

The Land of Lost Content by Ray Pearce

I know Shropshire fairly well apart from some of the smaller towns in the south west of the county. I started my banking career at Ellesmere in 1955 then moving on to our branches in Shrewsbury and Much Wenlock. I also met my wife there at a poetry weekend at Attingham Park quite near to Shrewsbury. The Severn Valley Railway has a station at Bridgnorth and I have also played cricket there and at Whittington near Oswestry. I was viewing Midlands Today being presented by Nick Owen when he mentioned Craven Arms. It looked quite interesting and as I had never been there decided to investigate.

I found it is on the railway from Shrewsbury with its own station. There is also a bus service from Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire. There is also a museum in Craven Arms called Land of Lost Content. I knew this to be a quotation from a poem by A E Housman in his book A Shropshire Lad.

*Into my heart an air that kills, from yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills, what spires, what farms
are those?
This is the land of lost content, I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went, and cannot come again.*

That was enough, on a too hot spring day, to get me on the train to Shrewsbury. I had intended to go by bus to Craven Arms but, because of the hot weather went by train instead. First stop was Church Stretton then



Craven Arms. The little town seemed deserted so I went into a small café and asked the way to the Land of Lost Content museum. Only a 10 minute walk and I was there.

It is housed in an old market hall built in 1888. Four floors full of nostalgia going back to Victorian times and claiming to be the National Museum of British Culture.

The ground floor is given over to Victorian items, school days, office equipment, cleaning material and soap powders over the years. The Home Front in two world wars. Food and beverages.

On the first floor I recall an advertisement for Woodbines, my father smoked Park Drive, and also Kensitas which I think were posh cigarettes.



The second floor contained toys, confectionery, hardware, cosmetics and photography to name but a few of the items on this floor. The top floor included footwear, fashion, radio, films including a poster for the film *The Great Game* with James Hayter, Diana Dors and Thora Hird. Old TV sets, guitars and many, many more items. If you enjoy nostalgia and the past then the museum is well worth a visit.

Ray Pearce 26.9.2022.