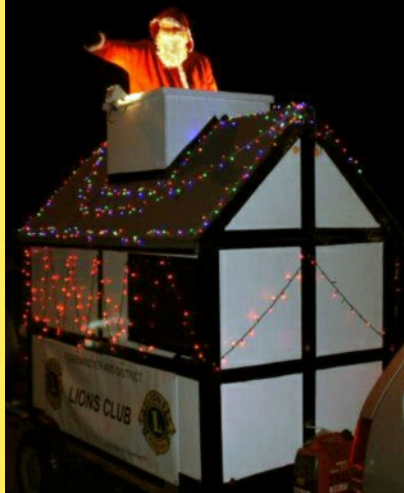




Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Santa on parade...



Brightening up a building site school style

It must have seemed as if if Christmas had come early for Bewdley pupils when the foreman of the Medical Centre site gave them the freedom of his hoardings! The local WI has also booked a site for their own offering!

...for the Christmas lights switch-on



...and the Society braves the weather



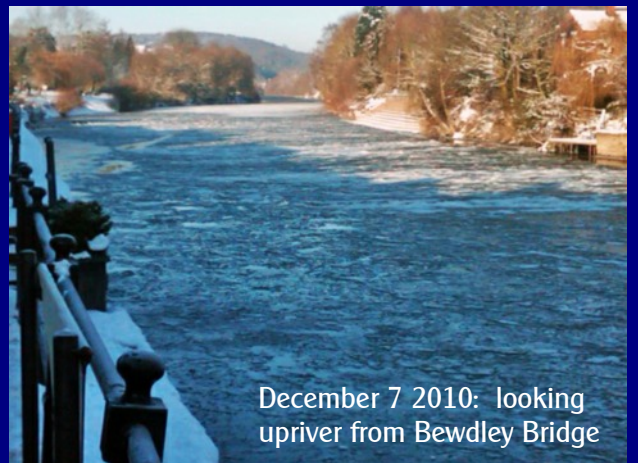
It wasn't a cold and frosty night...it was freezing and soggy wet. Only the stalwarts - like Pauline Lowe (above) - braved the terrible weather to attend to the Society's stall at the Christmas Lights Festival. Despite the rain there was a gentle flow of visitors and we even signed up a couple of new members.

CLASSICS from JASON WILLIAMS

Christmas Eve 2010: photo taken from the by-pass bridge at Blackstone looking upriver towards Bewdley



December 7 2010: looking upriver from Bewdley Bridge





THE MAGIC OF MORGAN

Our visit to the Morgan Motor Company in October attracted 28 members and friends who, after making their own way to Malvern Link, met up in the café of the company's Visitors' Centre. It was a very busy morning for Morgan and I was a little concerned to see a party of rather noisy school children marching in ahead of us. However, the company has obviously mastered the management of visits and once we were ushered into the 'theatre' to have an introductory talk (by our society member and guide, Derek Richards) and to watch a film about the development of the company and the vehicles, the visit progressed as if we were the only group on the premises.

Following our introduction, we were taken through the whole production process of the Morgan vehicles and everyone was impressed with the highly-skilled craftsmanship involved in their production.

From the construction of the hand-crafted, light-weight ash wood frame right through to the hand-spraying and trimming of each vehicle, perfection was paramount. And what a wonderful final product! I was extremely impressed that the customer had a choice of over 4,000 paintwork colours and many other options in manufacture were available, so that each car on order was especially handmade for a particular person.

Many of you may remember the Sir John Harvey Jones' BBC2 television series in 1990 where he advised businesses on how they could improve their operation. On visiting the Morgan Car Company he was horrified to see that they were still making their vehicles by hand and even continuing to use a large amount of wood in their construction.

His advice to the company was: "modernise, greatly increase production and ramp up your prices or you will go out of business". Morgan completely rejected his advice on all counts but so popular were their cars that they went on to benefit from the publicity and their turnover rocketed.

