



NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2017

INSIDE

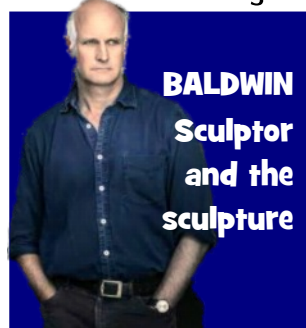


For latest see Pages 2/3

Bridge 'at risk'



See Page 4



BALDWIN Sculptor and the sculpture

See page 7/12



See Page 10

BREAKING NEWS + + + RIBBESFORD HOUSE TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION IN NEW YEAR

Scrooge and the Neighbourhood Plan

as told by Councillor Philip Edmundson



"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change."

In a changing world, Bewdley needs to know its position and its role within planning and land use; the Neighbourhood Plan is the heart of this. It is the gatekeeper of our future; built upon the views and interests of the people of Bewdley, aiming to ensure a preserved cultural and historical perspective, yet understanding the need for an eye on the future and a need to embrace the needs of all aspects of the community. After further debate and further

disappointment from Wyre Forest District Council, on December 4, Christmas came early and the Town Council approved the move to pursue the Neighbourhood Plan final stages, without the housing sections.

The reason? To ensure the views of the people of Bewdley are heard loud and clear and endorsed by them. The key issues with WFDC and planning can be summed in one, simple, catch all phrase: communication. I wrote in the press

Continued on Page 11

IT IS TIME

*Suffocating our historic town
amidst its beautiful countryside?*

*These new red brick houses all in a row
will tower above the scenes of long ago.*

*The public footpath trodden across these fields,
leads to tracks that wander peacefully to the
Wyre Forest glades below.*

*This is our Bewdley town we cherish, sitting
beside the river Severn.*

*Small and packed full of character,
beautiful in its attraction.*

*A property developer is here!
Who looks to profit from their creeping
thoughtless destruction.*

*Ruining our character town which
holds such affection.*

*There is no doubt houses are needed but there
are plenty of brown sites about.*

Where less of an impact would be felt.

*Please think again before you sign away
this patch 'Of England's green and
pleasant land'.*

JEN AVRIL

STOP PRESS: Change to lecture programme

Owing to unforeseen circumstances, we have had to make two changes to our 2018 Programme. **a)** The lecture, on January 17 will now be given at **7.30pm** not **2.30pm** as originally programmed. This will be *Kidderminster: Alternatives to Working in the Carpet Factory* by Robert Barber (originally listed for March) and **b)** The lecture - John Chester's *Baldwin and Churchill* - listed for March 13, will now be on **March 20 at 2.30pm**.

Merry Christmas



The inquiry outcome is now expected in

No!

Chorus of communal concern

In a commendable show of solidarity, Bewdley said No to Gladman; Wyre Forest District Council said No; Bewdley Town Council said No; the local MP said No; the Civic Society said No; and through the energetic *Bewdley Says No to Gladman* group, the community said No.

The Planning Inspector, Matthew Nunn conducting the hearing (that follows Gladman's appeal against Wyre Forest District Council's refusal of planning permission for 195 houses in open fields on the west side of the town) could be under no misunderstanding about the force of local opinion.

During the eight-day hearing, it was hammered home relentlessly in a cohesive chorus of communal concern.

- The District Council said: *Social and economic benefits of such a scheme are far outweighed by the harm caused.*

- The Town Council said: *This development...would not recognise the community's vision for future local development*

- The *Bewdley Says Say No to Gladman (BSNTG)* group said: *Needless to say the answers received were mainly bland and non-committal, generally not really answering the points that we raised.*

- The Civic Society said: *The scheme is a speculative, controversial and contrary development*

- The local MP Mark Garnier had earlier said: *Gladman's approach to planning is cynical.*

Collectively they made a very powerful case against the appeal.

