

THE SPARKLING SEVERN



TO EDUCATE
THE PUBLIC IN
THE GEOGRAPHY
HISTORY,
NATURAL
HISTORY AND
ARCHITECTURE
OF THE AREA

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021



The changing face of Load Street?

**COMMENTARY
BY TONY LEACH**

First an apology: this short article does contain some technical planning terms. However, the appearance of Load Street could change significantly over the coming years and I feel it is important that local residents understand why.

Across the country, High Streets are struggling and this has been exacerbated by Covid 19. The government's response has been to make the planning framework much more flexible.

There have been several changes to *Permitted Development Rights (PDRs)* and last September the government introduced the new Class E category for High Street businesses. Up to then different business types had different categories, e.g. shops were A1, pubs A4 etc. A change of use (*COU*) generally required planning permission. Now, almost all High Street businesses are in Class E, including: shops, estate agents, restaurants, cafes and offices.

Under this framework, any of these can change use without planning permission and this applies to Load Street even though it is in a Conservation Area.

In April, the government introduced another significant *Permitted Development Right* for the High Street. This concerns the change of use of a business (Class E) to residential use (C3). This is now classed as *Permitted Development* in Conservation Areas such as Load Street. There are some constraints in that it requires *Prior Approval* (a light touch application process) from the local planning authority but the grounds for refusal are very limited. Any vacant shop or business in Load Street could be changed to residential use. Time will tell whether the changes will encourage more businesses to follow suit. In short, I hope you can see why there is the potential for significant changes to the nature of Load Street.

If readers have any queries, please contact tony.leach2@btinternet.com.

I wish to acknowledge the support given by Civic Voice [the national association of Civic Societies of which the Bewdley Civic Society is a member].



CHERRY RIPE PAGE II

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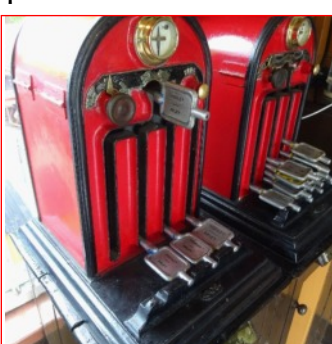
SVR: where heritage meets modern

Right on our doorstep we have a fine example of heritage equipment being used to run a modern visitor attraction – The Severn Valley Railway. When you see the cheery signalmen – or Bobby as they are colloquially called – hanging out of their signal box, duster in hand, you may wonder what equipment they use...and why they are all called Bobby!

Put simply, signalmen are there to stop trains bumping into each other. In the early days of the railways from around the 1840s, railway policemen were employed to control the passage of trains. Policemen were called Bobbies after their founder Sir Robert Peel. The name stuck and, as signalmen replaced railway policemen, more technology was used to ensure the safety of trains. The same technology is still used on the Severn Valley Railway in the 2020s.

Today, the SVR is divided into sections controlled by seven signal boxes manned by over 120 volunteer signalmen (and a few lady signalmen). They operate the points, signals, and token machines. At Bewdley the section between Bewdley North and Bewdley South signal boxes is the shortest at around 1 mile.

Before a train is accepted from another signal box it is important that the points are in the right position and are locked. Then the signalman needs to pull the signal levers to lower the signals allowing the train to pass before putting the signals back to danger when the train has passed.



Arguably the token machine [left] is the most important piece of equipment to ensure only one train can enter a section of single line.

Token machines [one for each section of line] were manufactured by Tyer & Co from 1880 onwards. The metal tokens for each section of line are stored in the machine at