Every Morgan is expertly crafted using three core elements: ash, aluminium and leather but it would be impossible to describe the intricate processes involved in this short account. If you missed the visit and want to know more, you will have to see it for yourself. Details of how to book can be obtained from <http://www.morgan-motor.co.uk/factorytours/> or you can telephone the Visitors Centre on 01684 584580, or Main Reception on 01684 573104.

The small museum attached to the Visitors Centre can be viewed during working hours by members of the public without having to book a visit.

OCTOBER OUTING



The Morgan story: told by Ian Patton



Editor's disclaimer: I can't quite believe I'm devoting a whole page to a duck-house and a cat. Well, my reasoning is that it's not just any old duck-house. It's a winning duck-house. Came out top in the vote for best duck-house in Bewdley, actually. And certainly not any old cat Molly, once the cat-in-the-park, has been re-styled the cat-in-the-duck-house with her very own fan-base (*see the note below from a doting owner*). The two come together to make a compelling Christmas story At least that's my story.

The Editor

Molly: the cat who's leader of the High Street pack

Molly, who has recently become known as the cat in the park or the cat in the duck house, has lived with her son Socks and her two friendly and "tolerant" springer spaniels Sam and Jack and not forgetting her two human owners on the High Street for nearly ten years now.

Molly is definitely in control of the pack in High Street. She will think nothing of helping herself to the dogs' food when they are politely waiting to be told to eat. She will sleep in their beds while they have to make do with the floor and if allowed, would sit up at the table on a dining chair as if she were about to participate in the evening meal.

She will be very vocal if things are not going her way and then we all know about it.

Molly is definitely a character. She clearly believes the park is part of her garden. Well, it's just over the wall and she has made herself quite at home there.

Antics

I have witnessed her antics. She will stretch out on a bench while the humans are all crowded at one end. She will endear herself to those who are eating sandwiches or fish and chips in the hope of a hand-out and she asks to be stroked and fussed.

She drinks from the pond and on one occasion I caught her in the café trying to persuade an unsuspecting couple to give her some cake.

Molly is very much loved at home. She has unfortunately had a couple of near misses in the park.

She was mistaken for a stray and taken to the vet in Bewdley but luckily she is chipped and we got her back.

She was picked up by someone who felt sorry for her and wanted take her home: again, luckily, a friend recognised her and explained that she did already have a happy home.

On the whole, people are becoming protective of Molly in the park and like to see her there. I would not like to see her kept in and it's nice that she has a safe traffic-free area in which to play.

I'm sure she is looking forward to the festival next year and whatever installations there may be in her "playground" for her to enjoy.

Jan Hudson (proud owner)

Society's duck-house ...with attitude



There was jubilation - in some circles - when the Society proved its style and industry by transforming a wooden shell into...a duck-house with attitude. The first in a new genre of *art ducko*?

The efforts of a seriously-talented working party - of Penny Griffiths and Jan Pearce (seen above with the interloping Molly), David Griffiths and Pauline Lowe - proved enough to beat all challengers to capture the Festival's coveted Community Arts Project prize for the most original.

The chairman heaped praise on the team at a packed awards ceremony in St George's Hall when it was revealed the Society's duck-house had won the town's popular vote. It was a proud moment, he said.

Our contribution illustrates aspects of the Society and of Bewdley. The adjoining garden houses a memorial bench to Kenneth Hobson: the green wheelie bin represents his valiant efforts to clear up any litter which could be recycled. The house even has its own flood defence system and it sports a fine blue plaque...marking the first nest of Sir Stanley Baldwings!

The project does have a serious side. The basic houses were produced by workers from the Emily Jordan Foundation, which provides opportunities for young people with moderate learning and physical disabilities to participate in a manufacturing environment to develop their skills in the workplace.

Now for the DUCK RACE on New Year's Day!





