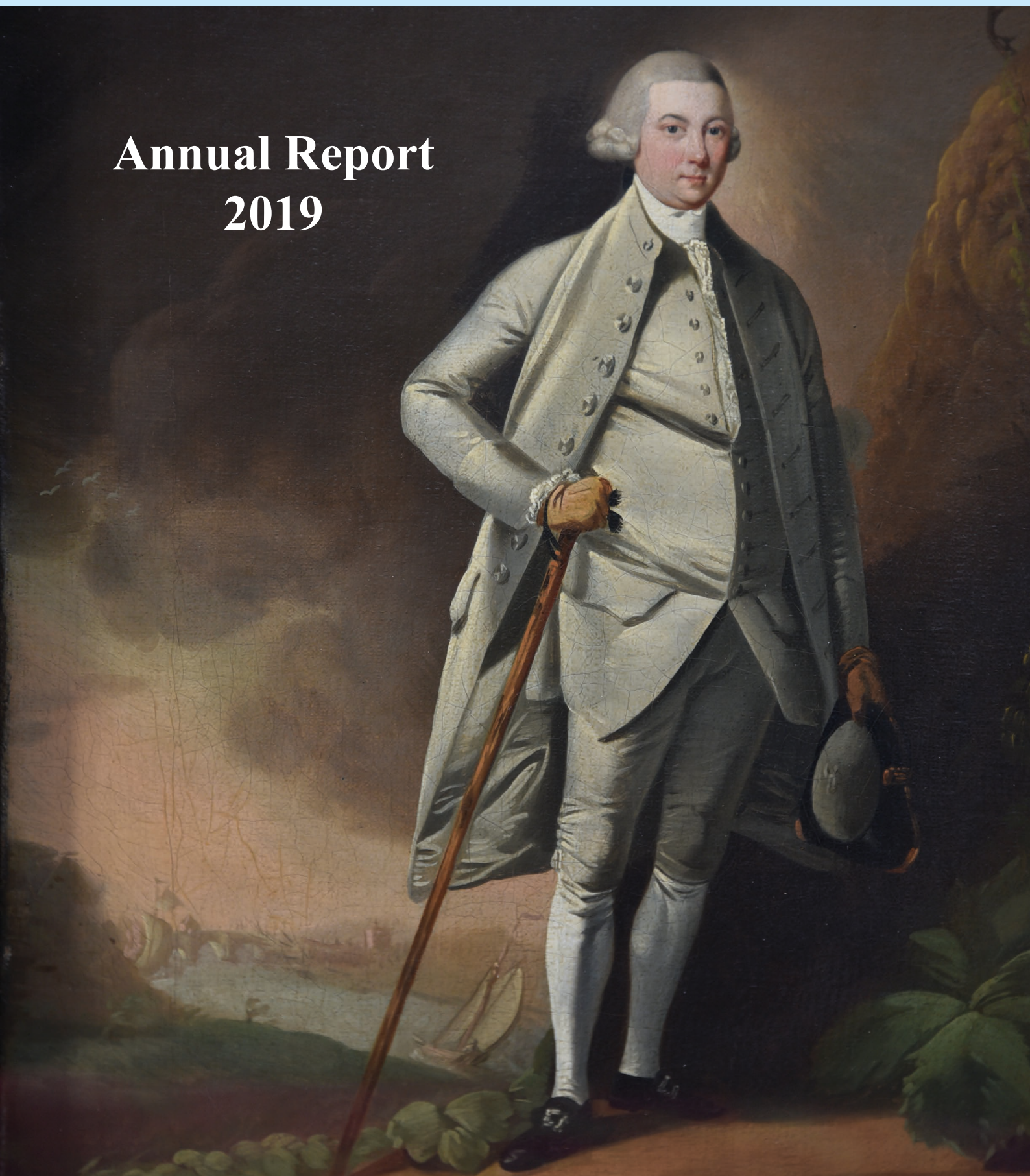


## Annual Report 2019





## National Civic Day

On Saturday 22nd of June we welcomed visitors to the annual Civic Day event. This was the first time we had contributed on such a large scale to this national event which is organised under the auspices of Civic Voice, our umbrella organisation for Civic Societies. The objective of the day is to promote civic pride and we were pleased that some local voluntary organisations could join us at the Guildhall to man their stalls and talk to people about their work. Also, St Anne's church tower was open for viewing Bewdley from above and a Society guided walk of the town centre and visits to Bewdley Brewery were laid on. We were blessed with lovely sunny weather which drew many people to the town. The Society, through its publicity machine, had invited members of the public to bring in and show us their collections of Bewdley memorabilia. And what a wonderful number of items they brought all of which were recorded and photographed for our archives. We were delighted that the Mayor, Mayoress and other town councillors could help us and we were delighted to welcome also the new chairman of Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), Shazu Miah, and show him the Town's rich heritage. The event was organised by Sue Perrin and her sub-committee.



