.

Sir – I am very much surprised at Ald. Willetts's appeal for help to find a name for the bungalows off Beecher Road, Colley Gate. I thought the name put forward in your paper a few weeks ago. "The Councells Folly." Was very suitable.

As Ald. Willetts does not seem to fancy the name, a number of people in Colley Gate suggest that he might approve one of the following: "Hosses Hill Bungalows," "Who'da thought it" two very historic names in Cradley, or "the Crazy Gang" bungalows. I prefer the crazy gang name, as a crazy gang must have passed the plans.

K. BISHOP

Halesowen.

Ben Garth

Sir – I think Cradley should be proud of the place names that have been chosen by the Council in post war developments. Some have historic meanings and are worthy of being perpetuated, but the name "Ben Garth," which has been suggested , for the area known as "Hosses Hill" in the Fatherless Barn Estate is very inappropriate, because it has no real meaning to a place which was once a very charming bit of rural England. Originally "Hosses Hill" was part of "Denzeal Gap," which was from early Saxon times the main passage into Cradley Fields. About the middle of the 18th century, a Mr. Humphrey purchased part of the Cradley Manor from Lord Lyttelton , and his family settled the old monastic farm grange at Colman Hill. As time went on the family began to develop the estate into building plots, and so about 1870 the old farm track which had for centuries been called Denzeal Gap became known as Beecher Road.

WILFRED WILLIAMS

Cradley

Cliff Willetts was instrumental in the development off Beecher Road being named Dencil Close.

B. G. W.

April 1976

Wilf and his friends say thanks

When the TV needs repairing or if they want the doctor to call or an ambulance “booked” for a hospital visit, the pensioners living in the semi-detached council bungalows in Dencil Close, Cradley. Have only to contact 86 year old Mr. Wilfred Homer or his wife Lillian (75) who live at number 51.

An alert and active ex-chainmaker, Mr. Homer is in ‘The Good Neighbour’ service



which is run by Dudley Council Social Services. Not only does he and he and his wife know all the residents in the other 27 bungalows which make up the small community in which they live, off Drews Holloway but they are well aware of the individual problems and difficulties of their neighbours.

Mr, Homer is also ready to give thanks on the tenants behalf to the

council – their landlords – when it is felt that it is deserved. That’s why he wrote to Dudley Council’s Housing Department to thank them for putting full central heating in all the bungalows

The new central heating has cost £10,087 and to show how satisfied the tenants in Dencil Close are with the improvements Mr. Homer invited the Housing Director, Mr. Mike Summerfield, and three local councillors to call last Thursday and see for themselves.

Councillor Stan Swinson, vice-chairman of the housing committee, who was accompanied by Councillor Ashley Neale and Cliff Willetts, he said he was particularly pleased that the efforts of his committee had been directed towards helping the elderly.

9th May 1969

Face lift for ‘twilight area’ of Cradley

The provision of about 180 dwellings on an 8.1/2 acre site – to be known as the Huntingdon Gardens development which will result in a facelift for the ‘twilight area’ of Cradley Forge (off Butchers Lane) – was described this week as a “very exciting prospect,” by Mr. T. W. Tivey, Halesowen surveyor.

The development is scheduled for next year, Mr. Tivey said: “We own three-quarters of the site already, and have made application for compulsory purchase orders on the remainder.

Car-parking space under the courtyard is envisaged and the development will be on a site that has a gradient 1 in 10.

Representatives of the Halesowen Council and the County Council have met to discuss publication of the Cradley district plan, at present in draft form, and they have discussed how best to get local peoples views.

The two ideas under consideration are a public meeting to explain the proposals, and the possibility of staging an exhibition.

OBJECTION

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, Ald. Clifford Willetts objected to procedure last month when after a street name had been changed in open council the matter was referred back.

In the Housing Committee report it was stated that as a result of the last council meeting consideration had been given to renaming “Huntingdon Gardens because of the possibility of the name being confused with Huntintree Road, Huntlands Estate, and Hunnington.

Although the committee recommended that the name should remain unchanged. Cllr. Fred Harris said that he still felt that there was still a chance of confusion. Asking for the reference back he suggested “Riverside” or Riverside Close” might be two alternatives to consider. Ald. P. W. Scott seconded.

Ald Willetts said that the name “Huntingdon Gardens had been accepted by the people of Cradley, and he warned that they might be alienated a little more if the name was changed.

Ald. Norman Garner (Deputy Mayor) said it not only had been accepted by the people of Cradley but by the Housing Committee. It was the third time it had been bought up in council.

Ald. Me. E. M. Bridge (vice-chairman of the Housing Committee) said it had been the unanimous decision of the committee that they should stick to the name chosen.

The reference back was defeated, only three voting for it.

Here is a part report, which is interesting from a historical view. It is almost certainly written by Clifford Willetts. B. G. W.