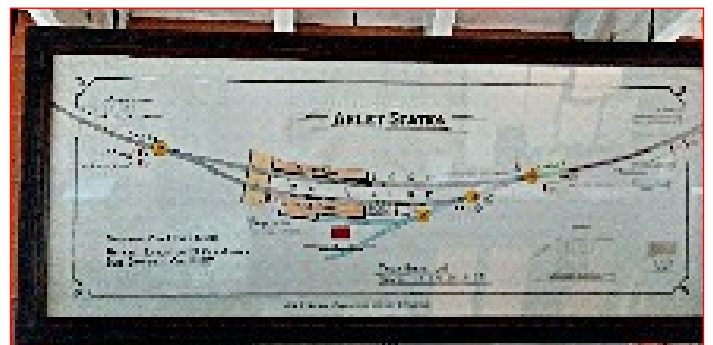
both ends of a section. The token machines are electrically-linked to ensure only one token for a section can be released at either end of the section. They are released by raising a token to the central “keyhole” and plunging the brass plunger which rings a bell in the signal box at the opposite end of the section. Only when the signalman holds down his plunger at the far signal box can a token be released. The black galvanometer needle in the brass dial at the top of the machine flickers from left to right. In normal train operation conditions, drivers must never enter a section without the token. The black knob on the machine is moved left or right by the signalman to show whether a train is moving away or approaching the signal box.

ROBERT SMITH REPORTS ON
THE BOBBY IN THE BOX

‘Put simply, signalmen are there to stop trains bumping into each other’



The black levers control the points, the blue levers lock the points in position, the red levers work signals near the signal box, the yellow levers work the signals some distance away and the two red levers with a white stripe control signals allowing access into the sections ahead. The duster is used to pull the levers without sweaty hands causing the levers to rust! On the ledge above the levers are various indicators showing the position of signals, the presence of trains, the bells (with different tones from each different signal box) and indicators to show the signal lamps are working for night operation. All the signal levers are interlocked so they cannot be pulled if the points are incorrectly set or if a token has not been released from the token machine.



Each signal box is equipped with a chart showing the station layout with all the points and signals marked accordingly.

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Historic bell added to museum's fascinating fire brigade collection

Peter Roberts' tale of the tolling bell

The St Anne's bellringers have been undertaking improvements to the weatherproofing of the bell chamber and in doing so have had to remove a bell which was mounted on the inside of the tower wall on the East side of the bell chamber. The bell has not been used for some considerable time. The bell is about eighteen inches tall and the reverse side shows the arms of the old Borough of Bewdley.

It's believed this bell was originally used to call firemen to the borough fire engine when the engine was housed in the Guildhall entrance. Recent research suggests that it dates from about 1880. It could have been manufactured in Bewdley's brass foundry though the provenance is not certain. The Tower Team approached the Church Council with the suggestion that the bell should be offered to the Museum on free permanent loan and would be happy to refurbish the bell for display. The PCC agreed and the Museum has since confirmed that they are very keen to see the bell mounted alongside the fire engine currently on display in the Shambles.



The bell complements the early 18th century appliance, first introduced to Bewdley after the 1708 Parish Pump Act, the 19th century helmet [and uniform] and this stunning print of the local fire brigade on parade outside the Guildhall in 1908.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE



Every train movement is recorded manually in the train register book which is also a handy place to leave the token. Many a signalman has forgotten where they have put it when things are busy. Everything must be done by the rules. There are over 200 of them and it is good to keep the rule book handy for reference!

THE SECOND PART OF THE ILLUSTRATED INSIDE STORY OF SVR BY ROBERT SMITH WILL APPEAR IN OUR AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

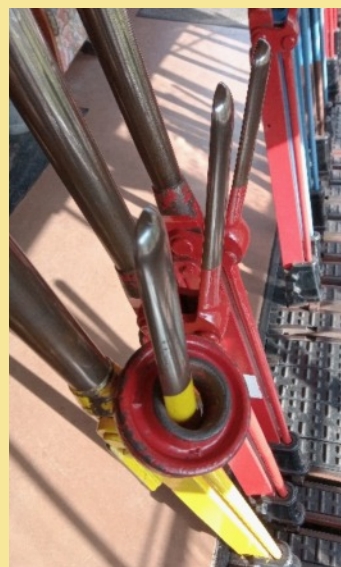
The rules of the railway



Once the token is taken out of the token machine it is placed in the bottom of the token holder ready to give to the driver. Where a train is passing through a station it is common to exchange tokens on the move....thus the need for the big hoop to make it easier to catch the token holder!

POLO MINT REMINDERS

Metal rings looking like large polo mints are used to place over a signal lever as a reminder not to pull that lever. They can be used if there are engineers working on the track or signals or if there is an obstruction ahead.