## The Stanley Baldwin Statue

I am pleased to report that the statue, unveiled in September 2018 by the Duke of Gloucester, has remained completely unharmed and continues to stand proudly in the town centre. Indeed, it was the subject of a TV programme made by Lord Lexden for the Parliament Channel which featured SB's life in Worcestershire. We still have funds left over and plans are being evolved, albeit more slowly than we would have wished, to floodlight it. It seems County Council officials from whom permission is required are inundated (because of cutbacks?) but progress is being made.

## The Bewdley Museum Touchscreen and Sound Cone Facility

Better progress has been made with this project, which features the life and times of Stanley Baldwin and which is happening thanks to the very generous donation of £10,000 from West Midlands Safari Park. Discussions were held during the year with officials from York University which culminated in the signing of a contract of some £11,000 for the supply of both the necessary hardware and software. Naturally the provision of relevant information is, to some extent, being supplied by ourselves. The Museum's staff, like us, are looking forward to the installation of this excellent piece of kit later in the year.



## The School's Heritage Project

The Society again worked with the Bewdley School to deliver a successful local history project with Year-7 pupils. "Teddy Grays and the History of Sugar in Bewdley" worked out to be of particular interest to the students, especially when they were invited to sample some of the products. After a field trip through Bewdley visiting Teddy Grays Shop, Bewdley Museum and sites associated with river trading, and the import of sugar in particular, they returned to school to continue their research and are pictured checking out the amount of sweets each child would have been allowed in one month during the sugar rationing of WW2 and post-war Britain, 1940-1953. Their project was presented at the international conference of young people, called The Global Happiness Conference described in the next paragraph. Barbara Longmore and her helpers, once again, organised this important project.

## Global Happiness Conference

The Society played a major part in this excellent initiative organised by the Bewdley School. It arose out of a partnership with a variety of international schools as part of the Connecting **Classrooms through Global Learning Programme** run in over 30 countries by the British Council in partnership with the Department for International Development. In November pupils and teachers from eight far-flung countries descended on Bewdley to learn about the area's rich heritage facilitated by guided visits to all the relevant places of historic interest. The visit included an evening Community Supper, organised and hosted by Bewdley Civic Society in St George's Hall. The conference also included various workshops at the Bewdley School including developing a wonderful final gala night's entertainment for invited guests at the Hartlebury studios of the DRP Group. The Bewdley School's headteacher, Dave Hadley-Pryce, later thanked the Society for its help in making the event an outstanding success.

## The Hobson Room

Good use continues to be made of this town centre facility. A handsome brass plate, designed by Graham Luxford, advertising our presence, has been fixed to the wall outside at number 18 Load Street. Barbara Longmore has started to put together a library of books of local interest which was boosted by the donation of a good number of similar publications from Joan Hobson. Paul Crane donated some lovely prints to adorn the walls and a very worthwhile trip was made down to Oxford to take delivery from Lord Baldwin of a large coloured photographic image of the inaugural train crossing Dowles bridge in 1860. He also let us have two well used hairbrushes both engraved with the initials "SB". We are very grateful to the above donors for their kind and generous gestures and, of course, to Paul Crane for continuing to let us have this room rent-free.

## Redthorne House

The first-class restoration of this distinctive house over the last two years or so will not have escaped members' notice. Prior to Vice-President Paul Crane's acquisition of the property it was in a poor state and Paul's attention to detail and ambition to return it to the condition in which it was originally built is to be greatly admired. It was built by William Prattinton in 1775/6 whose picture is shown on the frontispiece of this report. He was a leading Bewdley merchant importing Caribbean goods principally mahogany and spices. His son, Peter, although qualifying as a doctor in medicine, followed his hobby to become a noted historian and antiquarian whose collection on Bewdley in particular and Worcestershire in general are in the keeping of the Society of Antiquaries in London. In recognition of Paul's wonderful restoration of Redthorne, the Civic Society is planning to install a blue plaque to mark this achievement.