For Gladman, their barrister asked for the appeal to be upheld because *in essence, the limited identified harm does not come close to significantly and demonstrably outweighing the very substantial benefits of this sustainable development scheme.*

Development doesn't fit in with local plans

This development does not fit with either the Bewdley Neighbourhood Plan or Wyre Forest's Local Plan. We believe that the local infrastructure is incapable of supporting development in this particular area, especially the roads through the town centre - a conservation area. *Cllr Philip Edmundson, Chair Town Council Neighbourhood Plan group*

Over 380 people demonstrated their opposition to Gladman's plans by joining hands all along the public right of way, the beautiful footpath, which crosses these fields



The site is not in a sustainable location...it is on the western urban fringe ensuring all traffic will have to negotiate through our town in order to access the West Midlands. *Civic Society*



Impact on quality of life

The proposed development would inflict an unwanted and dramatic change on the character of the neighbourhood which lives in harmony with the green space, appreciates the well-used rural footpath and the landscape of the Severn Valley... Bewdley's community, as a whole, does not want to see any more large-scale housing development and certainly not on a landscape that is so much appreciated and essential to well-being. *Wyre Forest District Council*

Herding cats!

In a lighter moment, Rod Stanczyszyn referred to one of Gladman's offers... "an appropriate planting scheme to deter cats from leaving the site as a measure to maintain biodiversity." *It is stating the obvious I know but this idea seems as ridiculous in intention as it is impossible to achieve,* he said.

Continued on Page 3

NO TO GLADMAN

The inquiry: Part 2

Whose views are important? They didn't listen!

Rod Stanczyszyn, Chair of the *Bewdley Says No to Gladman* committee told the enquiry that the company had not listened to their objections. He quoted an initial leaflet to residents: "This specifies that, of the 539 of those local residents who received...the leaflets which contained the statement; *Your views are important to us and will be considered as we progress our plans for this site*, a total of 161 sent a response. It omits, however, to mention that 154 of those replies were categorically against the proposals. It can be seen that, even in the case where local views may have been "listened to," no changes were made to the proposals between the consultation starting and the validation of the application 32 days later.

The view from this site is geologically absolutely unique

It is the only long view of the topographical expression of a structure termed the Bewdley Fault as shown on the geological map accompanying the local *Geopark Way* booklet. This geological faulting has the more resistant strata of the Upper Carboniferous – shown by the higher ground of the Trimpley Ridge to the north – next to the less resistant red sandstones and conglomerates of the younger Triassic age strata which is clearly shown by the lower ground of Crundall's Farm allowing the uninterrupted view across to the Clent Hills to the east.

'Plan will take away an ancient coffin path'

The site is in countryside loved and enjoyed by both residents and tourists alike for generations. The plan will take away an ancient coffin path across historic farmland with unrivalled pristine views of the Wyre Forest (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) and the Severn Valley.

Bewdley's Tour de France

Cycling has also been proposed as transport to the town. It is a fact that the National Cycle Route 45 joins Dry Mill Lane to the centre en route to the Severn bridge. This means that many fit cyclists of a range of ages can be seen on the local roads obviously dressed for a long cross-country journey. On the other hand, the sighting of a local resident cycling along Richmond Road or the B4194 Cleobury Road is the equivalent of an amateur cyclist taking part in the Tour de France.

Gladman's approach to planning is cynical

Mark Garnier MP



Mark Garnier MP: While there is no doubt we can do with more housing in Wyre Forest, it should always be the case that this is done through consultation between the community and the planning department. Gladman is an example of an operator that games the rules without any regard to the community or its needs. They are cynical opportunists and they are absolutely and in every way, unwelcome in the Wyre Forest. They have cynically used the planning law to sidestep the District Council knowing the council would have thrown out their proposals.

'Joy from the green fields and yon azure sky'

Lynn Stanczyszyn (speaking for those who use the footpath that dissects the site) said: The predominant and uplifting view is that of the landscape of the Severn Valley. This is a 180 degree sweeping view that clearly shows the Wyre Forest and its ancient oak woodland in relation to the river valley, Trimpley Top, Wassell Wood, the setting of the town of Bewdley, which is in itself a conservation area, and further North and North East, the hills of North Worcestershire, including Wychbury Hill and obelisk; Clent; Waseley and Lickey Hills. These can all be clearly seen from the footpath across the fields. There is no other public access to these views in the locality. This footpath offers a unique experience. The footpath may well have been in use before the Bewdley of the Georgian era. The loss of those fields and rural footpath to our neighbourhood, the wider community, and visitors, would be immeasurable, we would be diminished.

