

## Celebrating the life of local wheelwright, Mr Leonard Wright

# Canal zones ...

ELDERLY gentlemen with good memories are repeatedly urged by those younger, to commit their memories of times past to paper.

In similar vein I am frequently approached by would-be journalists who advise me heavily to "have a word with" so-and-so because he's got "a good story to tell".

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The elderly gentlemen invariably die without having given posterity the benefit of their memoirs and I, thwarted by a shortage of time, similarly fail to capture other people's yesterdays.

Occasionally, however, there is a combination of effort.

The late Mr. Leonard Wright, latterly of Waltham and one time wheelwright of Alvingham parish, was I am happy to say, an acquaintance of mine.

He achieved great age and retained a clear memory and was frequently of great assistance to me in years gone by when I was at this newspaper's Louth office.

A few years ago I recall telling the story of how he and the Alvingham make-shift firefighters came to the rescue of burning Grimsby in 1942 in a commandeered car towing a tired and totally inadequate fire pump.

Now, post mortem (for Mr. Wright died last year), I discover that Leonard Wright did his bit at Alvingham in the 1914-18 lot and an amusing memoir of those far off days appears in the booklet **Keep The Home Fires Burning** just published by Highgate Publications of Beverley at £4.95.

How far away it all seems ... good men from the villages joining the Lincolnshire Yeomanry to fight a war on horseback in far off Palestine ... a Zeppelin bombing Cleethorpes ... a young man's thrill at simply being near a motor-cycle ... cavalrymen from the Scottish Horse a regular sight on the Marsh roads.

For Leonard Wright, then 16, the zenith of excitement was reached when an aeroplane piloted by a chap in the Royal Naval Air Service, landed in a stubble field at North Cockerington.

Wright dropped everything to be first on the scene and was dazzled out of his mind to be asked by the pilot to guard his machine and be left his revolver to fulfil the request.

There was the ever present prospect (fortunately) of an enemy submarine sailing up the Louth Canal. It was an impossibility, but no one wanted to deny the Germans the chance!

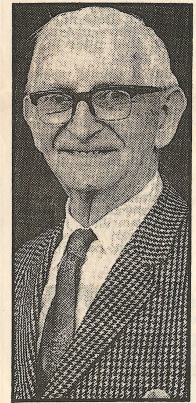
There was also the

threat of invasion; and that kept spirits up too!

Explosives for blowing up the bridges on the canal were kept in the granary at Lock Farm, Alvingham. "On a routine inspection a young officer supposedly struck a match and found the materials in good combustible condition. The resultant fire ..."

Mr. Wright retained these memories of his youth to the end. But he didn't omit to leave them behind.

There are other recollections in this slim book. Generally, however, they are of wartime life on the other side of the river ... but nonetheless interesting for all that.



MR WRIGHT  
— amusing memoirs

22/12/1983



Life's column about  
people and places  
in Lincolnshire



### A MUSEUM PIECE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE

One of the first acquisitions of the new Museum of Lincolnshire Life (see *Poachings* column) is illustrated here. Mr. Loughborough, the Curator, notes that the characteristic deep narrow body and high front board of the Lincolnshire Waggon is shown to advantage in this example which was used in Alvingham. It has been restored and repainted in the traditional colours of Prussian blue and red by an Alvingham craftsman, Mr. L. M. Wright, who has maintained it for many years.



It's "plane" to see that retired wheelwright Mr. Leonard Wright has a choice between left or right hand.

## Ambiguous!

SIR, — It was with interest that I read the Saturday Surgery item on 'Left-hander's delight' on March 17.

Having been 'born so' myself 84 years ago I would be pleased to exchange experiences with others and wondered if there is a local group of 'Sinistrals', 'South Paws', or even 'Ambidextrous Buddies'.

My own experience was influenced by the fact that at the age of about four years I fell while playing 'Tiggy' in the woodshed, breaking my left collar bone which in those days meant having my left 'wing' tightly plastered across my chest for a considerable time. The removal of that plaster is still vividly remembered.

This experience did not cure me of left-handedness for, in my first two years at school I used the slate pencil in my left hand, until a 'modern thinking' teacher politely — though firmly said 'No! Put the pencil in the other hand', at the same time assisting the transfer of the pencil.

It was of course difficult for me to adjust but the battle was won. Today I could not hold a pen in my left hand.