Rocking down the ages JIM PARKER REFLECTS ON LIFE AT TICKENHILL

One of the delights of visiting Granny and Grandpa at Tickenhill in the 1950's was to be allowed to explore the museum and attics of this wonderful old house...and to ride the rocking horse!

The attic was accessed by a rickety set of stairs from the landing, more like a ladder and very steep. Headroom in the attic was minimal but no problem for children so we clambered up and wondered at the huge oak timbers in the roof space.

We crept around the side of the massive water tank, installed by Joseph Tangye but no longer used. This provided water for the household in the 1880s with water pumped up from the watercourse below Tickenhill, which was downstream from the Snuff Mill.

At the end of the attic the floor area dropped to a slightly lower level where the rocking horse stood on its bow rockers ready to be ridden. We took it in turns to ride and were fascinated by the rattling sound from within the horse and always wondered what was inside. We were told by Granny (Alice Parker) that the rocking horse had been given to her as a child and when she and her siblings were playing 'Hunt the Thimble', a popular parlour game, she pushed the silver thimble inside the horse through a hole under the saddle never to be seen again, hence the rattle sound.

My sister Rosemary inherited the horse when family heirlooms were distributed and the top photograph shows how it looked recently, rather worse for wear having been loved and ridden by several generations of children including me!

My love of making things from wood and metal inspired me to make a rocking horse [lower photograph] for my own grandchildren to enjoy.

A specialist company in York supplied me with plans and guidance in traditional construction. The timber used for the body head and legs is tulip wood often referred to



as poplar. It carves well and is tough enough to take the knocks. The horse is made up of separate components each carved to shape and glued together. The body is effectively a hollow box, hence the space for the thimble or perhaps a time capsule. The shaping of the head was a challenge but sharp tools are the secret with a good dose of patience!

When the carving and assembly is completed the whole horse is treated with 'Gesso'. This is a white, glue based coating applied quite thickly and then sanded to create a smooth surface for painting. Most antique horses were painted dapple grey but I chose chestnut as my horse is modern and I like the colour.

The rockers are made from ash which is strong and flexible and the horse is attached to the rockers with quite small nuts and bolts through the hooves.

Because I had spent many hours working on my horse, and I wanted it to look good, I decided to push the boat out and buy the saddle and all the 'tack' from specialists. This included glass eyes, leather bridle and reins, real horsehair mane and tail, metal bit and stirrups and fancy head nails for fixing. The horse is now finished – see pictures – and will soon be galloping off down South for my grand daughter Alice Parker to play with

History is repeating itself!

JIM PARKER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ALWAYS WELCOME

email jyg@cix.co.uk



Dad and his brother Francis had built a gauge '1' model railway when they were children and remnants of this still remained in the attic.

Francis had been given a Bassett-Lowke clockwork model locomotive for Christmas in 1907.

This was a LNWR 'Precursor' class 4-4-0 engine and tender – *Pictured* – and this became the start of a hobby which he enjoyed throughout his life, making many scratch-built locomotives with rolling stock to match.

Although popular in times gone by, gauge 1 was too big for small modern houses and gave way to 'O' gauge (1 1/4 inches between rails) and then to 'OO' or 'HO' which was much smaller.

J. Francis Parker gave his entire collection of working Gauge 1 models to the City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in 1979.

Memories in a photograph

Cedric Quayle's photographs of the 1947 floods [in the Spring Newsletter] aroused family memories for regular reader, Richard Hemingway

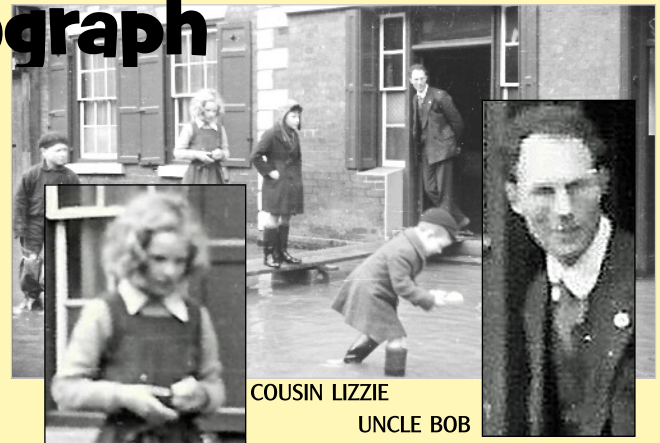
This latest issue was full of interest. So here is some feedback.

