

Samuel Wackrill, the son of a prosperous draper from Chelmsford, and an experienced draper in his own right, arrived in Leamington in 1861 and set up a drapery business with his brother Jack. In common with other tradesmen of the time, the brothers worked very long hours. There was no early closing, or Bank Holidays, and summer holidays were the exception rather than the rule. The business prospered: Waterloo House, Bath Street became one of the most important concerns in the town.

For four decades, Sam Wackrill was central to the life of Leamington. In 1865, when Leamington College faced bankruptcy, he was the driving force in saving the College and its buildings. When the College finally did close, Sam Wackrill purchased both the Beaumont and Smith-Ryland Library collections and donated the 13,000 books to the Reference Room of the Municipal Library in Avenue Road. More than anyone else he was responsible for the town becoming a Borough in 1875, – to the extent of offering to pay the costs if the application to the Privy Council were refused, – and he was unanimously elected the first Mayor (1875-76). In that year, although it was not built for another nine years, he proposed the building of a much-needed new Town Hall, and secured sanction for a loan of £20,000 for the Waterworks. One of the pumping engines was named “Wackrill” in his honour. He was elected Mayor again in 1885-86 and 1886-87.

Sam Wackrill donated the Mayor’s robes and Chain of Office. He chose the motto on the town crest, ‘Sola Bona Quae Honesta’ (Those things alone are good that are honourable) and designed the town crest (see below). He was the Borough’s first Chief Magistrate, an honorary auditor of the Warneford Hospital, Chairman of the Provident Dispensary, Deacon of Spencer Street Church, and Chairman of the Joint Hospital Board for the Heathcote Hospital District for sixteen years. He commissioned the marble bust of Edward VII for the Town Hall. Prior to coming to Leamington, he had been a pupil of Sir Isaac Pitman and taught at the Field Lane Ragged School. He was a regular visitor at Lambeth Workhouse and a member of the original Peace Society, which took him to Annual Congress in Brussels in 1846 and Paris in 1848. He was also a founder member of the YMCA, and one of the original members of the Early Closing Association of England.

In Leamington he was widely acknowledged for his hospitality and Mayoral ‘At Homes’, and his generous entertaining of local schoolchildren at the Pump Room Gardens. He was an interesting, sometimes amusing, speaker, courteous, well-informed, a stickler for legal propriety and a cheerful even-tempered man, devoted to his family of five sons and three daughters.

In short, Sam Wackrill was generous with his time and money, the sort of man upon whom a good society depends. He was rightly rewarded with the Freedom of the Borough in 1899.

Dudley describes him as “having industry, intelligence and impartiality”, – not a bad collection of virtues. He lived in Portland Street from 1863 until his death in 1907, and left estate valued at £7,783.6s.1d. (in the region of £500,000 in today’s money.) He left his house and personal effects and land in Burnham on Crouch, Essex to his unmarried daughter Alice Maria, and equal shares in the business to each of his children.

A road in the town Wackrill Drive was named after Samuel some years later.

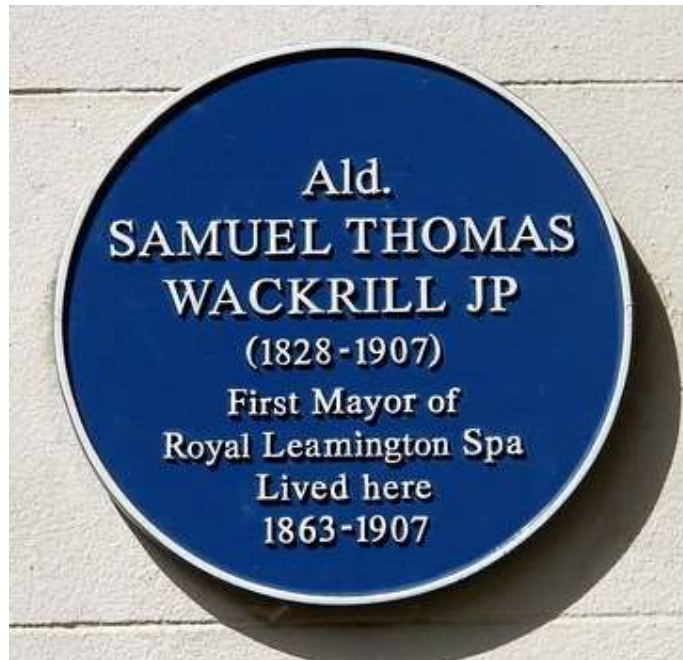
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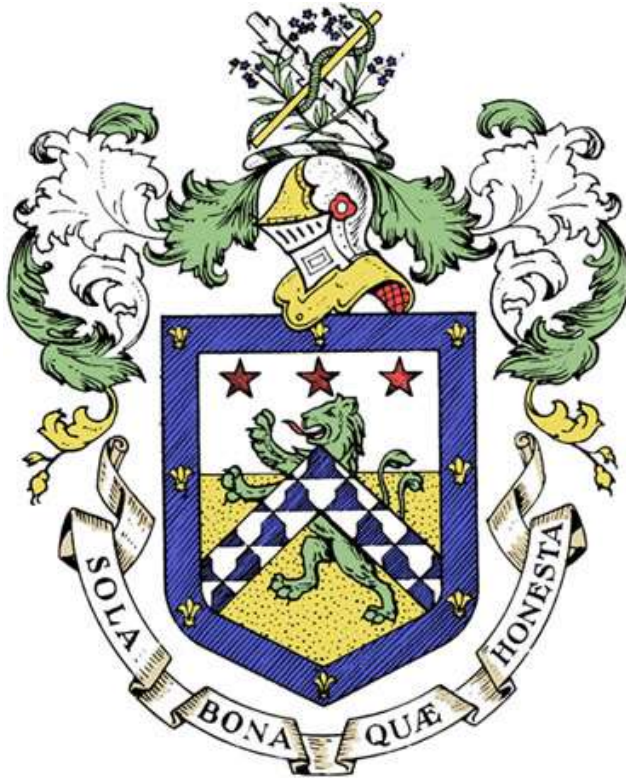
Alderman
Samuel Thomas Wackrill
Charter Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa



Waterloo House, Bath Street, Leamington Spa
Wackrill's Drapers Shop



Plaque at 38 Portland Street, Leamington Spa.



Royal Leamington Spa
Town Crest

Granted 1896.

Official blazon

Arms : Per fesse Argent and Or a Lion rampant double queued Vert debruised by a Chevron Vair in chief three Mulletts Gules all within a Bordure Azure charged with eight Fleurs-de-lis of the second.

Crest : On a Wreath of the Colours in front of a Staff raguly in bend Argent surmounted by a Staff in bend sinister Or entwined with a Serpent proper two Sprigs of Forget-me-nots in saltire also proper; Mantled Vert doubled Or.

Motto: 'SOLA BONA QUÆ HONESTA' - Only those things that are honourable are good.

The town crest consists of a shield with a crest above and a motto beneath. "Sola bona quae honesta" means "Those things alone are good which are honourable",

The shield divided into silver and gold portions representing two Manors of Newbold Comyn and Leamington into which the parish was anciently divided.

The blue/white chequered chevron is a device of the family Fisher of Packington, who owned the Manor of Leamington in 18th century. The three red stars are in honour of the Willes' of Newbold and the blue border with the gold lilies is part of the arms of Geoffrey de Clinton, who also owned Leamington and gave it to the Priory of Kenilworth (hence the name Leamington Priors).

The helmet is standard centre piece of any crest and the crossed staves represent the Saxon Earls of Mercia and the medical properties of the spa water.