

Rowell Heritage

The Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre Magazine



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£2

Free to Friends of the Heritage Centre



Rowell Heritage - Issue16

We are dependent on advertisers as their financial support is vital to the funding of this newsletter. However, your contributions are equally important so if you have anything you wish to submit for inclusion in future issues, please send it to either the manager or the editors at the address below.

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Deadline for March / April 2017 Issue:
Monday 13th February 2017

Cover Picture: Rothwell Manor House
G Davis (2015)

Friends of the Heritage Centre

As the festive season draws to a close and another year begins, it is time to remind our friends that their membership subscription for 2017 is now due.

This can be paid at the Centre and it is a good time to make sure that we have your correct details: address, post code, phone number & email address in case any of these have changed.

Your benefits of membership include six issues of this magazine published in January, March, May, July, September and November and you can collect your free copies from the Centre. Friends are also entitled to a reduced admission fee at most of our talks.

Every purchase of the magazine is important in raising funds to help in the preservation of this town's wonderful history.

Thank you to everybody who has supported the Rothwell Arts and Heritage Centre during 2016 and special thanks to all of the volunteers.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

Please note that while we take every care to be accurate, no liability will be accepted should any of the contents of this magazine be incorrect.

Dear Readers

A Happy New Year to you all.

I would like to start by thanking Geoff Davis for all his hard work in editing (and often distributing) this magazine over the last few years. I hope that with his support, Barry and I can be as successful as he was.

For those of you who don't know us, here is a bit of background information.

My maiden name was Parker and my roots in Rothwell date back to the 1880s when the family moved here from Newton Harcourt, just over the border in Leicestershire.

My mother's family moved here more recently, when my grandfather, Joe Wiggins, became landlord of the Woolpack pub in World War 2. By the time Grandma and Granddad moved out, Mum and Dad had married.

They lived first in Madams Hill with my paternal grandparents and then at 31 Market Hill. This was once the Old Surgery next to F.J. Dines (See photo left). It is now for some reason, number 34.



Mum's sister Vera also stayed in the town and married Derek Newman. Now that's a name you all know.

Living on Market Hill was never dull, especially as we were next door to the Church Sunday School and Youth Club. It was always an open house and pantomime week saw a flood of visitors. Our various friends came in and out, before and after performances, to wash and dress.

Rowell Fair week was no different but this time it was mum's hot dogs they were after.

Mr and Mrs Holland who owned the dodgems used to give me and my brother and sister free rides as a way of saying thank you for them being able to get water from our house.

I moved to Kettering for a few years after I met and married Barry. We moved back here in 1987.

We both took early retirement at the end of 2015 and are now enjoying spending more time with our families. After years of early mornings it is lovely not to have to set the alarm.

I had worked at Kettering General Hospital for 25 years as an IT Trainer and whilst Barry's background was in engineering, he spent his last two years at KGH too, as a porter.

Retirement has meant that at last I am able to fulfil my wish of becoming involved with the Arts and Heritage Centre and was therefore delighted to be offered the role of Editor.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Rowell Heritage and would like to thank all our sponsors and contributors for their support.

Val and Barry

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Methodist Church Sunday School Reunion

Hi to all members of the Rothwell Methodist Church in the fifties and sixties!

We (i.e. Max Green, Jayne Atter and Helen Chapman) are organising a get-together, with buffet lunch, for all those involved in the Methodist Church Sunday School, Youth Club or Social Hour during the fifties and sixties! This reunion will be held at the Rothwell Methodist Church at 12.00pm on Wed. 29th March 2017. Please put this date in your diary!

Tickets are now on sale at £10.00. They can be bought from Alan Joyce, Margaret Read, Max Green, Jayne Atter and Helen Chapman. All profits will be donated to Rothwell Methodist Church. We think it would be fantastic just to meet with everyone again.

I hope the accompanying photo will jog some memories and if you have any photos suitable for our display boards, please let us know.

Best wishes

Helen, Jayne and Max



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Local and National Events

50 years ago

1967

4th January - Donald Campbell was killed while driving a Bluebird K7, a jet-powered boat, on Coniston Water; Campbell was trying to beat his own speed record.

7th January - The television series The Forsyte Saga was first shown on BBC Two.

15th January - The United Kingdom entered the first round of negotiations for EEC membership, in Rome.

23rd January - Milton Keynes was formally designated as a new town by the government.

