

= Wells , Somerset =

Wells (/ wɛlz /) is a cathedral city and civil parish in the Mendip district of Somerset , on the southern edge of the Mendip Hills . Although the population recorded in the 2011 census was only 10 @, @ 536 , it has had city status since medieval times , because of the presence of Wells Cathedral . Often described as England 's smallest city , it is second only to the City of London in area and population , though not part of a larger urban agglomeration .

The name Wells comes from three wells dedicated to Saint Andrew , one in the market place and two within the grounds of the Bishop 's Palace and cathedral . A small Roman settlement surrounded them , which grew in importance and size under the Anglo @-@ Saxons when King Ine of Wessex founded a minster church there in 704 . The community became a trading centre based on cloth making and Wells is notable for its 17th century involvement in both the English Civil War and Monmouth Rebellion . In the 19th century , transport infrastructure improved with stations on three different railway lines . However , since 1964 the city has been without a railway link .

The cathedral and the associated religious and architectural history have made Wells a tourist destination , which provides much of the employment . The city has a variety of sporting and cultural activities and houses several schools including The Blue School , a state coeducational comprehensive school originally founded in 1641 and the independent Wells Cathedral School , which was founded possibly as early as 909 and is one of the five established musical schools for school @-@ age children in the United Kingdom . The historic architecture of the city has also been used as a location for several films and television programmes .

= = History = =

The city was a Roman settlement but only became an important centre under the Anglo @-@ Saxons when King Ine of Wessex founded a minster church in 704 . Two hundred years later , in 909 , this became the seat of the newly formed bishopric of Wells ; but in 1090 , this had been removed to Bath . This caused severe arguments between the canons of Wells and the monks of Bath until 1245 when the bishopric was renamed as the Diocese of Bath and Wells , to be elected by both religious houses . With the construction of the current cathedral and the bishop 's palace in the first half of the 13th century , under the direction of Bishop Reginald and later Bishop Jocelin , a native of the city , Wells became the principal seat of the diocese .

Wells was listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Welle , from the Old English wiells , which was not listed as a town , but included four manors with a population of 132 , which implies a population of 500 ? 600 . Earlier names for the settlement have been identified which include Fontanetum , in a charter of 725 granted by King Ina to Glastonbury and Fontanensis Ecclesia . Tidesput or Tithesput furlang relates to the area east of the bishops garden in 1245 . Wells was part of , and gave its name to , the hundred of Wells Forum .

Wells had been granted charters to hold markets by Bishop Robert (1136 ? 66) and free burgage tenure was granted by Bishop Reginald (1174 @-@ 1191) . Wells was recognised as a free borough by a Royal charter of King John in 1201 . The city remained under episcopal control until its charter of incorporation from Queen Elizabeth I in 1589 . City status was most recently confirmed by Queen Elizabeth II by letters patent issued under the Great Seal dated 1 April 1974 , which granted city status specifically to the civil parish ; on that date major local government reorganisation came into effect , which involved the abolition of the municipal borough of Wells .

During the English Civil War (1642 ? 1651) , at what became known as the " Siege of Wells " , the city found itself surrounded by Parliamentary guns on the Bristol , Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet sides . Col. William Strode had 2 @, @ 000 men and 150 horse . The Royalists evacuated the city . Parliamentary troops then used the cathedral to stable their horses and damaged much of the ornate sculpture by using it for firing practice .

William Penn stayed in Wells shortly before leaving for America (1682) , spending a night at The Crown Inn . Here he was briefly arrested for addressing a large crowd in the market place , but released on the intervention of the Bishop of Bath and Wells . During the Monmouth Rebellion (

1685) the rebel army attacked the cathedral in an outburst against the established church and damaged the west front . Lead from the roof was used to make bullets , windows were broken , the organ smashed and horses stabled in the nave . Wells was the final location of the Bloody Assizes on 23 September 1685 . In a makeshift court lasting only one day , over 500 men were tried and the majority sentenced to death .

There was a port at Bleadney on the River Axe in the 8th century that enabled goods to be brought to within 3 miles (5 km) of Wells . In the Middle Ages overseas trade was carried out from the port of Rackley . In the 14th century a French ship sailed up the river and by 1388 Thomas Tanner from Wells used Rackley to export cloth and corn to Portugal , and received iron and salt in exchange . Wells had been a centre for cloth making , however in the 16th and 17th centuries this diminished , but the city retained its important market focus . Wells in the 19th century had the largest cheese market in the west of England .