The 3 dimensional sensory experience becomes 4 dimensions when you feel '*the gentle breeze that ...brings joy from the green fields and yon azure sky*' If these fields and historic rural footpath are not worth preserving then I don't know what is.

...and finally: the Inspector saw the Severn Valley in all its glory

The Inspector toured the fields of the proposed site, the children's play area and the adjacent roads. Thankfully the weather 'played ball' and eventually those glorious views emerged. We spent two hours in the Lakes Road area before a smaller group accompanied the Inspector to the Railway Station and the public footpaths on Crundalls Hill and at Hall Farm on the East side of the Severn Valley; by now the sun was shining brightly so the views across the Severn to the site were prominent. After that, it was back to Dry Mill Lane and over the stile for another walk along the footpath in the top field, now with the North Worcestershire hills clearly visible.

From BSNTG



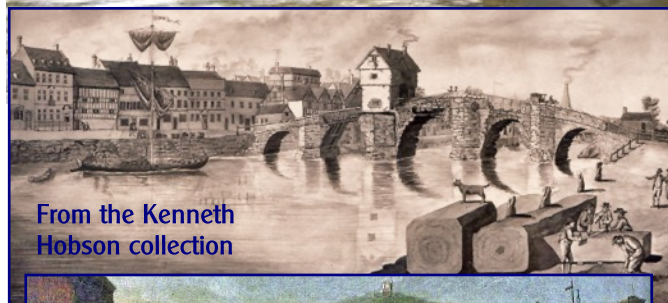
No one who has seen this beautiful bridge can regret that the one of five arches was swept away by the flood of 1795. It was replaced by Telford's bridge in summer of 1798, which was so dry that the great engineer was enabled to raise it as if by enchantment in finishing it entirely in one season.
from *A History of the County of Worcester: volume 4*

Bridge on Heritage at Risk Register

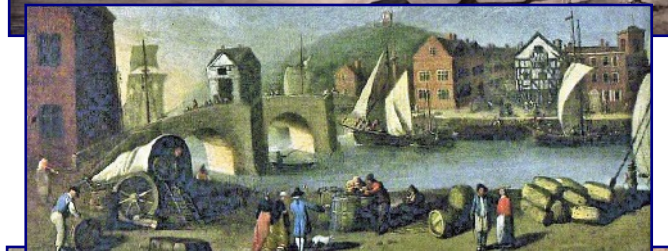


PHOTO Pete Lawes

HISTORY OF THE BRIDGE



From the Kenneth Hobson collection



There has been a bridge at Bewdley since the Middle Ages. Two wooden structures succumbed to the relentless flow of the Severn, another was damaged by Royalists in 1644 and the last - with five-arches was swept away in the floods of 1795. Thomas Telford (left) designed the current three-span masonry-arch bridge. It was built in 1798 by John of Shrewsbury at a cost of £9000.



Health check reveals stonework erosion and iron rusting

The town's bridge has had a serious health warning. It has been listed on Historic England's 2017 *Heritage At Risk* register because of stonework erosion and cast-iron rusting. The bridge - a Grade 1 listed building of "exceptional interest" - is said to be in poor condition.

The situation was flagged up after contractors had been called in to replace a damaged part of the ballustrade under Worcestershire County Council's general repair scheme for historic buildings.

"We are simply saying beware," said an Historic England spokesperson. "Our role is purely advisory. It will be up to the County Council to decide what to do next."

Society chairman Richard Perrin said he was surprised by the listing when asked to comment by BBC Hereford and Worcester Radio...on the bridge at 7:30 am on the morning of the announcement.

He said: "In explaining the entry, Heritage England had reported that the stone and cast iron balustrades were deteriorating badly in places and that the flanking peers were eroding.

"We were unaware about the latter but I was able to assure listeners that the Society had been consistently lobbying the County Council over a period of years about the need for urgent repairs. We are particularly concerned about the rusting cast-iron balusters and the original 1798 cast-iron frame around the pedestrian archway on the town side...put there to help the tow ropes which pulled the trows past the bridge." We have since followed up our concerns via Councillor Becky Vale, our local County Council member, who has assured us that action will be taken. We hope she is right and that this will have spurred the council into conserving our only Grade 1 listed building."