On page 10 the article about the floods, included a photo [right] which is very familiar to me. It shows my uncle, Dr. Bob Miles looking out from his surgery entrance, with my cousin Lizzie [the one with the blonde hair] on the plank.

One of the boys might well be cousin Rob, but I am not sure. These are the oldest of the four offspring of Dr. Bob. Unfortunately, I don't have email addresses for Lizzie and Rob, but they may be members of the Society anyway. I plan to contact them by phone soon to check if they have seen this issue.

My father (a Hemingway) married Mary Miles on January 28, 1943, thus uniting the 2 families. He died in 1999 and my mother in 2012.

On page 5, there is a familiar photo of my great uncle,



COUSIN LIZZIE
UNCLE BOB

Stanley Hemingway [founding chairman of the Civic Society]. He and my grandfather were half brothers. I guess the photo came from the Hobson archive. Stanley's son, Kenneth, was the only fatal casualty in the family in the First World War. Very sad.

The Obituary of David Sargent, who lived to a great age, was also of interest. There was a reference to my mother's brother, Dr. Bob Miles, who died in his 60s in the early 1970s, famous for his amazing collie, Whisky.

Richard Hemingway



In a community determination to create a Covid memorial, Councillor Paul Gittins MBE arranged for a tree - donated by WFDC Parks Department - to be planted in Riverside North Park. The railings were made and donated by Gaytsmaid. The Civic Society then teamed up with Bewdley Development Trust to provide a bench and the concrete based was funded by the County councillors community funding scheme.

Charity needs volunteer drivers NOW



We're a charity providing door to door transport using volunteer drivers' own cars and our own wheelchair minibuses for anyone who finds it difficult to use public transport and needs access to health, shopping, social and other day to day opportunities.

We've seen a 50% increase in demand over the past five years and need to recruit more volunteer drivers for this essential local service. Driver's hours are very flexible taking account of your other commitments.

All drivers using their own cars receive a mileage rate to cover the costs of their journeys..... or you could drive one of our own brand-new minibuses!

It's really rewarding.

Contact Beverley Coldrick at Community Transport to find out more on 01299 669840.





Bewdley at war!

SOCIETY LECTURE

BY DR SIMON FIELDING

REPORT BY ROB LIMBRICK

Dr. Simon Fielding, who grew up in Bewdley, gave an excellent presentation about WW1 and concerning some of the casualties listed on Bewdley's War Memorial.

Simon walked past this memorial every day on his way to school. On it, are at least seven sets of brothers, the son of the rector [see below], the son of the mayor, the son of the clerk-of-works, one-member of the RFC, one Royal Marine, and one 17 year-old sailor, Bewdley's only naval casualty [see below]

Bewdley earned the distinction of having sent more men to the colours than any town in the county, SHUTTLE
JANUARY 2, 1915

The *Soldiers died in the Great War* database lists 65 casualties born in Bewdley

Simon at the gravestone of his grandfather, John Heath, in 2016, more than a century after his death. The simple inscription reads *Sadly missed by his wife and children*



Jack Bishop [left] is the only sailor on Bewdley War memorial and the youngest to die at 17. He lived at 44 Lax Lane. The Museum has booklets describing his life and the intriguing story of how he died.

Lieutenant John Aubrey Moore [right]

7 South Staffordshire Regiment, son of the Rector of St. Anne's, lived in the old Rectory in Lower Park. He was killed in action at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, on August 9, 1915



Many thanks to Simon for producing this wonderful history of the men from Lax Lane. I know there are many other names that he has already researched and we look forward to seeing them in his forthcoming book.

ROB LIMBRICK

Unaware of the horrors ahead, the Worcestershire Yeomanry parade in dress uniform outside the George Hotel in 1913



The Territorials of C company 1/7 Worcestershire regiment assemble in Load Street before marching to war. Most of the regulars from the town were in 4th battalion Worcesters and served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.