Wells has had three railway stations . The first station , Priory Road , opened in 1859 and was on the Somerset Central Railway (later the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway) as the terminus of a short branch from Glastonbury . A second railway , the East Somerset , opened a branch line from Witham in 1862 and built a station to the east of Priory Road . In 1870 , a third railway , the Cheddar Valley line branch of the Bristol and Exeter Railway from Yatton , reached Wells and built yet another station , later called Tucker Street . Matters were somewhat simplified when the Great Western Railway acquired both the Cheddar Valley and the East Somerset lines and built a link between the two that ran through the S & DJR 's Priory Road station . In 1878 , when through trains began running between Yatton and Witham , the East Somerset station closed , but through trains did not stop at Priory Road until 1934 . Priory Road closed to passenger traffic in 1951 when the S & DJR branch line from Glastonbury was shut , though it remained the city 's main goods depot . Tucker Street closed in 1963 under the Beeching Axe , which closed the Yatton to Witham line to passengers . Goods traffic to Wells ceased in 1964 . A Pacific SR West Country , West Country Class steam locomotive no 34092 built by the British Railways Board was named City of Wells following a ceremony in the city 's Priory Road station in 1949 . It was used to draw the Golden Arrow service between London and the Continent . It was withdrawn from service in 1964 , and rescued from a scrapyard in 1971 . It is now undergoing a complete restoration on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway in Yorkshire .

During World War II , Stoberry Park in Wells was the location of a prisoner @-@ of @-@ war camp , housing Italian prisoners from the Western Desert Campaign , and later German prisoners after the Battle of Normandy . Penleigh Camp on the Wookey Hole Road was a German working camp .

= = Governance = =

Wells City Council is a parish council , with a membership of sixteen councillors , elected from three parish wards . They are (with the number of parish councillors each elects , in brackets) : Central (four) , St. Thomas ' (six) and St. Cuthbert 's (six) .

The civil parish of Wells was formed in 1933 upon the merger of Wells St Cuthbert In and Wells St Andrew (the latter being the historic liberty of the cathedral , the bishop 's palace , etc . , amounting to just 52 acres (21 ha)) . Wells is the successor parish for Wells Municipal Borough , which existed from the creation of municipal boroughs in 1835 to their abolition in 1974 . The parish has held the city status of Wells since 1 April 1974 (previously held by the municipal borough) and the member of the City Council who chairs the council holds the historic office of Mayor of Wells , typically for one year . The current mayor (for the 2014 @-@ 15 municipal year) is Councillor Chris Briton , who is the 641st Mayor of Wells . Another historic position is that of the Town Crier .

The City Council has responsibility for local issues , including setting an annual precept (local rate) to cover the council 's operating costs and producing annual accounts for public scrutiny . They also evaluate local planning applications and work with the local police , district council officers , and neighbourhood watch groups on matters of crime , security , and traffic . This includes city centre management including CCTV , an alcohol ban and regulating street trading permissions including the two funfairs held in the Market Place in May and November each year and the Wells In Bloom

competition . The city council 's role also includes initiating projects for the maintenance and repair of city facilities , as well as consulting with the district council on the maintenance , repair , and improvement of highways , drainage , footpaths , public transport , and street cleaning . They are involved in the management of the Community Sports Development Centre at the Blue School , the skateboard park and allotments in the grounds of the Bishop 's Palace , Burcott Road and Barnes Close . Conservation matters (including trees and listed buildings) and environmental issues are also the responsibility of the council .

The Town Hall was built in 1778 , with the porch and arcade being added in 1861 and the balcony and round windows in 1932 . It is a Grade II listed building . It replaced the former on the site of the Market and Assize Hall in the Market Place , and a Canonical House also known as ' The Exchequer ' , on the authority of an Act of Parliament dated 1779 . The building also houses the magistrates courts and other offices . The Assize court last sat here in October 1970 .

Wells elects five councillors to Mendip District Council from the same three wards as are used for the City Council (two are returned from St Cuthbert 's , two from St Thomas ' and one from Central) . The Mendip district was formed on 1 April 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972 and the district council is responsible for local planning and building control , local roads , council housing , environmental health , markets and fairs , refuse collection and recycling , cemeteries and crematoria , leisure services , parks , and tourism .