27th January - Three astronauts died in Apollo 1 tragedy. A fire in the Command Module killed astronauts Grissom, White & Chaffee during a launch rehearsal

Heritage Centre Tea Room

Have you heard of the Heritage Centre Tea Room? Have you visited it, I wonder.

A little haven, full of atmosphere from days gone by, it is perfect for your mid-morning break - with toasted tea-cakes, biscuits and cakes waiting to tempt you. Your dogs are welcome too!

This special venue has gradually evolved and grown to supply your needs and now offers so much.

We can be available to serve delicious teas for any group, club or society. A patio outside awaits you on a sunny morning and a small marquee can also be erected for a larger gathering.

We are really here to cater for the needs and wishes of our community, for two or twenty two, or more! Do come and visit us and discover what we have to offer.

The tea room is always open on Monday, Friday and Saturday mornings and sometimes others too.

We look forward to seeing, greeting and serving you - with a slice of cake.

Pat and Christine.



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A tribute to Olive Roberts (23.3.1926 – 29.11.2016)

By Ann Jones

Olive was born in Cheshire. She was one of twin girls born on 23rd March 1926, the same year as our Queen. As a young woman she met her husband Phillip Roberts. He was in the Royal Navy so during WW2 Olive joined the Wrens. They were married and lived to celebrate over 60 years together.

They came to Rothwell where Phillip became manager of Rothwell Co-operative Menswear 57 years ago. They had three children: Martin, Kathy and Howard. Olive had a shop selling ladies fashion, on the Market Hill where Frank's butcher is now. She then worked at Gladstone Street School as Canteen Manager and later opened 'Olive's Oven' in Tresham Street.

On her retirement she became a model for Trudi Claire's fashion shop and carried on well into her 80's. She was a great advert for the shop as she walked around Rothwell in her kitten heels.

She was a valued member of Rothwell Town Women's' Guild and Rothwell Twinning Association.

A supporter of the Heritage Centre she was a much respected lady who will be missed by many.



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GC-LFT 9639

Arts and Craft Fair - Saturday 10th December

The day was a great success and we had over 100 visitors to the centre. The total amount raised for the centre, including stall fees, refreshments and raffle was £122.



Thank you to everyone who supported the event.

Rothwell Arts and Heritage Centre Dates to Remember for 2017

January

Saturday 21st Special New Year Coffee Morning

February

Friday 24th Talk – Being a Special Constable by Robert Denton

March

Saturday 25th Spring 1950's Disco (To be confirmed)

April

Tuesday 4th 7.30 pm An evening with Dennis Binks

May

Saturday 13th Special Coffee Morning / Strawberry Fair

Friday 26th Talk – The Suffragettes by Peter Barray (To be confirmed)

June

Saturday 3rd Arts and Craft Fair

Saturday 10th Rowell Tart Fair (To be confirmed)

Saturday 24th A 1920's evening

July

Saturday 15th A 1940's afternoon

Friday 28th Centre Open Evening & Cheese and Wine Evening

August

Saturday 19th A 1950/60's evening

Friday 25th Talk – Northamptonshire by Peter Deakin (To be confirmed)

September

Tuesday 12th 7.30 pm An Evening with Dennis Binks

Saturday 30th Macmillan Coffee Morning (To be confirmed)

October

Saturday 21st Special Coffee Morning and Cake Making Competition

November

Friday 3rd Talk – The Gunpowder Plot by Malcom Dealin (To be confirmed)

December

Saturday 9th Arts and Craft Fair

Friday 15th Early Rowell Santa on low loader

Saturday 16th Special Coffee Morning – Mince Pies, Mulled Wine etc.

Note: Programme Subject to Change

Rothwell Arts and Heritage Centre Film Club Programme for 2017

January

Wednesday 11th 2.00 pm *Film Club - South Pacific (1955)*

February

Wednesday 8th 2.00 pm *Film Club - Lady of Burlesque (1943)*

March

Wednesday 15th 2.00 pm *Film Club – Sabrina (1954)*

April

Wednesday 12th 2.00 pm *Film Club – Roman Holiday (1952)*

May

Wednesday 17th 2.00pm *Film Club – A Place in the Sun (1951)*

June

Wednesday 14th 2.00 pm *Film Club – To Catch a Thief (1954)*

July

Wednesday 12th 2.00 pm *Film Club - Rebecca (1940)*

August

Wednesday 16th 2.00 pm *Film Club – Penny serenade*

September

Wednesday 13th 2.00 pm *Film Club – The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1952)*