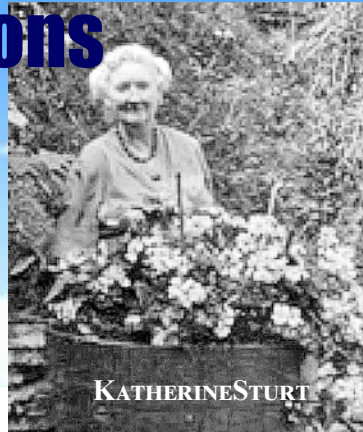
SIX men from Lax Lane died in WW1 including Private Titch [Percy] Whittington Carter, seen here with his family.



THE FALLEN REMEMBERED: two years after the end of hostilities, the Bewdley War Memorial was dedicated in 1920 and commemorative services have been held every year since.

Family connections

Following on from Barbara Longmore's article in the winter newsletter about the Sturt Family. STEVE BENT found a diary reference from James Lees-Milne. He visited Winterdyne on July 9, 1943 and recorded this affectionate but perhaps less-than-chivalrous pen-picture of Katherine [right] and her mother Beatrix.



On my way back to Evesham I stopped at Wynterdyne (sic) just outside the town and was given luncheon by Kathleen (sic) Sturt, with whom I was in love at the age of six.

She gave me a little box with an onyx lid which I treasured as my most precious possession for several weeks. Then lost it and never gave it or the donor another thought.

She is now a jovial, good natured, grey-haired tub with a veined face. She could not have been kinder or nicer.

After luncheon I was taken upstairs to see Mrs Sturt [May's mother BEATRIX], aged ninety-three, in bed. A toothless, clean-looking, smiling old dame, she was an intimate of my grandmother in Ribbesford days.

Kathleen walked me round the Wynterdyne fields and through the shrubberies to the red cliffs with the grottoes above the Severn.

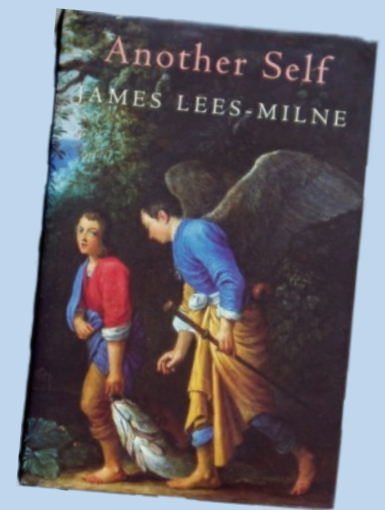
I remember these romantic Germanic walks so well. She and her mother are anxious to do what Mrs Lloyd [of ARELEY HALL] has done at Areley Kings down the river, namely covenant. It would be splendid because the Wynterdyne land goes right into the heart of Bewdley.

NB *The covenant did not come to pass and the famous Winterdyne Walks passed into history.*

Katherine Mary (known as May) lived at Winterdyne Lodge probably until the estate was sold on her mother's death in 1944. Her father, Napier George Sturt had died in Abergavenny in 1901. May ended her days in Stroud in 1967.

The Napier Sturts, to give them their full title, had interesting family connections. Beatrix's father-in-law was Captain Charles Sturt, the famous Australian explorer [whose face was on the Aussie postage stamp, right]; her great grandfather was Matthew Boulton [below], the renowned Birmingham industrialist. Beatrix was a regular contributor to the Dictionary of National Biography and her subjects included Captain Sturt. SCB

James Lees-Milne was born in August 1908 at Wickhamford Manor, Evesham, His biographer Michael Bloch observed that in *Another Self*, Lees-Milne conveys the impression that he hailed from an old county family and that Wickhamford was their native seat. This was not quite the case; his father bought the manor and moved from Lancashire only two years before Jim was born.