My difficulties did not end there for on leaving school at the age of 14, to work in the wheelwright's shop with my father, I had to adjust to working at a right-hand bench and struggle to use

tools, some of which like the side axe were made for right-handed people. Father probably didn't appreciate my difficulty and certainly did not make any allowances in this respect. So to some extent I became ambidextrous.

In discussing this with a friend many years ago he informed me that he would drive a nail in with his left hand, to which I replied: 'I prefer to use a hammer'.

During retirement someone watching me at work remarked "I see that you are 'ambiguous' — something of a left-handed compliment. — Leonard Wright, Danesfield Avenue, Waltham.



### TAKE A ZEBRA TO A BARGAIN BRITISH HOLIDAY!

- Choose from 70 departure points by luxury Zebra coach.
- And a fabulous choice of Zebra-Sunrise hotel destinations:

EASTBOURNE, CLIFTONVILLE,  
THE ISLE OF WIGHT  
BOURNEMOUTH, TORQUAY,  
ILFRACOMBE,  
WESTON-SUPER-MARE,  
NEWQUAY, FALMOUTH, TENBY,  
LLANDUDNO, SKYE, AVIEMORE,  
THE SCOTTISH LOCHS AND  
HIGHLANDS!

Book direct now!  
**GRIMSBY**  
**(0472) 42776**

or send for a free brochure to Zebra  
Holidays Freepost 25, Leeds

# Veteran craftsman and councillor dies

MR. Len Wright, the one-time Alvingham wheelwright and parish council chairman, has died in Grimsby District General Hospital after a short illness.

As old as the century, Leonard Morgan Wright was as delightful a man as he was remarkable.

The son of Alvingham village wheelwright, he took over from his father, John, in 1926, having worked for him mastering

his craft since 1914. His grandfather, Aaron Wright, had been a labourer at Maltby-le-Marsh in the last century.

The same year he married and in 1986 he and his wife Kathleen, who survives him, celebrated their diamond wedding at Danesfield Avenue, Waltham, to which they had retired after leaving Alvingham many years ago.

## Spellbound

A member of the old Louth Rural Council and a found member and first chairman of Alvingham Parish Council, Mr. Wright was a master craftsman to his fingertips.

He was also never too old to learn — at the age of 73 he went to night-school classes to master silver-soldering.

Tireless in his assistance to others, whether giving advice, encouragement or holding audiences spellbound at village institutes and parish meetings, he was a model maker par excellence.

When he began work it was, in the main, on farm carts for a strictly horse-drawn world.

When (if) he ever stopped, it was while working on perfect scaled-down replicas of the farm carts of his youth, miniature gems that he once sold from the pottery and craft shop which he set up at Alvingham.

Mr. Wright, one of the

band of enthusiasts for the windmill restoration in his adoptive and adopted Waltham, leaves a widow, two children and two grandchildren.



MR. WRIGHT — classes at 73.

## The Wright stuff

THE death last week of Len Wright — right and wrong by name and nature — will have saddened many into whose life he brought that extraordinary enthusiasm for getting on with things.

His obituary has appeared elsewhere in this newspaper but there was, perhaps, no room in it to mention his forte as a raconteur.

Denied, by his wheelwright father, the chance of a place at grammar school in 1914, he went to work at the Alvingham 'wrights and joked that he only got the hang of making wheels by 1935 — when call for them had vanished!

One of 11 children he alone stayed in the Lincolnshire village but recalled one memorable excursion into Grimsby during the war after a butterfly bomb raid.

He was in the AFS and Alvingham had its very own mobile pump. The

great call to duty finally came. But the lorry they towed the pump with had actually been sold. They decided to borrow the local farmer's car.

Len woke him up. It was the middle of the night. There were no lights and Len had never seen the car before. He fumbled his way into the garage, got the car started by pure luck and got it out.

He and his fellow part-time firemen managed to fasten pump to car and they made haste for Grimsby to receive orders at the Orwell Street fire station.

But halfway down Weelsby Street, car and pump parted company, the pump careering off on its own. A passing air raid warden helped them tie it back on then they finally were detailed off to fight a fire in Albion Street.

No one knew where Albion Street was and by the time they got there the fire had burned itself out.

So they went home. It was only on the way home that Mr. Wright and his team realised they wouldn't have been able to do anything in any event. 'Cos their pump relied on country streams and village ponds for its source of water.

Grimsby could have burned down in spite of Alvingham's gallant firefighters.