Civic tea-party for our winners



Following our 2017 School Heritage Project, the Mayor, Cllr Anna Coleman, held a tea party in the Guildhall to reward those taking part in this annual local-history project and to present prizes to those whose contribution had been exceptional. The mayor welcomed the students to the Council Chamber, explained the seating arrangements for council meetings and how they were conducted. She mentioned the position of Bewdley's Young Mayor (a senior pupil of their school) and the importance of involving young people in the town's local government. The students were fascinated when she talked of her own upbringing, outside the UK, and asked her some very pertinent questions. This year's project involved a collaboration with Bewdley's historic churches and religious meeting-places. It enabled the first-year students to develop an understanding of the history behind the positioning of each religious building and the differences between each community. The young people had visited the five historic religious buildings in Load Street, High Street and Lower Park, and the Garden of Remembrance on the site of the demolished Christchurch in Wribbenhall, where local historian, Heather Flack, gave a talk about the church and its burial ground. Later, members of each religious community freely gave their time to to answer some very searching questions.

Barbara Longmore

Behind-the-scene visit to the iconic Birmingham Town Hall

SATURDAY JANUARY 27
Coach leaves Bewdley at 11am

Tickets are strictly limited: the cost is £12 50 and includes a 90-minute guided tour of Britain's first civic building - completed in 1834 at a cost of £8000 and renovated in 2008 for £35million. It was designed by Joseph Hansom (of Hansom Cab fame) and Edward Welch. It was there Elgar premiered his *Dream of Gerontius*. CONTACT: Sharon Harvey s.harvey1885@btinternet.com





What if...the local council had listened to the architect who created the film-set-style Portmeirion? What would Bewdley be like without its landmark Telford bridge?

These were some of the questions posed after the town's councillors invited the highly-original Clough Williams-Ellis to develop a scheme to solve traffic problems.

Although no one seems too sure of how or exactly why he was invited to give Bewdley a post-war makeover, he produced a draft plan that could have seen the demolition of the Telford bridge - thankfully a scheduled monument - and its replacement by a *modernistic concrete and steel design*.

Presciently, he did propose a solution to the traffic problems. Not a by-pass as we know it but more of a *round-the-town-circuit*.

Apparently even in 1944, congestion was a major issue and he toyed with the idea of a new ring road: he called it a *round-the-town circuit* to ease the problem.

Although this merely diverted traffic along the river front, it would have required radical re-planning - road-widening and that steel bridge - and he was quick to recognise that could destroy the character of Bewdley. A show of early cold-feet?

He described the town as having a *higher proportion of architecturally pleasing buildings than almost any other that I know of in all England*. though many, he thought, were let down by inappropriate painting, advertising, alterations or neglect and that's clear, for example, in this



What if...the Borough Council had taken up Clough's 1944 proposals?

contemporary photograph (below) of the local post office. Because Bewdley was an easy day-trip from Birmingham and the Black Country towns, there had been some talk about making this the Blackpool of the region but that was never on the Williams-Ellis agenda.

Ironically, the town was saved from any radical change because the Borough Council's Town Planning Committee *was more concerned with wider-ranging proposals for local government reform and with the removal of numerous temporary buildings that had been constructed without permission in the early years of the war*. He might have got some inkling of what he was up against if he had read the Borough Council minutes: *A Development Committee be Constituted to whom be delegated the consideration of all matters relating to the preparation and completion of the report and plan for the future development of the Borough*. Frustrated and clearly wondering why he had been invited to produce a plan, he later wrote: *Once the delights of the preliminary reconnaissance and the draft proposals were behind me and one began to be impeded by the dead weight of public lethargy and official slow-motion brakemanship, I found it hard to sustain my initial enthusiasm*. Clearly defeated by the bureaucrats, he retreated to find solace in his beloved Portmeirion.



The 1944 post office

Clough Williams-Ellis - in his trademark white suit and calf-length socks. - at Portmeirion, the beautiful village he created on his own private peninsula in North Wales in 1925...to show *that the development of a naturally-beautiful site need not lead to its defilement. Architectural good manners can be good business*. He must have seemed a natural choice to help give Bewdley a post-war filip.