October

Wednesday 11th 2.00 pm *Film Club – His Girl Friday (1940)*

November

Wednesday 15th 2.00 pm *Film Club – Murder at the Gallop (1963)*

December

Wednesday 13th 2.00 pm *Film Club – The Road to Bali (1952)*

Note: Programme Subject to Change

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Oxford Products (Rothwell) Ltd

**Manufacturers of Welding Transformers,
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This is where it all began, circa 1954 – this building behind 15 Oxford Street, Rothwell, complete with Mr Burgess's observatory which had been removed when Mr James Lloyd Pratt bought this property as his family home. He was working at that time as the General Manager of The Cytringan Electric Welding Company, 13 Cambridge Street, Kettering. The remaining building had been structurally altered to become a sizeable workshop, complete with a new pitched roof.

This was destined to become the first workshop of Oxford Products (Rothwell) Limited, initially on a part time basis. Mr Jim Pratt was joined in this new venture by his brother, a skilled engineer working at the Timpson's Perfecta Works in Kettering and Mr Richard Thomas Pratt. (They were also helped by his Father Mr Alfred Pratt, who I understood at the time, helped out financially, but didn't want to be a Director).



The first products manufactured were Electrode Holders and Earth Clamps made to the following designs on press tools produced by Dick, for use on large fly presses. An old second-hand D.C. Generator type welder was also purchased to weld the copper contact jaws on the Electrode Holders. It was at this point that Mr Anthony Earnest Coleman joined the Company and became the third Director. It was his welding skill that now came into play, followed in due course by his knowledge of coil winding and transformer building. (Incidentally the D.C. Generator/Welder was the one used by Mr Roy Weston for many, many years.)

The very first employee was Mr Cliff Abrahms all be it, part time, closely followed by Mr Billy Spencer, who was working during the day for A.E. Smith coach-builders (unbeknown at that time of course, he was destined to be the last employee out of the factory, locking the door after him on that final day. See photograph). I (David Page) followed Billy soon after working all day at Cytringan and then for Oxford Products part time evenings. Initially we were producing something in the order of one hundred of each electrode holder and earth clamp, per week.



In 1956 I was called up to do my national service. Late 1956 early 1957 the production of Welding Equipment started and more room was needed the New Inn on Kettering Road stood empty and was for sale. Jim bought it and production started. I called in a couple of times whilst on leave and Mick Smith tells me everybody who was then employed was asking who I was. Mick of course was able to tell them. Arthur Henley was there by then and Mick of course but I can't remember who else, somebody will no doubt enlighten me.

I recall that soon after I joined the company we had to get permission from the ministry of transport to repaint the sign changing it from 'The New Inn' to Oxford Products (Rothwell) Ltd.

The Young brothers (William and Charles George) became the main customer very early on in the company's history and remained so for as long as I can remember. Indeed it was Mr Young whom encouraged Jim to leave Cytringan and branch out into Welding Equipment, I think there many have been some form of agreement whereby Messrs C.G. and W Young of Twickenham, would guarantee to take a percentage of machines produced and they eventually became our main agents World Wide. Robert Young, son of Charles, took over in due course. I believe Mick Smith is still in touch with Robert. We produced an own brand range for them called 'Olympic'.

When I was de-mobbed from the Royal Air Force in 1958, Jim offered me a job and I was able to play my part along with everybody else in building one absolutely superb company. At this time there were six of us employed by the embryonic Oxford Products company.

Oxford products prospered and grew into quite a formidable force in the Welding Industry; we actually held at one time some 25% of the U.K. in our particular area - stick welders. We were also exporting quite a lot and at one time it was in the order of 25/30% of our machines and accessories mainly to the old British Empire /Commonwealth Countries. I used to have a complete list of countries supplied, but that of course has gone, between us we should be able to produce a near full list. Some of them I can recall being; Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong, India and Ceylon, Sudan, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Tanganyika, Uganda, Zambia, Southern Rhodesia, Nigeria, Gambia, The Gold Coast Jamaica, Barbados and St. Kitts. One other country, which remains in my mind, is Russia (The old U.S.S.R.) How we came to supply them I can't remember.

