

BURTON COUPLE'S DIAMOND WEDDING

MARRIED ON SITE OF TRAM DEPOT

ACTIVE THOUGH OVER EIGHTY

Hale and active still, though both in their ninth decade, Mr and Mrs Samuel Ralph Norton, of 103, Wellington Street – the parents of Mr. S. R. Norton, the butcher, of Horninglow – on Thursday celebrated their diamond wedding – an anniversary that very few couples indeed remain together to see. They are almost certainly the oldest married couple in Burton.

Sixty years have wrought tremendous changes. The very chapel where the marriage took place has gone – it was the original Wesleyan Chapel – and in its place the Tramways Depot stands. Burton was at that time little more than a village. They have lived in it all the while, watching it grow to its present size around them, and their family, which was growing also. The family grew to ten children, and nine of them are still alive – two sons and seven daughters.

OLD LOCAL FAMILIES

Both Mr. and Mrs. Norton sprang from families that have made their homes within a few miles of Burton for generations. Mrs. Norton was a native of Hanbury, her father being the late Mr. John Woolley, a painter and plumber. Mr. Norton's father, the late Mr. Thomas Norton, came to Burton from Cauldwell, where he now lies buried. He set up in business as a shoemaker in High Street – first in the shop that is now Messrs A. V. Cresser's, and later at the corner of New Street – the shop now occupied by Messrs. Amies. His son, the only one who now survives, was born in the earlier shop.

One of the pioneers of the Baptist cause in Burton, he with the late Mr G. Hurst, took a leading part in the founding of the first chapel at Bond End. They purchased some cottages for the purpose, and when the Mother Church of the Baptist denomination later removed to New Street, the Bond End Chapel was replaced by cottages again.

FIRST PASSIVE RESISTER

It is said that he was the first passive resister in this district. His High Street shop was probably the last place in this district where Wellington boots were made by hand.

To a "Burton Observer" reporter who called at Wellington Street, he spoke of these things with pride before he passed on to tell of his own long and not uneventful life.

Mr Norton attended the Guildables School – Guild Street of today – "when old Mr Samble was there," he

said. High Street, Cat Street (now Station Street), Scott's Lane (Union Street), and the Guildables, then only a narrow passage, were practically the Burton of those early days.

Apprenticed to Messrs. Bowler and Beck, of Abbey Street, he became a carpenter and joiner. Between the finish of his apprenticeship and his retirement 20 years ago, he worked for a number of local firms. He mentioned among the buildings on which he worked, Messrs. Bass and Co.'s first maltings at Shobnall and Bladon House.

WHEN MEN SWAM IN NEW STREET

He remembers Mr. "Dick" Roe, the Burton constable, of whose regime there are grim relics in the Burton Museum.

The great floods of '75? Of course, he remembered those. They were comparatively recent history. He went back beyond '75 to floods of earlier years. There was a bad one in '52, and Mr. Norton spoke of men swimming in New Street, and himself boating about in a small tub, in his father's cellar. When the last great floods of '75 occurred, Mr. and Mrs. Norton had already been house-keeping nearly ten years and, living in Station Street – or Cat Street, we believe it was still then – they had their full share of the alarming experiences that are now regarded as one of the outstanding features of Burton's history.

Their house then, by the way, was the one now, and for many years passed, occupied by Alderman J. H. King for his tailoring business.

This house they tenanted for 22 years; for 26 years they lived in Shobnall Street, and they have occupied their present house in Wellington Street for 12 years.

OVER FIFTY DESCENDANTS

Although the offspring of Mr. and Mrs. Norton's sons and daughters have already totalled over thirty grandchildren, - something over fifty descendants in all – only a small number have shared in the celebration. The others are living at a considerable distance. One son is in Australia and both he and a son who died in Lichfield, were butchers like their brother in Horninglow.

Three grandchildren served abroad during the war, two of them coming from Australia. One was killed. Their sacrifice also included a son-in-law, who was killed and left a family of small children, including twins whom he never saw.

No one would guess that either Mr. or Mrs. Norton was so far past the allotted span. Mr. Norton will be 86 next November and Mrs. Norton 82 in the same month.