## The Newsletter

Once again, we published four colourful newsletters under the expert editorship of Jock Gallagher, whose stories of local politicians in days of old made fascinating reading. We very much see this publication as our shop window and, judging by the amount of favourable feedback we get, we can think of nothing better to do the job. The cost of printing **this is** kept to a minimum via the use by the Chairman of a sophisticated printing machine at his place of work.

## Outings

We first of all visited Wightwick Manor near Wolverhampton built by the wealthy paint manufacturer, Theodore Mander. It is known as a place "where domestic comfort meets extraordinary Victorian art" and it certainly lived up to expectations. This well-attended outing, on a pleasant spring day in May, was deemed a great success.

On a glorious day in September, in another full coach, we visited Acton Burnell and Pitchford Hall in Shropshire. The morning was spent at the former exploring the ruins of the fortified manor, the home of Robert Burnell, Lord Chancellor to King Edward 1st and later, Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1282 and 1283, King Edward 1st held Parliaments there. A most pleasant lunch was taken at the Riverside Inn at Cound before moving on to nearby Pitchford hall for a guided tour of this large Grade 1 listed Tudor mansion. After 20 years of neglect the current owners, who re-purchased the property recently, are carrying out major restoration work. A bonus was climbing up into possibly the oldest treehouse in the world in the footsteps of Queen Victoria who visited in 1832.

## Lectures

During the year, the following lectures were held in St George's Hall. All were very much enjoyed by large audiences.

15th January 2019	"Chelsea Porcelain and the Age of Enlightenment"	by Paul Crane
12th February 2019	"Hagley Hall, the Lyttleton Family and the Bewdley Connection"	by Lord Cobham
19th March 2019	"More Bewdley Dendrochronology"	by Stephen Price
17th September 2019	"A River Runs Through It"	by Richard Perrin
24th October 2019	"Worcester Porcelain the Age of the Great Exhibitions"	by Paul Crane

In October, as a partner of **Bewdley Festival**, we provided sponsorship of £400 which helped them promote several interesting talks. It also contributed towards the Festival's American Epic weekend in October when the whole town embraced this theme which served to draw crowds into the town centre.

## Annual Dinner

Our Annual Dinner, organised by Sue Perrin and attended by some 80 members and guests, was held in November in St George's Hall. Our President and I were pleased that the Mayor, Councillor John Byng and his Mayoress, Barbara Byng, could be our guests of honour. After the meal I gave a PowerPoint presentation of Bewdleyana images including photographs taken by Robert Limbrick at the Civic Day event.

## Balsam Bashing

This project led by Steve Bent seems to grow as quickly as the invasive weed itself. The fourth annual bash took place over a few days in July and on this occasion new ground was tackled under the Winterdyne Cliffs as well as the usual riverside locations from Bewdley up to the Dowles Brook. There is no doubt that our efforts to eradicate this plant in the area is plain to see. In the meantime, a biological solution, a rust fungus, is being tested across the country but, since it is seen as a slow development project, it seems we will have to continue the good work for some years to come. We are grateful to our volunteers who joined Steve both from within and outside of the society.

## Cherry Fair

The Civic Society and Bewdley Museum's Cherry Fair followed the pattern of previous years, with a good crowd of visitors and much interest during a weekend in July. Representing us, as usual, was our Vice-President, Brian Stephens. We displayed 20 varieties of cherries for people to taste and compare and offered a selection of cherry trees, small enough for gardens and patios, for sale. While the profits from these were not enough to cover the cost of the cherries, we are content that our efforts represent the worthy cause to restore Bewdley's heritage as a major cherry growing area.



## National Heritage Weekend in September

We conducted guided town tours which included the entertainment of a coach full of members from the Hereford and Leominster Civic Societies. The latter were fortunate that our Vice-President Paul Crane was on hand to take them inside Redthorne House.

## The Stall

We are grateful to Sharon Harvey, ably assisted by Ann Howarth, for running the stall which enabled the Society to be represented at most civic occasions. These included the Christmas lights festival where we were pleased to be located in St Anne's Church (in the warm). For the second year running Sharon arranged a Civic Society Christmas card which proved most popular and profitable.