The 'New Inn' as it was always called, soon became inadequate, with poor old Lenny Wright working outside most of the day. The Seargents Boot & Shoe Factory, on the Market Hill became vacant, the price was right and the property was purchased. Bill Tranter and I were given the job of sorting it all out, deciding on initial layouts and getting all the services in place ready to move in 1963(?). This we did, as I recall, fairly smoothly. Production was barely disrupted and steadily grew until at our peak over 200 units, a mix of all sizes, were being built per week.

The Cytringan Electric Welder Company was bought in 1972 (?), and eventually moved over to the Rothwell Factory where we continued to manufacture this range together with the 'Oxford' range. Eventually they were all the same structurally, just a different colour and logo. Ironically it was common to go into a workshop in many industries and find both Oxford and Cytringan equipment being used side by side on the same work, each welder swearing that his equipment was better than the other, little did they realise that they were for all intent identical. At this time we employed in the region of 100 people, mainly from Rothwell itself but others from Desborough, Kettering, the surrounding villages such as Loddington, Harrington and Broughton, plus one or two from Corby.



In 1967 we had a near disaster; a fire broke out in the early hours, one Friday evening in the preparation and spray shop area which was situated at the very bottom of the old row of cottages and went straight up through the main stores and roof. Mr Polmaeteer the chemist and his wife lived in the remaining cottage adjacent and connected to this part of the building. They were extremely lucky, only a relatively small area of his roof loft was burnt plus some smoke damage. Everybody rallied around and the damage was quickly sorted out and any necessary repairs carried out. I believe we only lost a couple of days of full production. This was essential because at that time we were in the middle of quite a large export order, which fortunately was dispatched on time.

We did actually produce a one portable generator welding set. Mr George James, the blacksmith at Broughton purchased, it at cost to us, to assess and put it through its paces, with a view to producing them. This was not to be and a range of Air-cooled Welding Transformers (The Trojan Range) took precedence over them. His son was still using it up to a relatively short time ago.

The 'Trojan' range of air-cooled welding transformers was developed and we purchased the 'Old Methodist Sunday School Building' just over the road in Well Lane. This was laid out especially for the production and this range. This soon became inadequate and Gambles old factory, in Crown Yard, High Street, was purchased and duly altered. 'Trojan' production transferred to this site. Space was still a problem and a unit on Telford Industrial Estate was rented and used as our distribution centre.

A lot of other work was being done such as special design work for B.O.C. Glasgow and Philips Electric Arc Welding Ltd. This in time led to the designed, pre-production and prototype Semi-automatic equipment for both M.I.G. and T.I.G welding processes. Together with associated add on equipment such as D.C. converters and High Frequency generators, plus a range of accessories for these processes.

By 1975 the company had become extremely successful and showed a turnover, for that financial year in excess of £750,000.00. That was a lot of money in those days, at today's values this would be something like £5,250,000.00. If things had carried on this would have been substantially more, but then things, not just the market place but other factors came into play and there was a steady fall in the fortunes of Oxford Products (Rothwell) Ltd, which by now incidentally had been renamed Oxford Products (Sales) Ltd., to my mind and I'm only one, this was a mistake.

Following the death of the Company Founder, Mr J.L. Pratt in 1980 there appears to have been a fairly steady and increasingly rapid decline and eventually the sale to an outside Group of Companies, and the demise in due course, with final closure in 1998.



I can't be more precise about the last paragraph as I was no longer involved, having moved on in 1978.

By David A. Page A.Weld.I.
Ex Technical Director.
Oxford Products (Rothwell) Ltd.

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ROTHWELL HERITAGE CRAFTS

Have you a skill to share, want to learn a skill? Have you time for others, would like some like-minded company? Would you like to help raise the profile of Rothwell, want to raise your own? This could be just what you want . . .

. . . Rothwell Heritage Crafts is a new group, but with a difference, we aim to include *all* sorts of different crafts and not be dedicated to just one. Working on a not-for-profit basis, the group will be 'owned' by all members.

For £3 a week, we will be accessible on a weekly basis for you to come as little or often as you want. The £3 charge belongs to all the members and is to help cover the cost of hiring our room and, hopefully, our tea, coffee and bikkies, maybe even more?

We hope to attract both young and old and it would be wonderful to be able to pass some of our skills to youngsters wherever possible.

Everyone is valued and at all levels. This is a social inclusion group who's only rule is spread happiness and contentment.

We hope to organise outings, sale days for the public to visit us and maybe even visit craft fairs together, maybe host our own in time.