Jock Gallagher



As neat as Scrooge ...and nearly as old

You don't see script like this nowadays. It always reminds me of Scrooge, Oliver Twist and Christmas but this is not the case with this extract from a minutes book compiled by the Almshouses charity back in 1866.

It's quite remarkable that there are still three books remaining and in such good condition. Kind thanks to the Bewdley Historical Research Group.

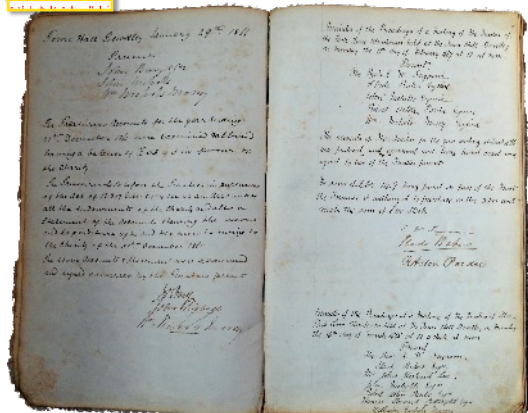
The Almshouse Charity still exists and in 1998, six trusts came together to create the current charity called the Burltons, Cookes and Sayers Almshouses. The properties house 15 people in 14 cottages all of which are approximately 400 years old. Run by volunteer trustees under the chairmanship of Richard Perrin, it continues to thrive.

With the assistance of Bewdley Historical Research Group Society, Kidderminster Library and private contributors, I am slowly gathering together the history of the almshouses. Some very old sketches (see left) have been discovered showing two of the sites looking very similar in their appearance as they are today.

As you can see in the pictures, the locations are peaceful and private

My quest for 2018 to find as much detail as possible about the history of the buildings and previous residents. So, if you know anything, have any photos or other information please let me know. In the meantime, have a peaceable Christmas and may the Almshouse Charity continue for the next 400 years!!

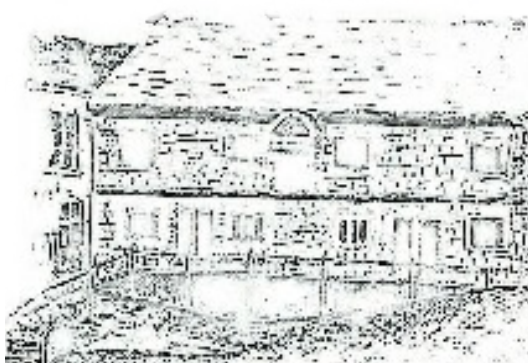
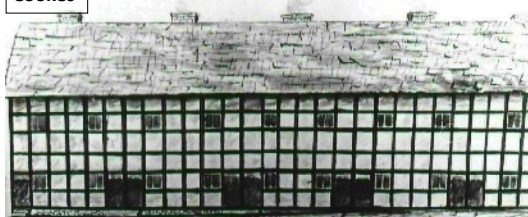
Sharon Harvey (Clerk to the Trustees)



Sayers



Cookes



Burltons, Cookes and Sayers Almshouses (Reg charity 1088784)

The three almshouses were founded at different times by well disposed benefactors Samuel Sayers (1625) providing six units for men only in Lower Park.; Humfrey Burlton (1645) who accommodated couples in Park Lane; and Thomas Cooke, who created six homes for ladies. Burlton also set up a separate trust that included a parcel of land on the outskirts of the town to ensure additional income.





Who was Mary Sidney? asks Brian Stephens,

The Son et Lumière presentation during Heritage weekend in September mentioned a Mary Sidney, born at Tickenhill and who influenced William Shakespeare. We are indebted to Jim Ineson, author of the pageant script, for this revelation.

It is perhaps surprising that her name has not aroused more interest.

Who was Mary Sidney?

During Tudor and Stuart times, Tickenhill was used by royalty and a succession of Presidents of the Council of the Marches continuing up to 1690. One such President was Sir Henry Sidney (1529-1586).

As courtiers and politicians, the Sidney family served all the Tudor monarchs and Henry grew up with Prince Edward, and later he was Lord Deputy of Ireland and for twenty-four years was President of the Council of the Marches, based at Ludlow and using Tickenhill.