## Development Control

### Local Plan Review and Neighbourhood Plan:

Tony Leach, who Chairs the Planning Sub Committee reports as follows:

#### WFDC Local Plan (LP)

WFDC must meet housing targets that are set by national government and by formulating a local plan it gives WFDC a degree of control as to where housing development occurs right up to 2036. Over the last two years WFDC has consulted extensively on its draft plan and the Society has ensured that it has had its say in these exercises. It has now been approved by the Council and has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Independent Examination by a Planning Inspector. Hopefully a response will soon be received, and the Plan adopted later in 2020. Regarding Bewdley, the LP has identified 4 potential sites for housing development:

Stourport Road Triangle	100 dwellings
Catchem's End	75 dwellings
Land south of Habberley Road	35 dwellings
Bewdley Fire Station	15 dwellings

Any plans to develop on alternative sites would be opposed by WFDC.

#### Bewdley Town Council Neighbourhood Plan. (NP)

The residents of Bewdley have been extensively consulted over the last few years. The NP is now in a process of fine tuning some technical matters and covers a range of issues such as:

Managing Housing Supply  
Improving the Infrastructure  
Protecting the Countryside etc.

The Steering Group is currently led by Councillor Rod Stanczysyn and Jock Gallagher, Tony Leach and Richard Perrin are sitting members. As with the WFDC Local Plan, a robust Neighbourhood Plan gives Bewdley Town Council a lever against unwanted and unplanned development and the Society has supported the policy that there should be no large-scale development, except on the fire station site, west of the River Severn. Following further examination, the NP should go to a referendum of Bewdley residents in the summer before being formally adopted by WFDC in the autumn.

**Wharton Park Golf Club:** The Society objected to a planning application from the new owners for change of use of land at the Golf Club in order to site 9 holiday caravans. We considered that the proposed plots were situated in an area of valued landscape, a fact recognised by the County Council WCC and WFDC in their respective strategic plans. The Society also felt that the caravans would have a negative impact in this area and, although the plans were modest, they could lead to a larger scale development in the future. The application was subsequently withdrawn but may well raise its head in the future.

**Other Developments:** All planning applications affecting the Conservation Area, plus some others, were examined and our views are communicated to the relevant authorities when appropriate. We are also vigilant for breaches of planning permissions and lobby accordingly.

## Buildings at Risk

**Ribbesford House:** We were pleased to see the erection of scaffolding around most of this historic Grade II star listed mansion evidencing that the new owners, Samuel and Russell Leeds, mean business in its restoration to create luxury apartments. We were not surprised however to learn from press reports that the building, arguably Bewdley's most important, was in much worse condition than originally thought by the owners and that it was going to cost much more than the original estimate of £750,000 to complete the work. We remain hopeful that all goes to plan from now on.

**The Old Workhouse, 64 High Street:** We were delighted to learn in November that most of this Grade 2 historic building had, at last, been sold to a local builder/developer. The Society had been lobbying WFDC for over 10 years for action to be taken to preserve the building. Whilst this did result in them issuing an Urgent Works Notice we had to wait 4 years longer until this sale went through. The new owner has promised to keep us fully informed as to his plans to convert the building to residential use. We remain concerned however that the part of the building which fronts to High Street will continue to lack any attention. We are grateful to WFDCs Conservation Officer Peter Bassett, and Bewdley Town Council for supporting us over the years.

**Telford's Bridge:** We received the further good news in November that WCC is to fund much-needed repairs. Once again, the Society can show that it had been lobbying WCC for many years for action to be taken and it was apposite that Historic England placed this Grade 1 structure on its 'At Risk' Register two years ago. We thank County Councillor Becky Vale for her tenacity in achieving this result and for publicly recognising that it was the Civic Society which motivated her.

## **Civic Voice**

Our Champion of **Civic Voice** (CV), the National Body for Civic Societies, Barbara Longmore, reports that during the year the Society again renewed its membership of the national body and has taken an active role in many of its events and information-seeking activities. This is a useful process as it ensures that grass-roots Civic Societies maintain a link to decision-making bodies at Westminster. Civic Voice is also used by the government as an advisory body for issues relating to planning, housing design, conservation, etc.