Daylight robbery

For the first time in 234 years, Bewdley will not have a bank after January 22. Not even the declared policy of the Prime Minister that 'no town should be without a bank' nor the imprecations of our MP nor the protestations of our Town Council nor the anguish of local customers have been enough to change the minds of HSBC bosses who determined to close the doors of the town's last remaining bank.

Petitions and pleas have proved fruitless. 'They are robbing us of any kind of future,' said one angry shopkeeper, who has relied on the bank for a wide range of vital services. "This is a new form of daylight robbery!"

The Mayor, Cllr Calne Edgington-White said it was 'the life blood of the town' and will have an impact on so many residents. Councillor John Beeson said: 'It's a disaster for the town.'

Sara Hayden, of Hayden Estates said: 'We risk losing the heart of our community. The people, the businesses and our little town everyone once loved to visit will be another picture saved in the archives.'

Local MP, Mark Garnier, said: "It is a bad sign that a town is left without any bank branch at all. I will certainly be making the strongest possible case I can but it is, of course, a private entity. As a result it makes it very hard to get them to change their mind."

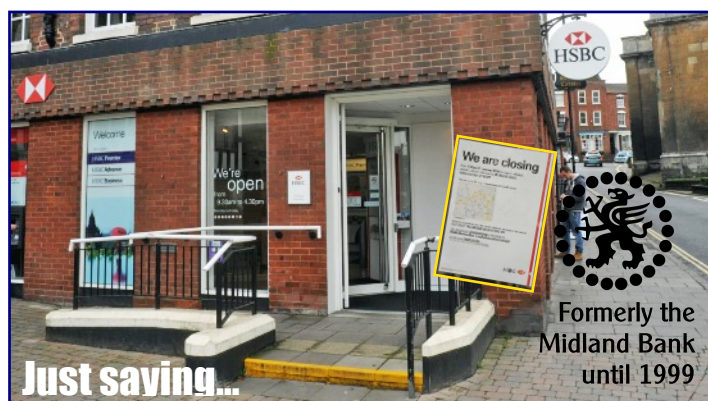
A spokesman for HSBC said the branch was being closed because of a drop in its use. 'We never take the decision to close a branch lightly, and we understand it's unsettling for the local community. Unfortunately, with an increase in the use of online and telephone banking over the past few years the use of the Bewdley branch has fallen significantly.

'We will be working with customers who use the branch to help them understand their options, which include being able to use the local post office to check their balance and withdraw and pay in cash and cheques to their personal HSBC account. There are also a number of fee-free cash machines in the area.' After January 22, the number of ATMs in Bewdley will be...one!

HSBC don't seem to be aware of its own publicity about 'investing in our communities.' Instead, they have now confirmed with Mr Garnier that they will not go back on their decision to close the branch.

He is therefore talking to Tesco about installing a second ATM and even the possibility of adding a banking counter within the store.

The Town Council and the Civic Society are pursuing a number of other possibilities with alternative providers.



From HSBC's current website...

HSBC takes a business-focused approach to sustainability, creating long-term customer relationships and investing in our communities. We recognise that we have responsibilities not only towards our customers, employees and shareholders but also to the countries and communities in which we operate. ■

The Bewdley bank's origins can be traced back to 1781 when it was established as a pioneering venture under the name of Roberts, Skey and Kenrick. It was the only banking house in Bewdley to survive the crises of the early nineteenth century. By the time the Midland Bank bought it in 1862, it was known as Nicholls, Baker and Crane and until now, had been the bank's second oldest branch. History, however, comes to nought when the branch closes on January 22...at precisely 3.30pm. So much for loyalty, too. Customers are told they must now use the local Post Office or go to one of the other HSBC branches in Kidderminster or Stourport.

Weep, too, for the willow



One of the casualties of the recent gales was the beautiful weeping-willow on the riverside at Beale's Corner. It was cut almost in half and we await the tree doctor's verdict on how much of the glory can be saved.