Henry married Mary Dudley in 1551. They had three sons and four daughters. The eldest son was Sir Philip Sidney and of the daughters, only Mary survived. She was born at Tickenhill on October 27, 1561.

The family moved frequently and it is not known how much time was spent in Bewdley.

Her mother was a close friend of Queen Elizabeth and in 1575, the Queen invited Mary (then 14) to Court, where she received a humanist education similar to the Queen; she would have been one of the best-educated women in Elizabethan England.

Two years later, in 1577, she married Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, becoming Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. She was rich and mistress of several properties. Wilton, just west of Salisbury, was the family home where she raised four children.

In 1586, when she was just 25, her father died in May; her mother died in August; and in October her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, to whom she was devoted, died of wounds fighting the Spanish in Holland.

It was to honour Philip that she began her long literary career. Well-schooled in scripture, classics, rhetoric; fluent in French, Italian and Latin; an accomplished singer and luteist; her needlework, said one poet of the time, "would make her fame live for ever; she honoured her brother's name by serving as a literary patron to those who had admired him and hosted literary gatherings at Wilton House, which became a 'paradise for poets' known as the Wilton Circle.

She edited and published Philip's *Arcadia* and his *An apology for poetry*. Apart from poems, her numerous translations from French and Latin works, notably *A Discourse of Life and Death* and *Antonius*, were important contributions.

Philip Sydney had translated Psalms 1-43. Mary completed the task. However, her scholarly translation of the Psalms into English verse, described as 'a school of English versification'; one hundred and seventy one poems, Psalm 119 with twenty two poems and 126 different verse forms, remains her greatest work.

Mary Herbert was renowned in her own time as being the first woman English poet.

Contemporaries who praised her work or even borrowed from it include George Herbert (whose family lived in Montgomery Castle), John Donne, Henry Parry, Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare. Shakespeare dedicated his First Folio of 1623 to the 'Incomparable Pair'



WILTON HOUSE

- Mary's sons. It is said that he used *Antonius* as a source for *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

Mary Sidney Herbert died in London of smallpox in 1621 and is buried under the choir steps in Salisbury Cathedral. Needless to say there is a Mary Sidney Society in America, a Poetry Foundation and numerous reference sites all with more detail.

BRIAN STEPHENS

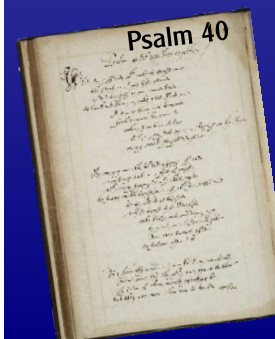
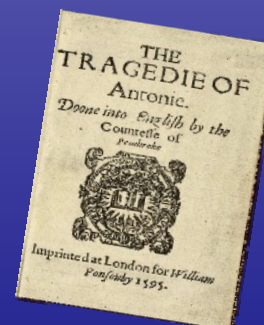


MARY SIDNEY
from a 2008 portrait
by John Tollett



Her brother
PHILIP

...and the portrait
depicting his death in
battle against the
Spanish





2017: That was the year that was!

Bewdley did more than say *No* to Gladman

See Pages 2/3



PHOTO: Adam Fradgley
Kidderminster Shuttle



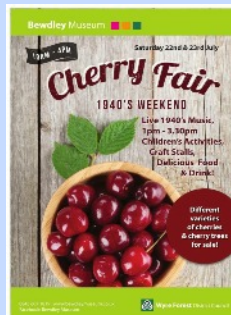
Passionate protest and careful arguments leave the Planning Inspector pondering on the merits of the town's collective objections to the building of homes in beauty spot: *report expected next month.*



From the Kenneth Hobson Collection

We also reflected on the Changing Face of Load Street with this photo of John George Potter outside his shop which has been a butcher's since the 1830s.

Summer wouldn't be summer without Steve Bent's Balsalm Bash (above) and we we joined forces with the Museum for the Cherry Fair in July.



In the summer, we forecast that this will become a car-park...eventually



Where once there was a weeping willow...
The oft-promised replacement remains...a promise!