The group founder is a qualified and experienced teacher (spinning, crochet, designer and leather carver). Formal lessons are also available by arrangement on a one-to-one basis.

Interested? We hope you are.

CONTACT Linzi Mason 01536 418977

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School Days at Gladstone Street during World War 2

By Ann Jones

The School Building - this was less than half the size it is now and assembly was held in two classrooms with the partition pulled back. Many of the children had fathers away at war for many months, even years and in assembly we would pray for their safe return and an end to the war.

The school hall was used for woodwork class, cooking and school dinners. This meant a lot of furniture moving, which was done mostly by the older boys. They were quite big as those who didn't pass the 11+ examination stayed on at this school until they were 14 years old.



The girls' playground was alongside Gladstone Street and the boys at the top of the street so we were always apart at playtime. At 9.00 am the teacher rang a bell and we proceeded into school.

There was a school garden and all the big boys were encouraged to dig for victory. Every bit of garden space was used to grow food during the war as many merchant ships were beached and we had to try and be self-sufficient.

The air raid shelters were across the school garden under the ground. As soon as the air raid siren sounded we had to move quickly to the shelters and stay there until the all clear sounded. There was an Elsan toilet at the end of each shelter as we weren't allowed to leave for any reason. We would pass the time reciting our times tables or singing cheerful war songs

Staff and monitors - Most of the young male teachers were soldiers in the war so most of the teachers were ladies and some quite old. They had Victorian standards and were quite strict. Anyone who was very naughty would end up outside the Headmaster's study to receive the cane. Being late for school was a caning offence.

Good boys and girls were made monitors. Some were milk monitors who collected the crates of milk for the classroom - one third of a pint for each pupil and a straw inserted into the cardboard top. We all had to sit at our desks and drink the milk at morning playtime. They we were all expected to go the toilets across the yard. These were rather primitive. A row of wooden seats with a hole in and one pull flush at the end of the row. There were cubicles but only the end toilet worked with the flush. If paper was required we had to ask the teacher who gave you just one piece, so most of us took some to school with us in our pockets.

Some monitors had the job of filling the ink wells on the desks. We were all given a pen and a piece of blotting paper. Blackboard monitors would rub the board clean when the lesson ended or when requested by the teacher. There were also tea monitors who had to make the tea for the teachers and take it to them on a tray.

School dinners - We had tables in the hall for school dinners and any left-over food would have to be deposited in the pig bins. The food which came in containers did not always look very appetising and we were told to eat it up and not be faddy.

Uniforms and Gas Masks - We had no uniform and mothers had to be careful with clothing coupons so many of us wore hand-me-downs and home-made clothing. The boys' trousers were often made from a pair of dad's and everything was made big enough for us to grow in to. Blakey's studs were hammered into the soles of our shoes to stop the leather wearing away too quickly. On ice covered roads and pavements these helped us to make good slides which the caretaker (Mr Baxter) would put salt on before playtime.

We had to carry our gas masks at all times and had regular checks at school when we had to put them on. They smelt of rubber and would mist up if you didn't wet the visor on them. My sister, at the infant school, had a Micky Mouse gas mask with a nose that flapped. Mine was black like the adults ones. Babies had a contraption that fitted over the crib. It was a great relief that the gas did not come. Many old men from the First World War would tell awful stories of being gassed in the trenches. Pieces of board in the streets, like bird tables, were painted green with a special paint which turned colour in the event of gas being present.

Transport - Everybody walked or cycled to school. Cars were only allowed for essential drivers such as doctors and farmers. Even the police man rode a bicycle. Petrol was in short supply and rationed. Milk was delivered on a horse pulled float and the baker had a horse drawn van. In the winter we loved to sledge to school in the snow. There was no danger of cars getting in the way on Glendon Road and the only traffic we met were the men from the ironstone pits, on their bicycles. They worked all hours to get the iron ore for the war effort. It was transported by small trains to Corby where it was made into steel at the steel works. The Germans would like to have blown up the works but thankfully never managed it.

All signposts were taken away from road junctions to make us more secure and any strangers in the area were treated with suspicion. All adults had to carry their identity card with them. No street lights were allowed or were very dimly lit. Everyone tried to get home before dark and carried torches with clips fitted. The school windows all had blackout curtains fitted as well as tape across the glass to prevent it shattering in the event of a bomb blast.