A view from St Anne's Church

The old Workhouse

One of the the most consistently-important item on the Society's Agenda for the past decade and more has been concern for the fabric of the old Workhouse, the Grade II Listed Building off High Street. There is optimism, however, that the building will be saved before it falls to the ground on its own volition. Watch this space.

The Workhouse, built in 1737, closed in 1834, when a much larger institution was built in Kidderminster. The building was later used as a house and horn-workers' workshop, hence its other popular name: The Horn Factory.

WINTER/SPRING LECTURES

All in St George's Hall

7 30pm Tuesday January 12

Reluctant Rebel: the story of Owain Glyndwr (right) by Tim Porter (of Marcher Lords fame)

2 30pm Wednesday February 17

Baldwin – A Reputation Restored by John Chester

7 30pm Tuesday March 15

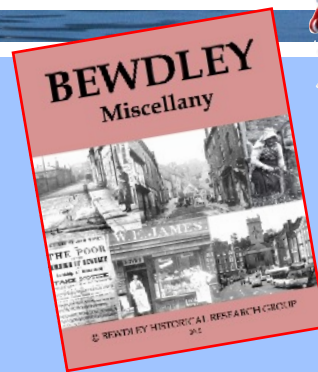
Birmingham Back-to-Back Houses by Derek Clarke

7 30pm Wednesday April 20

Annual General Meeting



Roses are red...and green and purple and yellow and pink and blue! This unique hybrid beauty that makes one want to sing was created for a customer's wedding by *Bewdley Blooms*.



Bewdley Miscellany is the latest in a series of publications produced by the Bewdley Historical Research Group. As *miscellany* implies, this is a collection of short articles covering many aspects of the town and its inhabitants. It ranges from the academically serious to the tragi-comic and the downright outrageous. You will find items going back as far as the banishment of Henry VIII's daughter Mary to the palace at Tickenhill and as recent as a WWI mystery. You can read about the curious goings-on in Welch Gate, Alice Parker's recollections of Bewdley in Victorian times, the trow ladies of the 1820s and much more.

The authors are members of the local research group and have years of experience discovering new information about Bewdley and its surrounding area. This richly illustrated new book is a great addition to their many existing publications on the town's history and will delight locals as well as visitors. It would make an excellent Christmas present.

Bewdley Miscellany can be purchased at the Tourist Information Centre, Bewdley Emporium in Lax Lane and the Civic Society, price £9.95.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that the annual - unchanged - subscriptions fall due on January 1. See the form attached at the end of the Newsletter for full details.

The Editor welcomes articles and photographs from members on jyg@cix.co.uk



Lecture on the History of Stourbridge Glass by Dr Kate Round

An international reputation

Dr Kate Round delivered her talk to a large and interested audience in St George's Hall, relating how a combination of factors led to the world renowned industry being based in Stourbridge.

These included the area's geology and the arrival of persecuted immigrants - including 'French coal-miners in the Huguenot diaspora' - with their artisan skills, not to mention proximity to the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

She explained the design and workings of the amazing glass domes that grew up in the famous "glass mile", painting a picture of the workers' conditions and wonderful skills they brought to the industry.