Wells is an electoral division (with the same boundaries as the civil parish) of Somerset and returns one councillor to Somerset County Council , which is responsible for running the largest and most expensive local services such as education , social services , libraries , main roads , public transport , policing and fire services , trading standards , waste disposal and strategic planning . Wells is part of the UK Parliament constituency of Wells . Since 2015 the Member of Parliament for Wells is James Heapey of the Conservatives . Wells is within the South West England constituency of the European Parliament which elects six Members of the European Parliament using the d'Hondt method of party @-@ list proportional representation .

== Coat of Arms ==

The Wells city arms show an ash tree surrounded by three water wells , crested with a gold mural crown , with the Latin motto Hoc fonte derivata copia (translated : " the fullness that springs from this well ") .

== Freedom of the City ==

HMS Somerset , Mary Bignal @-@ Rand , Danny Nightingale , The Rifles and the late Harry Patch have the Freedom of the City . The Somerset Light Infantry received the freedom of the City of Wells following their return from Cyprus in 1956 .

== Geography ==

Wells lies at the foot of the southern escarpment of the Mendip Hills where they meet the Somerset Levels . The hills are largely made of carboniferous limestone , which is quarried at several nearby sites . In the 1960s , the tallest mast in the region , the Mendip UHF television transmitter , was installed on Pen Hill above Wells , approximately 2 miles (3 @.@ 2 km) from the centre the city .

Streams passing through caves on the Mendip Hills , including Thrupe Lane Swallet and Viaduct Sink (approximately 5 kilometres (3 @.@ 1 mi) east of the city) , emerge at Saint Andrew 's Well in the garden of the Bishop 's Palace , from where the water fills the moat around the Place and then flows into Keward Brook , which carries it for approximately a mile west to the point where the brook joins the River Sheppey in the village of Coxley .

Along with the rest of South West England , the Mendip Hills have a temperate climate which is generally wetter and milder than the rest of England . The annual mean temperature is about 10 ° C (50 ° F) with seasonal and diurnal variations , but due to the modifying effect of the sea , the range

is less than in most other parts of the United Kingdom . January is the coldest month with mean minimum temperatures between 1 ° C (34 ° F) and 2 ° C (36 ° F) . July and August are the warmest months in the region with mean daily maxima around 21 ° C (70 ° F) . In general , December is the duller month and June the sunniest . The south west of England enjoys a favoured location , particularly in summer , when the Azores High extends its influence north @-@ eastwards towards the UK .

Cloud often forms inland , especially near hills , and reduces exposure to sunshine . The average annual sunshine totals around 1600 hours . Rainfall tends to be associated with Atlantic depressions or with convection . In summer , convection caused by solar surface heating sometimes forms shower clouds and a large proportion of the annual precipitation falls from showers and thunderstorms at this time of year . Average rainfall is around 800 ? 900 mm (31 ? 35 in) . About 8 ? 15 days of snowfall is typical . November to March have the highest mean wind speeds , with June to August having the lightest . The predominant wind direction is from the south west .

The civil parish of Wells is entirely surrounded by the parish of St Cuthbert Out .

= = Demography = =

The population of the civil parish , recorded in the 2011 census , is 10 @, @ 536 . Of this number 97 @. @ 5 % are ethnically White (with the more specific White British category recorded at 93 @. @ 5 %) and 66 @. @ 5 % described themselves as Christian . The mean average age in 2011 was 41 @. @ 9 years (the median age being 43) . The population recorded for the Wells civil parish in the 2001 census was 10 @, @ 406 .

= = Economy = =

Following construction of the A39 / A371 bypass , the centre of the city has returned to being that of a quiet market town . It has all the modern conveniences plus shops , hotels and restaurants . Wells is a popular tourist destination , due to its historical sites , its proximity to Bath , Stonehenge and Glastonbury and its closeness to the Somerset coast . Also nearby are Wookey Hole Caves , the Mendip Hills and the Somerset Levels . Somerset cheese , including Cheddar , is made locally . Wells is part of the Wells & Shepton Mallet Travel to Work Area which also includes Glastonbury , Cheddar and surrounding areas .