] this pavestone-like slab in its present position in the hope of preserving it.

For from this stone John Wesley preached during his visit to Cradley on March 19 1770. the founder of Methodism did not always get a friendly reception on his preaching tours, but Cradley took kindly to him though the weather was hostile, and he wrote in his journal! "The multitude of people obliged me to stand abroad, although the wind whistled around my head."

Originally the stone lay on a bend in Cradley High Street, near the church and at the centre of the village activities.

DUNGEON

Proclamations were read from it: its near neighbours were the stocks and a dungeon. In fact, the spot was known as Dungeon Head".

The stocks were burned one Bonfire Night, and the dungeon was demolished around 1850, though Mr. Harold Taylor's drapery store thereabouts has a one-time police cell as its coalhouse, with a heavily-studded door, barred window, peephole, and a trapdoor serving hatch for passing food to the prisoners.

The stone was set aside about 1850, and lay beside the Baptist Chapel there, forgotten – or almost forgotten, for some 70 years, when the High Street was widened and the stone again displaced, a Mr. Raybold remembered its significance to Wesleyans and made a plea for its preservation.

So Samuel Newby loaded it on a wheelbarrow and pushed it to its present position in Windmill Hill, where he then lived.

'IN JEOPARDY'

MR. Wilfred Williams, of 44 High Street, Cradley, to whom I am indebted for this story, told me: "Now the stone is in jeopardy again because of shopping development on Windmill Hill. I think it should be preserved for all time.

The Stone now lies in a place of honour at High Town Ragged School. B. G. W.

May 30th 1971

HALESOWEN COUNCIL'S 30 – 1 VOTE TO KEEP COUNTY LINK

BY A MAJORITY OF 30-1 Halesowen Council gave its approval at last night's annual meeting to the eight-page document setting out the Council's case for Halesowen remaining in Worcestershire.

The Government's White Paper on local governments reorganisation proposes that the borough should be merged with Warley and West Bromwich in a Metropolitan District.

The two members who expressed contrary views to the majority opinion were Ald. A. Brodie and Cllr. D. E. Aldridge, who strongly feel that Halesowen's future is with that conurbation.

But Cllr. Len Hughes swept into the attack hammering home the point that he felt it absolutely essential that Halesowen should remain in Worcestershire.

Cllr. Fred Harris said he was convinced that Halesowen was not part of the conurbation "though we are linked no doubt."

Cllr. Clifford Willetts said if he were in Ald. Brodie's position he would resign "and have a by-election and let the people decide." As an Alderman, Ald. Brodie represented no one, he said.

Ald. Brodie abstained from voting when acceptance of the document was put to the meeting. Cllr D. E. Aldridge voted against it.

BACHELOR MAYOR

Cllr. Arthur Brown (Lab.) was unanimously elected as Mayor. He appointed Ald. W. C. J. Ray as deputy mayor.

Cllr. Brown is the first bachelor Mayor. The Mayoress is Mrs. Celia Herbert, a former Mayoress and wife of Ald. Dai Herbert who moved Cllr. Brown's election as Mayor.

County Express November 1977

Letters to the Editor

Please ‘Not Cradley near Quarry Bank’

Sir, - Thank you for your excellent coverage of the report of the boundary proposals, particularly the reference to Cradley, I am sure now that Cradley people are well aware of the implications of the Commission’s recommendations.

The boundary of Cradley was formed in the year 957 by King Edward, a king of the West Saxons. This was 100 years before Domesday and over 1,000 years ago, it has remained unaltered ever since.

The proposal would destroy our heritage. Let there be no mistake of what it means. It severs Cradley in two and would take in our precious history. It would take our oldest church (Netherend), the Parish Church, Trinity, Providence, Baptist, Overend Mission, the former Bethesda Church and High Town Ragged School.

It would absorb all three political clubs, the two Darby and Joans and the proposed new community centre.

We have already lost our identity with the postal service and use the word “Cradley” at the risk of long delay in delivery.

It may mean a further change and end by us addressing letters Cradley, near Quarry Bank. All our resources must be marshalled to see that it doesn’t happen.

CLIFF WILLETTS

Halesowen

January 1977

Chilly... even for Scott

Even Scott of the Antarctic would have been daunted waiting for a bus in Halesowen, councillors at Dudley heard. For in an impassioned plea for more shelters to help bus travellers bear the cold, Councillor Cliff. Willetts told them: “If Captain Scott had visited here he would never have bothered going to the South Pole.”

8 November 1974

County Express - Letters to the Editor

Perpetuate their names

Sir, - I would like to make a few observations on your report of the meeting of the Halesowen Trades Council, re; names of roads. I think we should get the naming of places in proper perspective, particularly so far as Cradley is concerned.