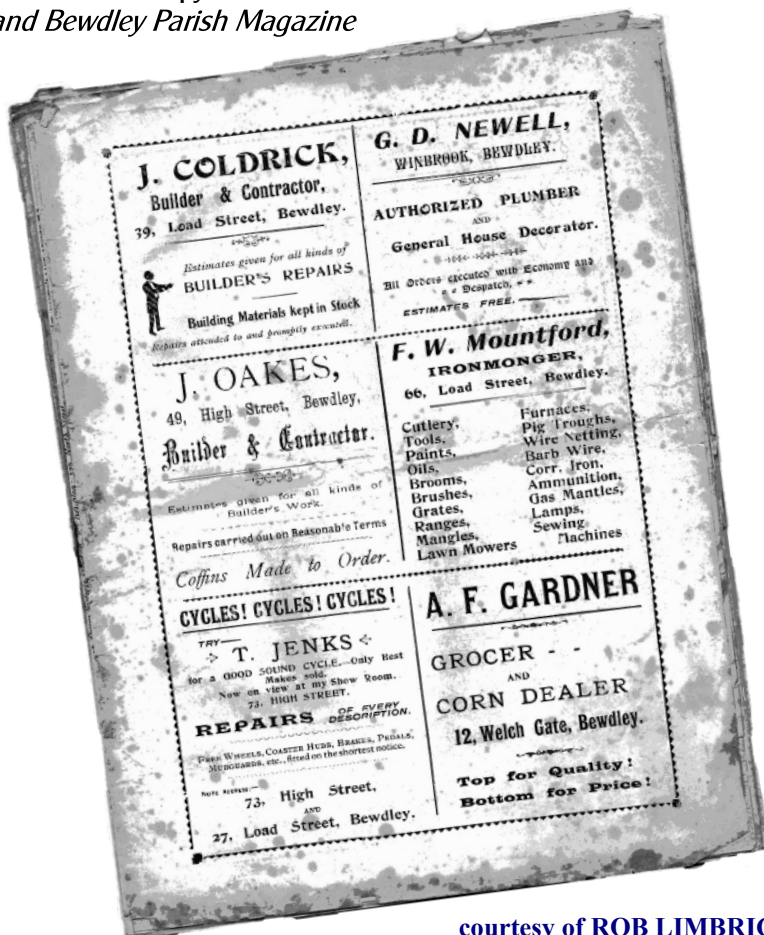
There are many individual craftsmen and women still working in studios in the area today.

The international reputation of Stourbridge glass is such that even large museums in America check to see if Broadfield House Museum is interested when a collectors' piece comes on the market!

The museum is currently closed while a new venue is built in Wordsley.

An outing perhaps for the Society when it opens? Jenny Frow

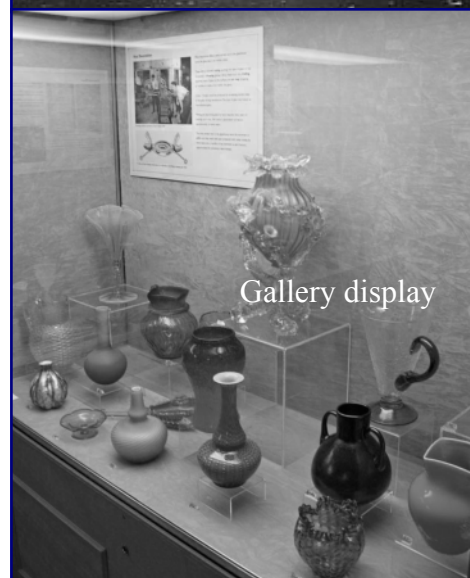
From a 1911 copy of the *Ribbesford and Bewdley Parish Magazine*



courtesy of ROB LIMBRICK



Broadfield House Museum



Gallery display



Solid glass making demo in the hot-glass studio

Photos: Aaron Hickman, Wolverhampton Art & Museums Service



Memories of pre-Health Centre days in Bewdley

by Dr Ruth Lillie

'It was the nearest beautiful place we knew'

It is now 50 years since I qualified in Birmingham where I stayed during the war assisting in a General Practice until my late husband, Jock, was discharged from the RAF in September 1945. We then started to look round for somewhere to settle. It was a difficult time with all the other chaps from the services competing for very few vacancies.

Dr Lillie died last Boxing Day. She was 99. A lifelong member of the Society, she and her husband Jock were popular figures after they bought a share of the local practice immediately in 1946. When Jock died suddenly at the age of 42, Ruth continued in the local practice.

Philip Harris, the surgical-instrument and wholesale chemist firm in Birmingham, ran an agency for locums and GP partnership vacancies and in those pre-NHS days, we had a choice of the Bristol downtown area, Church Street in Kidderminster (Sam Wadsworth took that one) and Bewdley.