= = Transport = =

Wells is situated at the junction of three numbered routes . The A39 goes north @-@ east to Bath and south @-@ west to Glastonbury and Bridgwater . The A371 goes north @-@ west to Cheddar and east to Shepton Mallet . The B3139 goes west to Highbridge and north @-@ east to Radstock . Wells is served by FirstGroup bus services to Bristol , Bristol Temple Meads , Bath , Frome , Shepton Mallet , Yeovil , Street , Bridgwater , Taunton , Burnham on Sea and Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare , as well as providing some local service . Some National Express coach services call at Wells . The bus station is in Princes Road . The Mendip Way and Monarch 's Way long @-@ distance footpaths pass through the city , as does National Cycle Route 3 .

Webberbus connects Wells to Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare , Highbridge and Bridgwater .

= = Railways = =

Wells had two stations which were closed by the Beeching Axe in the 1960s such as Wells (Tucker Street) railway station and Wells (Priory Road) railway station . The nearest head of steel is located on the East Somerset Railway at Mendip Vale .

= = Education = =

The Blue School , founded in 1654 , is a state coeducational comprehensive school and has been awarded Specialist science college status . It has 1 @, @ 453 students aged 11 ? 18 of both sexes and all ability levels .

Wells Cathedral School , founded in 909 , is an independent school that has a Christian emphasis and is one of the five established musical schools for school @-@ age children in Britain . The school teaches over 700 pupils between the ages of 3 and 18 . The school 's boarding houses line the northern parts of the city and the music school retains close links with Wells Cathedral . The primary schools in Wells are Stoberry Park School , St Cuthbert 's Church of England Infants School , St Cuthbert 's Church of England Junior School and St Joseph and St Teresa Catholic Primary School .

= = Culture = =

Wells and Mendip Museum includes many historical artefacts from the city and surrounding Mendip Hills . Wells is part of the West Country Carnival circuit .

Wells Film Centre shows current releases and , in conjunction with the Wells Film Society shows less well known and historical films . The previous cinema , The Regal in Priory Road , closed in 1993 and is now Kudos Nightclub . It was built in 1935 by ES Roberts from Flemish bond brickwork with Art Deco features . It is a Grade II listed building , and was on the Buildings at Risk Register until its restoration which included the restoration and repair of the stained glass façade . Wells Little Theatre is operated by a voluntary society which started in 1902 . In 1989 they took over the old boy 's building of Wells Blue School , where they put on a variety of operatic and other productions .

Milton Lodge is a house overlooking the city . It has a terraced garden , which was laid out in the early 20th century , is listed as Grade II on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England .

= = = Town twinning = = =

Wells is twinned with :

Paray @-@ le @-@ Monial , Burgundy , France

Bad Dürkheim , Rhineland @-@ Palatinate , Germany

Fontanellato , Emilia @-@ Romagna , Italy

= = Religious sites = =

A walled precinct , the Liberty of St Andrew , encloses the twelfth century Cathedral , the Bishop 's Palace , Vicar 's Close and the residences of the clergy who serve the cathedral . Entrances include the Penniless Porch , The Bishop 's Eye and Brown 's Gatehouse which were all built around 1450 .

The cathedral is the seat of the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells . Wells has been an ecclesiastical city of importance since at least the early 8th century . Parts of the building date back to the tenth century , and it is a grade I listed building . It is known for its fine fan vaulted ceilings , Lady Chapel and windows , and the scissor arches which support the central tower . The west front is said to be the finest collection of statuary in Europe , retaining almost 300 of its original medieval statues , carved from the cathedral 's warm , yellow Douling stone . The Chapter House , at the top of a flight of stone stairs , leading out from the north transept is an octagonal building with a fan @-@ vaulted ceiling . It is here that the business of running the cathedral is still conducted by the members of the Chapter , the cathedral 's ruling body . Wells Cathedral clock is famous for its 24 @-@ hour astronomical dial and set of jousting knights that perform every quarter @-@ hour . The cathedral has the heaviest ring of ten bells in the world . The tenor bell weighs just over 56 CWT (6 @, @ 272 lb , 2 @, @ 844 kg) .