Following the launch of the **Big Conservation Conversation** by CV, early in 2018, the Society completed the CV Conservation Audit for Bewdley. The national results of this Audit were influential in the government decision to announce, in September 2019, £95m funding for Historic High Streets. The campaign has also raised the awareness of the number of conservation areas 'at risk' in the UK. The Society also took part in the government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport periodic review of Historic England, supporting the work of this important organisation for the protection of listed buildings and conservation areas. The Society was represented at two of the three **All Party Parliamentary Group meetings**, held at Westminster in 2019. These were themed: **Public Participation in the Planning System** and the **Building Better, Building Beautiful Campaign**. The then Minister of State for Housing, Kit Malthouse, attended, listened and spoke at the first, and with regard to the second, Civic Voice has been the only organisation invited by the government to meet the commissioners, submit verbal and written evidence and to speak at the launch event of the Commission's interim report. The Society was also represented at the **2019 AGM of Civic Voice** in London where the current Chair, Joan Humble, was re-elected and CV pledged to work towards rebalancing power in the planning system and campaigning for a citizen-led, participative model of governance for our towns, cities and villages.

## **Annual General Meeting**

At the AGM in April, chaired by our President, Ian Williams retired from the Executive Committee (EC) and we thank him for his valued contribution over many years. Paul Crane was elected to the EC along with Tony Leach. Tony is chair of the Highclere Resident's Association and has an excellent working knowledge of planning matters. All other members of the EC and the officers were re-elected.

## **Financial**

The accounts for the year ended 31st of December 2019 show that there was an operating deficit of £1268. However, this was before the increase in value of £1,182 in the COIF investment. Overall therefore there was a small deficit of £86 with funds at the year-end totalling £31,435 of which £10,629 was unrestricted and £20,813 restricted (for statue and touchscreen purposes) evidencing that the Society's financial position remains in good shape.

## **Thanks**

I have mentioned in this report some of our members who have done good things for the Society and I would like to thank them along with all those others who have contributed so much. In particular I am thinking of our Honorary Treasurer Peter Archer, Sheelah Bolam our Honorary Membership Secretary and Ann Sutherland, Minutes Secretary. But there are many more to thank including a small army of newsletter deliverers; we are grateful to them and to the members for supporting us.

## **Richard Perrin**

# BEWDLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

[www.bewdleycivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.bewdleycivicsociety.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 700898

President

**Beatrice Grant**

Great-granddaughter of Stanley Baldwin

Vice Presidents

**Brian Stephens, Peter Bolam, Peter Archer, Paul Crane**

## Officers of the Society 31st December 2019

Chairman

**Richard Perrin**

Lucerne, 59 Park Lane, Bewdley, DY12 2HA

Tel: 405823

Email: [jrichardperrin@aol.com](mailto:jrichardperrin@aol.com)

Vice Chairman

**Chris Griffin**

Peacock House, Lower Park,

Bewdley, DY12 2DP

Tel: 400149

Email: [chris@griffintaylor.co.uk](mailto:chris@griffintaylor.co.uk)

Hon. Treasurer

**Peter Archer**

16 Park Dingle

Bewdley, DY12 2JY

Tel: 403845

Email: [peterarcher84@gmail.com](mailto:peterarcher84@gmail.com)

Hon. Secretary

**Barbara Longmore**

The Coach House, Park Alley,  
High Street, Bewdley, DY12 2DN

Tel: 403939

Email: [bmlongmore@gmail.com](mailto:bmlongmore@gmail.com)

### Executive Committee Members

Steve Bent, Paul Crane, William Dewar, Dr Jenny Frow, Jock Gallagher, Martin Guard, Sharon Harvey, Ann Howarth, Tony Leach, Robert Limbrick, Graham Luxford, Susan Perrin, Dr Alan Scaplehorn, Brian Stephens, Peter Waldron, Ex Officio The Mayor of Bewdley – Councillor John Byng

Membership Secretary

**Sheelah Bolam**

6 Sandbourne Drive

Bewdley, DY12 1BN

Tel: 401188

Email: [bolam6@btinternet.com](mailto:bolam6@btinternet.com)



Frontispiece: William Prattinton 1726 – 1789 in 68th year showing Bewdley old bridge and one of his trows in foreground. Oil on canvas attributed to Edward Allcock, by kind permission of Paul Crane.

Photo: Colin Hill