I was brought up in the Black Country and had a great love of Bewdley: it was the nearest beautiful place we knew.

On a delightful April day in 1946 we made a visit to Bewdley and met Dr and Mrs VWN Miles and Dr Bob and his wife, Molly, and arranged a preliminary assistantship for Jock. In the days before the NHS one bought a third-share of the practice to start with and this we did after the preliminary six months.

There were no modern houses vacant and Wing Commander Howell bought Baldwin's house on the corner of Lax Lane and converted it to flats and we bought next door opposite the rectory – all rather derelict at the time and complete with dry rot and woodworm. It was however a very convenient place to live and we stayed there very happily for seven years.

The Bewdley Practice had been a one-man show until Bob joined his father in 1935.

It was run from old Dr Miles' house in 42 High Street and conditions were far from modern.

Surgeries were 9-10am and 6-7pm including Saturday.

The doctor stood up at his desk and dispensed for the patients as he went along. Everything was written down in a day-book and after the meticulous record-keeping in the RAF, Jock found this terribly tedious, so when the practice moved down to 70-71 Load Street later in 1946, when the old man finally retired, a card-index system was started and consultations were held sitting down!

It is difficult to believe how "small" everything was in the Bewdley area in 1946: no new housing – Cleobury Road council houses and Bark Hill estate were the only pre-war ones – Lyttleton Road was the first building effort after the war – before then it was just Tudor, York, Baldwin and the top of Richmond Roads and patients just said they lived "up Bark Hill".

The Hospital was like a small family affair at Mill Street. John Stretton was Chief Surgeon, his wife the Matron. Bob Miles was the anaesthetist for him and physician – the other physician being Dr Lurring. Casualty was a small room in Out Patients Dept.

Hope and Charity wards were surgical and SS and Faith, medical. PE was the children's ward. They had an Radiation Safety Officer and one houseman. There was a county Medical Officer of Health and GPs were local MOHs. Dr Miles senior had been MOH in Bewdley.

Our practice was responsible for seeing that all the children in the area were vaccinated – it was compulsory in those days. With the advent of the NHS, Dr Markham was appointed MOH and became responsible for immunisations, school medicals, AN clinics etc. We had no contact with the health visitors and continued

to look after our expectant mothers and babies as before so I imagine his clinics were quite small.

There will be a second instalment of Dr Lillie's recollections of Bewdley in the post-war years in the Spring Newsletter



The Mill Street Hospital was 'like a small family affair' where the wards were called Faith, Hope and Charity!



The ladders that make easy picking for the top of the crop

BRIAN STEPHENS reveals the gems in the Museum

Bewdley Museum recently accepted six cherry-picking pole ladders twenty-five and thirty feet long, kindly donated by a smallholder at Buckridge, Far Forest. They were made to order by Walter Buckley in a workshop near The Colliers Arms, Clows Top.

All the ladders are in good condition having been kept dry and looked after. All are made from locally-grown timber: the sides of Norway Spruce, the familiar Christmas tree (one is much heavier and probably of larch) and all with oak rungs.

Why should some old ladders be of interest? Firstly, for safety reasons, wooden ladders are proscribed so no more will be made. Secondly, they form a tangible reminder of the once flourishing cherry-trade which died out in this area fifty years ago.

A pole ladder is made from a selected tree trunk sawn lengthways to give two matching sides. The rungs, free of knots are shaped on a shaving horse (as joining pegs have been made for centuries) fitted into tapered holes and held with wedges. The assembled ladder is then tightened by pulling the side together with metal rods riveted across at intervals.

Fruit-picking ladders are distinctive. The old standard cherry trees were huge and to reach the fruit, tall smooth ladders were needed. These could have up to forty rungs - which with rungs nine inches apart, would be thirty feet long. For use on soft, uneven ground, iron spikes were fitted to the bottom. For more stability, the sides were splayed at the base with long rungs, then narrowing to a few inches at the top. This gave a three-point support. With the base secure, the top against relatively small twigs and the weight spread over the outer branches, pickers could reach the fruit safely.