The Bishop 's Palace has been the home of the bishops of the Diocese of Bath and Wells for 800 years . The hall and chapel date from the 14th century . There are 14 acres (5 @. @ 7 ha) of gardens including the springs from which the city takes its name . Visitors can also see the Bishop 's

private chapel , ruined great hall and the gatehouse with portcullis and drawbridge beside which mute swans ring a bell for food . The Bishop 's Barn was built in the 15th century .

The Vicars ' Close is the oldest residential street in Europe . The Close is tapered by 10 feet (3 @. @ 0 m) to make it look longer when viewed from the bottom . When viewed from the top , however , it looks shorter . The Old Deanery dates from the 12th century , and St John 's Priory from the 14th .

The Church of St Cuthbert (which tourists often mistake for the cathedral) has a fine Somerset stone tower and a superb carved roof . Originally an Early English building (13th century) , it was much altered in the Perpendicular period (15th century) . The nave 's coloured ceiling was repainted in 1963 at the instigation of the then Vicar 's wife , Mrs Barnett . Until 1561 the church had a central tower which either collapsed or was removed , and has been replaced with the current tower over the west door . Bells were cast for the tower by Roger Purdy .

= = Sport = =

The city has two football clubs , one being Wells City F.C. , past winners of the Western League . Belrose FC play their football in the Mid @-@ Somerset Football League at Haybridge Park . Wells Cricket Club runs eight sides across senior , junior and women 's cricket ; they are based at South Horrington . Wells Wanderers Cricket Club are based in Meare . Rowdens Road Cricket Ground was a first @-@ class venue , no longer a cricket ground , now occupied in part by Wells FC .

Mid Somerset Hockey Club and Wells City Acorns Hockey Club both play on the Astroturf pitches at the Blue School , where several other sports clubs are based . Wells Leisure Centre has a 25 metres (82 ft) swimming pool , gymnasium , sports hall , sauna , steam room , relaxation area and solarium . The 18 hole Wells Golf Club is on the outskirts of the city and also has a 24 bay driving range with optional grass tees .

= = In popular culture = =

Elizabeth Goudge used Wells as a basis for the fictional cathedral city of Torminster , in her book A City of Bells .

Wells has been used as the setting for several films including : The Canterbury Tales (1973) , A Fistful of Fingers (1994) , The Gathering (2003) , The Libertine (2004) , The Golden Age (2007) , and Hot Fuzz (2007 , as Sandford) . The cathedral interior stood in for Southwark Cathedral during filming for the Doctor Who episode The Lazarus Experiment , and was also used as an interior location in the film Jack the Giant Slayer (2013) .

= = Notable people = =

Hugh of Wells ? native of Wells , Bishop , elder brother of Jocelin of Wells .

Jocelin of Wells ? native of Wells , Bishop , aided in creation of Magna Carta and largely responsible for the construction of the cathedral .

Mary Hamilton ? 18th century fraudster and cross @-@ dresser

Herbert E. Balch ? cave explorer and founder of Wells Museum . His name was given to Balch Road , a council estate that was built in the 1950s .

Mary Bignall @-@ Rand ? Gold medalist and world record breaker in the long jump at the 1964 Summer Olympics .

Harry George Crandon ? awarded the Victoria Cross during the Boer War .

Sir Chris Clarke ? county councillor for Wells from 1985 to 2005 .

Alexander Davie ? born in Wells 1847 , became 7th Premier of British Columbia .

Elizabeth Goudge ? author of novels , short stories and children 's books , was born in Wells in 1900 .

Roger Hollis ? Director General of MI5 .

John Holloway ? Governor of Newfoundland (1807 ? 1809) and Admiral of the Blue .

John Keate ? born in Wells 1773 , went on to become headmaster at Eton where he restored discipline with the birch , and once flogged 80 boys in one day .

Julia Somerville OBE ? born in Wells 1947 , newsreader and journalist who is working with BBC and ITN and co @-@ presenter of Rip Off Britain

James Keene ? professional footballer formerly of Portsmouth F.C. , playing for IF Elfsborg in Sweden .

Harry Patch ? last trench veteran of World War I , and at 111 , briefly the oldest man in Europe and 3rd oldest man in the world . He was born in the nearby village of Combe Down and at the time of his death in July 2009 he was living in local care home Fletcher House .

Kris Marshall ? actor , raised in the city and currently lives nearby .

Edgar Wright ? film and television director . Directed Hot Fuzz , which was filmed in the city .