

Eccleshall

Staffordshire



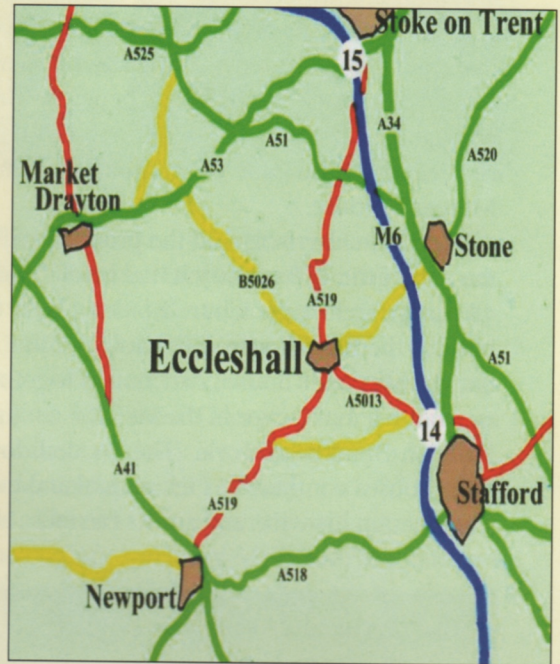
The story of some of
the town's
historic buildings



High Street
North Side

Number One

*Eccleshall,
a unique country
town of
historical interest*



Produced by
The Ecclian Society

*'dedicated to the preservation and
enhancement of Eccleshall,
a unique country town of
historical interest'*

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Continued ⇨

Shaftesbury House, 2, High Street, Grade II Listed

It is probable that Eccleshall's Moot Court met on this site from the 12th century to the end of the Middle Ages. Moot is a Saxon word for a general meeting. In the Moot Court the lord of the manor decided issues of law and order. He dealt with those duties and services owed by villeins and peasants to the lord of the manor and to the community.

The Court Leet was held here, too. This Court had many powers. It oversaw the maintenance of water courses and ditches, roads and paths. It supervised the use of

common land and prevented unlawful enclosures. It dealt with "every felony at common law", punishing people for crimes ranging from minor assaults through arson, burglary, larceny, manslaughter and murder, to treason. The Plea Rolls for 1473 tell us:

"William Gunne sued Thomas Brasevelle of Eccleshall, girdeler, and William Grene of Eccleshall, tailour, for breaking into his close and houses in Eccleshall, taking his goods and chattels to the value of 40s, and abducting his servants Joan Walton and Katrine Stokton, so that he lost their services for a length of time. The defendants did not appear, and the Sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce them on the Octaves of St John the Baptist."

Furthermore, the Court Leet dealt with such issues as the adulteration of food, checking weights and measures, and even people's morals if they affected the community at large.



After Tudor times the Moot and Leet courts were gradually replaced by other courts and the building was eventually pulled down and replaced. In 1686, the earliest record shows that one Catherine Wilcox lived here. The premises were occupied by Walter Blakeman's confectionary business from 1822 to 1842 and Turner's bakery and tea rooms from 1868 to 1931. More recently Dora Jones, née Turner, ran a sweet shop and tobacconists in these premises for approximately thirty years.

6, High Street, Grade II Listed

Charles Barrett, timber merchant, builder and ironmonger, had his workshop and yard on this site before 1871. He built the first Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Stone Road. By right of a medieval royal charter, Eccleshall had a weekly market on Fridays. In the 19th century traders sold meat, butter, eggs, and poultry from under the arches of the Crown and Royal Oak Inns. The market prospered and in 1884 this unusual timber fronted building jutting out over the pavement was built by public subscription at a cost of £700 as a market hall.

In the 1990s when boxes of documents were being cleared from the ex-Congregational Church on Horsefair, where the post van was garaged, documents referring to an early 19th century reading club were found. The club met in the market hall and its first honorary secretary was estate agent Mr T. H. Garlick.

The new fashion of Penny Readings caught hold of the popular fancy and, during winter months, people met publicly to read aloud and play instruments for entertainment. One Penny Reading, held at the Royal Oak rather than in the market hall, attracted an audience of over 350 people. The chairman and organiser on that occasion was the High Street wine merchant Samuel Yates.



London House, 28, High Street, Grade II Listed

Jeoffry (sic) Snelson, paid £50 to have this house built in 1717. At that time, to give some idea of relative values, it would have taken a farm labourer ten years to earn this amount. Snelson was a mercer, a dealer in textiles, particularly linen, and as was the common practice in the 18th and 19th centuries his house was his shop and workplace as well as his home. He had it built of brick with extensive cellars and a clay tile roof, rather than thatch. It has been rendered but much of the joinery in the upper storeys is original. The name London House came from the proceeds of the family's pottery and clothing businesses in Lambeth, London.

In the 16th century the Snelson family had lived three miles away at Greatwood. When the house was complete they moved away from Greatwood and Jeoffry's son, Thomas, worked and lived in this house until 1760. The family had considerable wealth and commemorated itself in Holy Trinity Church with a plaque dedicated to Thomas by his son Jeoffry. This is on the left wall beyond the choir stalls in the sanctuary, near the altar. This second Jeoffry, 1749-1812, was a Church of England vicar, serving, among other places, at Hanbury near to Tutbury in Staffordshire. The descendants of the family live in Canada and they still visit their home town from time to time.