Farms would have a stock of a dozen or more ladders for fruit-picking gangs to use. One member of the gang would set the ladders, fairly steeply, on a radius of the tree so that any slip would be into the tree and not sideways. Pickers could almost lie against the steep ladders as they leaned into the tree, taking the weight off their arms. Picking cherries by the stalks, without bruising the fruit or damaging next year's fruit buds requires some skill. Piece-work from a narrow ladder twenty feet above the ground would not be everyone's preference.

Ladders still survive in old farm buildings but are mostly machine-made or worm-eaten so to have a set of typical ladders, of known provenance, made locally by a traditional carpenter from locally-grown timber, is quite significant.



Bench for clamping and shaving pegs using a draw knife.



ABOVE: The shaving-horse;
RIGHT quartering the log;
BELOW Oak butts



Longbank Orchard



Charity ordered to re-plant hedge

In the Autumn Newsletter, I reported about the seventy-metre hedge at the top of Longbank which has been ripped out by the new owner, the Forces Support Charity. A public meeting, called by local residents, was held in October at Far Forest Village Hall.

Representatives of the charity were invited and four attended including the Chief Executive, Bill McCance (in colourful shirt in photo) and I was asked to chair the meeting.

Mark Garnier MP, Cllr Stephen Clee, WFDC and Cllr Derek Killingworth, Bewdley Town Council were also in attendance.

The fact that around eighty members of the public also attended clearly showed the strength of feeling amongst the local residents against any development on this site.

Cllr Clee explained that the District Council has issued the owners with a replanting notice and that no planning application had been submitted.

Mr McCance and the charity's architect explained that they have plans to create a Garden of Remembrance on the site plus construction of storage facilities.

Sketches of these were exhibited.

At times the discussions became quite heated and there were suggestions that the charity should approach the Forestry Commission for permission to site the facilities on their land at the Visitor Centre at nearby Callow Hill.

The charity representatives said they would take away with them the views expressed at the meeting.

To date an application for planning permission has still to be lodged and at the time of writing the hedge has yet to be replanted.

From the Chairman's Desk

The Green Belt

The recent announcement that a new government consultation which proposes to relax existing strict rules that only allow building on greenfield land around towns in exceptional circumstances follows the recent approval for a water park and hotel in the green belt between Bewdley and Kidderminster.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has responded by saying that this could result in a lot more planning battles in the countryside over coming years. Incidentally, the Society has recently become a member of the CPRE following the help they gave us in our efforts to have the Safari Park proposals amended.

The Annual Dinner

Feedback received showed that the 85 members who attended much enjoyed this occasion at St George's Hall in November. Once again our caterer was Kit Bamford and his canapes and main course were well received.

We were delighted to welcome our guests, the Mayor of Bewdley, Cllr Calne Edginton and her consort for the evening, Cllr Linda Candlin.

The evening was rounded off by a pictorial quiz of Bewdley contested on a table by table basis. The results were extremely varied and the fact that the top table were easy winners was probably down to the fact that the Mayor has lived for most of her life in Bewdley!

HSBC Bank

Our Editor has compiled an article expressing the Society's great regret that HSBC are closing their Bewdley branch, the last remaining bank in town. It seems that it is the victim of reduced usage caused by the modern phenomenon known as 'Internet Banking'.

That's no consolation for the traders in the town although it has been announced that HSBC has come to an arrangement with the Post Office which will now accept cash into HSBC business accounts. I am also in contact with the bank seeking their agreement to install an ATM somewhere conveniently placed in the town. Unless they do, the loss of their two existing ATMs at the Load Street premises will cause much inconvenience to hundreds, even thousands, of local people.

I wish all our members and their families a very enjoyable Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.