The Americans - One Christmas the Americans came from the air base at Harrington. They came in jeeps and brought an orange and sweets for all the children. One was dressed like Father Christmas but they all seemed like Father Christmas to us. I was lucky enough to be in the class chosen to be taken to the air base for a party and we were loaded up in army lorries and taken in style to the air base canteen. The airmen waited on us and brought me a big dish of chocolate stuff which I thought was pudding and hot. I got a shock when I found out it was ice cream as I had never seen it before. We all had a toy from the tree and mine was a cardboard dolls house

Toys and Collections - Toys were in short supply and many were home-made. My sister and I wanted a black doll so mum made them out of blackout material. We had never seen black people before the Americans came. They would give us chewing gum and we would stick it on the bed post to save it for morning and at meal times we stuck it under the table.

The Red Cross had a toy shop where second hand toys could be bought but you couldn't just go in and buy one. A price would be put on the toy and if someone else made a better offer the price could go up. We had to wait until the end of the month to see who had been lucky. We were always collecting things for the war effort. Silver paper, newspapers and in the summer we collected rose hips for rose hip syrup. All of these things would be pushed to school on old prams which the boys made out of boxes and old pram wheels. We had as much fun making the toys as we did playing with them.

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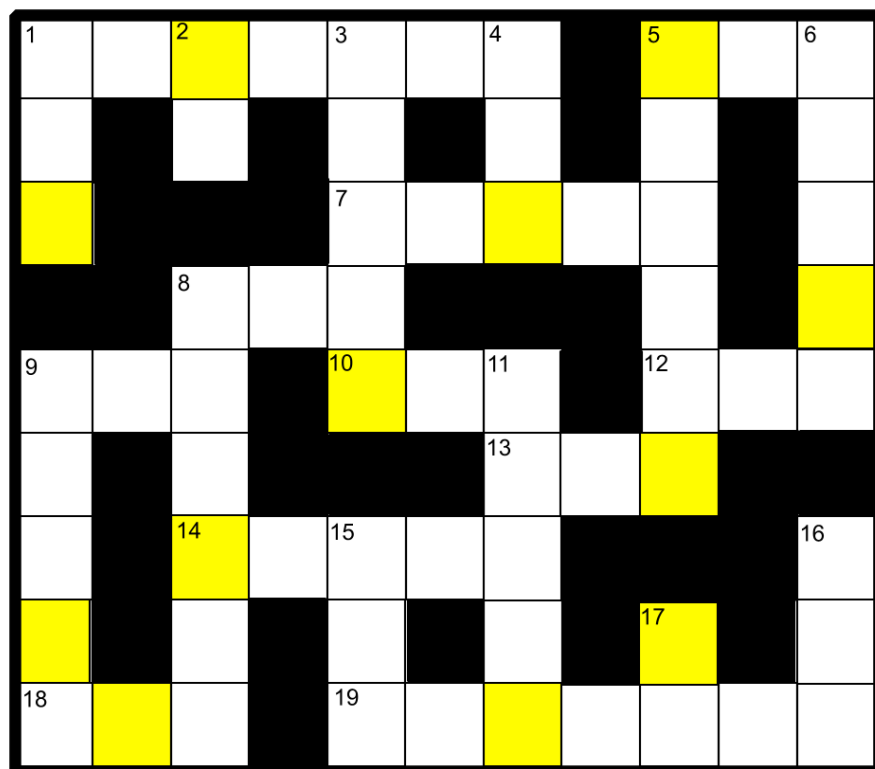
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Across

1. Science and history of the Earth's Crust (7)
5. Nocturnal bird of prey (3)
7. A written record of a commercial transaction (5)
8. Burdock seed vessel (3)
9. Expression of admiration (3)
10. A brew (3)
12. A small hole or loop (3)
13. A charged particle (3)
14. Yearned deeply (5)
18. To make public (3)
19. Composer of the Blue Danube (7)

Down

1. A colloid (3)
2. Belonging to (2)
3. The Marriage of Figaro for example (5)
4. Thus far (3)
5. Odourless gas (6)
6. A long pointed rod used as a tool or weapon (5)
8. A Town in Derbyshire (6)
9. 3rd letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
11. A downy sea duck (5)
15. Digits briefly (3)
16. An electrical conductor that makes a common connection (3)
17. Chemical symbol for gold (2)

Rearrange the yellow squares to spell out a word connected to the fair

Answers in next Issue

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