Membership subs reminder

With the gentlest of nudges, the Membership Secretary reminds us that subscriptions for 2018 (£10 single £15 family) are now due. Also: the AGM is at 7 30pm on Wednesday, April 18, 2018

When the long-overdue tribute to Stanley Baldwin - in the shape of an exquisite statue - is finally in situ, the three-times Prime Minister will forever survey his beloved constituency of Bewdley from a central but not-too-lofty perch.

Currently, the bronze statue is being finely tuned in the foundry and will shortly be finished.

Society Chair Richard Perrin says: "Owing to logistic reasons beyond our control, our originally planned date for unveiling the statue has been delayed - and we missed the actual sesquicentennial - we now anticipate it being carried out in the Spring."

The theme of the celebratory dinner/concert - *Hope and Glory* - was, of course, taken from Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* fifth march. It was especially fitting because Baldwin and Elgar were both from and inspired by their Worcestershire roots and their paths crossed regularly.

SEE PAGE 11

Statue will stand outside the old post office and look down Load Street



CS Secretary Barbara Longmore, her sister and brother-in-law were guests at the *Hope and Glory* fund-raising dinner

Lots of auction promises!

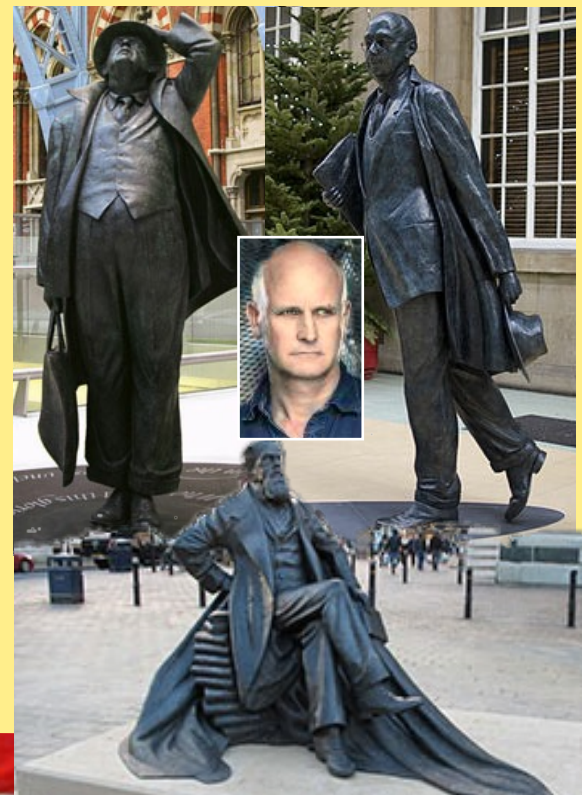
Items auctioned by Andrew Grant included a Costa del Sol holiday villa for six for a week (with the use of a six-seater car); a box for ten at Worcestershire County Cricket Club; a hot-air balloon ride for two; lunch or dinner in the House of Lords; a tour of Lord Heseltine's garden; a cooking lesson from chef Darren Bale of The Hop Pole; and a booklet history of 10 Downing Street signed by the Prime Minister

The seven-foot statue on a three-foot plinth (*this is still the maquette*) will show Baldwin looking down toward the end of Load Street.

The eye-line was determined by the sculptor Martin Jennings, when he joined Richard Perrin and Barbara Longmore for a recent site-meeting outside the old Post Office.

To be unveiled in the Spring

Martin Jennings' other subjects (*below*) include John Betjeman (now a celebrated London landmark at St Pancras station); Philip Larkin (in his birthplace, Hull); and Charles Dickens (a first for Portsmouth). Martin (*inset*) lives and works in Oxford. He is a Fellow of the Royal British Society of Sculptors.



FLASH-BACK FIFTY YEARS

Processing to St Anne's to mark the Centenary are (from left to right) Bert Perrin JP, Chairman of the Magistrates (in those days Civic Processions were led by two bench representatives) Dr Marjorie Quayle JP, Vice Chair of the Magistrates, Earl and Countess Baldwin, Lady Brinton (her husband, Sir Tatton Brinton MP is obscured). At the rear can be seen Wing Commander Alfred Howell (county councillor and then Chairman of Bewdley Civic Society).





CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE/ *"Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"*

that: *"The timeline for the Neighbourhood Plan has been in place and co-ordinated with WFDC from its inception. The Town Council is saddened that due to the activities of the Local Plan, the need for the two plans to synchronise and management issues around the Local Plan, the anticipated referendum in May 2018 will now be postponed."*

After all the commitment from Town Council colleagues, officers and members of the public, we are not going to let this happen. This consultation is the largest the town has seen and the local plan consultation thus far has been a drop in the ocean. 2% of the entire constituency responded to the local plan whereas in excess of 14% have for the Neighbourhood Plan. I realise these are small figures but in terms of such consultation, 8% would get the champagne corks popping.

So, why are we doing this? Personally, I was amazed at the draft Local Plan, released over the summer, and its disregard of the opinions and views we had shared with the district council regarding sites and proposals in Bewley. As

REFERENDUM WILL STILL BE IN MAY

hard as we have worked to create a hand in glove approach, the district council appears haphazard in these matters. I can only hope that their consultation has highlighted anticipated issues and they are busy re-considering the Local Plan. Well, hope can be motivating. By supporting the final stages of consultation, the draft plan and ultimately the referendum, will have a greater impact on the local plan. We have to get the approach from WFDC focused on the opinions of the people. So, thank you for all of your support across 2017; thank you for your patience and diligent inquiry and thank you for being involved in shaping the town's future. We are, in so many different ways, up against our own version of Ebenezer, ensuring our past, present and future.

Philip Edmundson



Marking a sesquicentennial

I bet that headline made you look twice - Ed

The Annual Dinner in St. Georges Hall was an historic occasion. Why? Because we were celebrating an important sesquicentennial: the 150th anniversary of the birth of Stanley Baldwin (SB) in Bewdley. Fifty years previously, the Civic Society had, at the very same venue, held a special dinner to mark the centenary when SB's son, the third Earl Baldwin, talked about his father.

As in 1967, we were delighted to welcome the current Earl Baldwin, who, like his father all those years ago, gave members an excellent summary of SB's achievements. Accompanying Lord Baldwin was his wife, Countess Baldwin to whom we presented a bouquet of flowers with our gratitude to them both for joining us on this special occasion.



We were also very pleased that our President, Beatrice Grant (left), great grand-daughter of SB, was present with her husband Andrew, who, incidentally, was the only person in the room who was able to claim that he had attended the 1967 dinner (he was guest of the then Chairman, Wing Commander Alfred Howell).

It is customary for the Mayor of Bewdley to attend our Annual Dinner and, on this occasion, we warmly welcomed Councillor Anna Coleman and her Consort Roger Coleman. I was pleased to thank Anna for her strong support of the Society and acknowledged that since she took office, she has yet to miss a Society Executive Committee meeting!



With a view to hitting, nay exceeding, our fundraising target for the statue the Society held a dinner at Treetops Pavilion, West Midlands Safari Park, when guests enjoyed a wonderful evening of music, which starred our own opera singer, Alan Fairs, along with lyric soprano, Elizabeth MacDonald. They were accompanied by the 20-piece Central England Camarata, the Midlands' most innovative professional chamber orchestra. Also during the evening Andrew Grant conducted an auction of promises (see Page 11) and an initial estimate of the funds raised during the event is £10,000. We are extremely grateful to a number of commercial sponsors and to Hewett Recruitment, in particular Jo Watkins, for helping us put on this event. Also to West Midlands Safari Park which provided the venue free of charge.

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



Guests at the annual dinner, the Earl and Countess Baldwin, also attended the service in Worcester Cathedral, when they laid a wreath on SB's memorial stone (above).

THANK YOU for supporting the Baldwin statue appeal

I was pleased to remind members at the dinner that exactly 12 months previously the Society had launched its fundraising appeal at the 2016 Annual Dinner when the society committed £5,000 from its own resources to start it all off. A year later, after an event at the House of Lords, a dinner at Hagley Hall and much campaigning across Worcestershire and the country, the Society had raised £115,000 against its target of £130,000. I took the opportunity to thank our own members for their generosity in supporting the appeal so well.