By the time of the 1871 census Elijah Thomas, a saddler, lived at The London House. Since then it has had a varied life being in turn an estate agent's, a grocer's, a general store and café and lately The London House Restaurant.

46 and 48, High Street, Grade II Listed

Numbers 46 and 48 were originally a single house. Bishop Lloyd's records show that it was built before 1696 for John Harrison. The outbuildings included barns, stables, a malthouse and cart house plus a back house, a garden and an orchard. The main house was built on both sides of Perle Brook so that there was water for livestock. The culverted brook still runs beneath the passageway dividing the two properties and is visible to the rear of number 48, The Mercer's House.

A later John Harrison sold the property to Thomas Harrison and until 1740 it was a bakery. By the end of the 18th century it had been divided into two. Thomas Harrison had the "upper" part, 48 (i.e. nearer to the Church), along with the barns, stables, and the back part of the property, but not the back house. Yet another John Harrison had the "lower" house, 46, along with the backhouse, malt house, cart house together with the garden and orchard. The building was treated to a make over in the late 18th century, giving it an up-to-date Georgian style frontage in Flemish Bond brickwork. The hooded door case and bay windows are 19th century additions. Both houses continued as residential and business properties in the 19th century. In 1831 Samuel Yates set up his wine and spirits business at 46 and 44. This was subsequently sold at the end of the century to Henry Millward, the landlord of the Royal Oak. The 1851 census records that James Nance, surgeon, lived and had his practice at number 48. He was followed by other surgeons and physicians who practised here well into the 20th century.



Church Lodge, 70 – 72, High Street

The deeds of the house and information from censuses show that until 1876 there were three dwellings described as “freehold messuages or tenements” on this site, possibly with another small dwelling house behind them. A messuage is a house, its outbuildings and the site on which they were built. The cottages faced the street and had long, narrow plots known as burgages, stretching north towards the meadow. During alterations to the house in the 1980’s evidence of the old cottages was found.

In 1876 Fredrick GreatRex, a solicitor living and practising in Stafford, bought the properties and redeveloped the site. His father, Christopher GreatRex, was a General Practitioner in Eccleshall for sixty years and lived in Lonsdale House, now Lonsdale Court. He died in 1880 and is buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. Fredrick GreatRex demolished the old buildings and erected “two new brick and tile dwellings.” Church Lodge was the larger part of the building. This included the door on the left and the bay windows. Church Lodge Cottage was the smaller house next to the entry.

Church Lodge was let successively to William Garlick, draper’s assistant, Elizabeth Kinnersley, Joseph Wright, an elementary schoolmaster and from 1927 to 1949 to Mr Arthur Ibbs. He acted as registrar of births and deaths, school attendance and relieving officer. In later years the owners included the local veterinary surgeons, a retired engineer and a retired vicar.

Church Lodge Cottage was occupied initially by the Seabridge family. Peter Seabridge was the postman and Parish Clerk. He died in the belfry of Holy Trinity Church and a plaque to his



memory is on the wall just inside the church. From the time of the First World War until 1982 members of the Tildesley family lived here.

In 1982 the two houses were combined into one property known as Church Lodge and the frontage of the house was changed by the creation of a garage.

Holly House, 80 – 82, High Street, Grade II Listed

Holly House stands next to the lych-gate of Holy Trinity Church. Behind it there is an extensive building. The deeds show that this was originally a malt house. It has a blue brick ground floor constructed three or four feet below the level of the churchyard. This was to provide a humid atmosphere for the germination of the barley. The two floors above have external doors that were originally for the receipt of the barley and the discharge of the malt. In living memory there was a manual hoist on the second floor, part of which was still covered with gypsum plaster over wooden slats and straw, a surface commonly used in malt houses during the 18th and 19th centuries. A two storey coach house and stables with an external staircase were demolished in the 1960s.



In the 1870s Holly House was used as a Gentlemen's boarding school for thirteen boys aged from ten to fifteen. Joseph Bernard, born in Gnosall, was the headmaster and his mother acted as housekeeper. A teacher's assistant, a governess and two domestic servants also lived there. From 1881 to 1891 the school was based in Claremonte House on Stone Road. By 1901, in the days before old age pensions or occupational pensions, Mr Bernard had been admitted to Stone workhouse.



The census of 1891 shows that Holly House was the home of Mr Matthew Plant, his wife Jane and their eight children. Mr Plant was an "ale and porter merchant and bottler." He probably used the back buildings for his work and two of his sons became "merchant's assistants". He died in 1908. At the turn of the 19th century, Charles Myatt lived here. He was a builder and erected some of the houses on Stafford Road. The house was bought in 1913 by Thomas Weston, who used the outbuildings as workshops for his carpentry business.

Despite the many changes of occupant and the variety of domestic and commercial uses to which the associated buildings have been put, the appearance of the house has changed little since the 19th century. The building behind Holly House was converted into a separate dwelling between 1976 and 1982 and is called The Malthouse today.