

**Memories of Wednesfield with Ray Fellows
(published in the Wednesfield Magazine, 2016)**

Wednesfield Institute

Ray takes a look at a letter he received from ex-Wednesfield man, Bill Enoch, who now (2016) lives in Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

“A relative in Wednesfield has sent me some items from the Wednesfield Magazine April/May 2016 edition, which has rung several bells in my memory.

Firstly, I was very sad to read of the disappearance of the ‘Stute’ as it featured in my life from an early age. I first went there on Sunday mornings in the mid-1930’s to St Thomas’ Sunday School which was held there. I also remember going to see a performance of Gilbert & Sullivan’s opera “The Gondoliers” by a local operatic society with my father Les in the cast.

The Stute was the venue for all kinds of social occasions right through the war years and beyond. Flower shows, school prize-giving, bazaars, whist drives, concerts, not to mention the superb dance floor and the twice weekly dances to Bob White’s Band, which were always packed. It was at these dances that I met my future wife, Vera.

Behind the ballroom was a men’s social club run by Sam Adey, a life-long friend of my grandfather Will Pickering. It had three first-class snooker tables, and in a smaller room there was a table-tennis table. I was able to join the club when I was 14 years old, and learned to play both sports.

Another thing that caught my eye was mention of the Lancaster bomber that came down on May 17th 1945. As the news spread through the town, a bunch of us kids were on our bikes and down to the site within the hour. Utter devastation, and the only recognisable things were the engines; the rest was in small pieces including (alas) body parts. I remember to this day the overwhelming smell of fuel in the air. A solitary local policeman was there, but he didn’t ‘shoo’ us away or tell us not to touch anything. How very different from today.

I lived on Orchard Road in my early married life, and I also worked for the Chubb Lock & Safe Co, from 1952 until 1985. I eventually moved onto the sales side, which is how I ended up in Derbyshire. I remember that the tennis club was at the top of Vicarage Road where, I think, the Royal British Legion Club is”.

Thanks for those memories Bill.