As Cradley abounds in history, I Hold the view that we should perpetuate names of those who helped to make its history possible. Almost as soon as I became a member

of the council in 1935 an opportunity occurred. I suggested Wesley Avenue, to perpetuate the visit of John Wesley to Cradley on March 19, 1770. through the years, whenever the Council were requested to suggest names, I always did so. There followed Caslon Road, in memory of William Caslon, who lived in Cradley, Priestley Close after Joseph Priestley, FRS, who lived for a time in Chapel House Lane. Huntingdon Gardens for the development now taking place in Cradley, thus perpetuating the memory of Countess of Huntingdon who started the building of the Parish Church. Broadstone Avenue, which is a reminder of the Broadstone which divided the parishes of Lutley and Cradley and was recovered after lying buried for over 30 years.

So far as the names of rivers in the Tanhouse Lane Estate are concerned, in addition to Severn, Teme and Avon the name Salwarps was suggested. I successfully moved the amendment to substitute the name Stevens, in Memory of a family who farmed the land there for 100 years. There are a host of others, particularly in the Fatherless Barn Estate, but I hope I have given enough to indicate the interest some of take in naming roads.

Cllr. Green says "naming of roads is one of the most difficult jobs a councillor has" if only it were, our jobs would be a sinecure. The councillor could have told the Trades Council, that at the last meeting of the Dudley Council, I objected to a suggested name for a road in Cradley. The chairman of the planning committee agreed it was a valid objection and the name was withdrawn. I have since sent a proposed name to the appropriate officer, with reasons for the name. I also suggested that in future, when names were being chosen for roads in Cradley, the representatives should be given the opportunity of making suggestions.

CLIFFORD WILLETTS

Cradley

December 1977 - Letters to the Editor

Councillors role in road name choice

Sir, - I am delighted to read Jack Dealey's reasoned letter. It helps to enhance a long standing friendship with each other. On postal addresses, I did know from personal experience of the involvement of the Post Office.

I have, since I became a member of the council, been suggesting names for streets and developments and am glad to say, with one exception, they were accepted Wesley Avenue which I suggested to perpetuate the visit of John Wesley to Cradley.

Since the new authority came into being, I have pursued this interest. In fact, during the past few months the appropriate department have asked me to suggest nine names for new developments, six in Lyde Green and one at Mogul Lane; the other two were at Belle Vale and Mr. Deeley I'm sure will be pleased to know that the hymn tunes Crimond and Blenwern were accepted, as were my other suggestions.

I wish I could say the same about Councillor Swaysland's comments. Personal attacks, thinly veiled though they are, as names are not mentioned, will not help his cause. I have to assume his reference to "a former councillor" is Arthur Jones.

This gentleman has earned the respect of Cradley people in so many spheres, that they know where he has been and the service he has given. Alternatively, until some 12 months ago, no one had heard the name "Swaysland".

If he wants to achieve the same measure of respect, he will have to refrain from such metaphorical phrases as hysteria, meaningless rhetoric, scaremongers and false rumours.

It is all very well for him to say the Cradley people will decide. They will not. Our destiny, as I pointed out at the Commission enquiry, it is determined in some office in London by someone who has never been to Cradley and never sought the advice of Cradley people. This to me is a negation of democracy.

Behind these lines they draw on maps are people, people who are proud of their history and heritage.

Councillor Swaysland invites those like myself to "sit down and shut up". He completely misjudges the feelings of people born and bred in Cradley, and for myself I shall, as I have on similar issues in the past, stand up and speak up for the place where I was proud to be born and lived all my life.

CLIFF WILLETTS

Halesowen

November 1977

Silence ... for sign language

A great silence came over Dudley Council when Councillor Cliff Willetts took the floor.

The sometimes noisy assembly looked on as he demonstrated the art of deaf and dumb sign language.

He was offering to help the social services committee, which was concerned over a shortage of interpreters when deaf people had to be interviewed by police.

Councillor Willetts admitted that he was no expert, but proved to the council that he was able to go through the sign language alphabet.

Social services chairman, Councillor David Gaunt, said “Fortunately we have now got three volunteers who can do this work.

“But Councillor Willetts will make a very good long stop.

This verse was received by Cllr Cliff Willetts after he had been expelled from the Labour Party but before the election when he defeated the official Labour candidate by 900 votes. There was no follow up received! The identity if J. W. is not known.
B. G. W.

WHERE GOEST THOU?

What, when the votes are counted
And the Officer presiding
Declares that you have lost,
What then? Will you drag your feet?
I wonder what you'd say, if as you left,
You met “young Clifford” on the steps,
And he should say,
Were all my sacrifices made that
That I should come to this?
Why did you waste that young
And precious life of mine if you,
My older self, are satisfied
With straying from the cause?”.
What should you do if he, exhorting,
Bid you come back to himself
And start again from there?
What would you say?

J. W.

December 1977 - Letters to the Editor

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CLIFF WILLETTS

Halesowen