CAPTAIN STURT & HIS STAMP



MATTHEW BOULTON
BUSINESS PARTNER OF
JAMES WATT. IN THE
FINAL QUARTER OF THE
18TH CENTURY



BEATRIX STURT

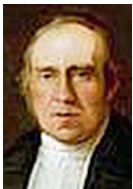
WINTERDYNE





The Free Grammar School in the High Street was built in 1861 by Henry Day of Worcester

The perpetual curate



John Cawood (left) was ordained in 1801 to the Curacy of Ribbesford and Dowles, of which he had the sole charge. He formed at Bewdley what was probably the first Sunday School in the county and also began a mission in the Far Forest, which ultimately led to the erection of the new church there.

In 1805 he was appointed Master of the Grammar School and was most successful in his scholastic work. Many of his pupils afterwards attained positions of eminence and usefulness.

Among them were Bishop Field, Bishop Medley and controversial preacher, Hugh Stowell. In 1814 he was appointed minister of St. Anne's, and his earnest discourses there during a period of forty years exerted an immense influence in Bewdley. The local branch of the Church Missionary Society, founded by him in 1816, has contributed upwards of £6000 to the good work. He was born in 1775, at Matlock, where his father carried on a small farm. He enjoyed very limited educational advantages. At the age of eighteen he occupied a menial position. But seeking every opportunity of self improvement, and aided by those who interested themselves in his behalf, he was enabled in 1797 to enter St Edmund Hall, Oxford, and obtained his B.A. in 1801 and his M.A. in 1807.

He was ordained in 1801 and most of his life in the ministry was spent as Perpetual Curate of St Anns Chapel of Ease, Bewdley. He died on November 7, 1852, and was buried at Dowles.

Excerpts from *History of Bewdley*
by JOHN BURTON Rector of Dowles June 1883

FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

George Jorden was an ardent lover of nature, and with the very least external advantages gradually acquired such a thorough acquaintance with the natural history of the neighbourhood that his opinion was asked for and respected by some of the most learned men in England. He was born on the Clee Hills in the parish of Farlow, where his father was a labourer and his mother was a herb-doctress.

He came to Bewdley as an errand boy, taught himself to read and write and soon afterwards went to live with Dr [James] Fryer [right], with whom he remained for 50 years. Being favoured with a sympathetic master, he was able to follow his natural bent with unwearied assiduity.



Rising before daylight he spent some hours among the local fields and came back loaded with specimens for his herbarium, in time to begin his day's work at home.

A monument of his diligence is left in his *Flora Bellus Locus*, now in the Worcester Museum and in his herbarium of beautifully mounted specimens now in the possession of Mr. Gabb.

He collected, mounted and named probably every plant which grows wild within ten miles of Bewdley and he is specially mentioned by Mr WA Leighton in his *Flora of Shropshire* and by Mr Edwin Lees FLS in his *Botany of Worcestershire* as having rendered them most effectual aid.



He also accumulated a mass of local antiquarian lore, including old ballads and electioneering songs, which he bequeathed to the Worcester Museum. He died in 1871, aged 88

The price of popularity

In 1596, the bells were rung at the coming to Bewdley of Henry Earl of Pembroke, Lord President of the Marches, accompanied by his wife, Mary, sister of the famous Sir Philip Sydney. The Countess was of most cultivated mind and her influence and popularity in Bewdley are strongly shown. The townswomen gave a present to her Ladyship of the value of £10 ls., equivalent to £50 today's money. We are not told what the gift consisted of but two years later, on a further visit, the townswomen gave her one sugar loaf, two boxes of comfits and four boxes of marmalade, the total value being £1 10s. 7d

Now you see him - now you don't!



At times down the years, the Bewdley constituency saw a number of merry-go-rounds where MPs were elected only to be unseated within weeks because an opponent petitioned to have the result declared void.

In 1869, one such unfortunate was John Pickersgill-Cunliffe (above right), the victorious Conservative candidate in a by-election of March 11. He was the beneficiary of a successful petition against his predecessor and he took the seat with a slender majority of 14 (on a turnout turn-out of 940) over Lt Col Augustus Anson VC (right), the first Earl Lichfield).



Six weeks later, however, he too was the victim of a petition and the seat ricocheted back to Augustus Anson.

Misfortune dogged Mr Pickersgill-Cunliffe, a banker by profession. He was struck by a train at Caterham Junction railway station on September 22, 1873, near his home in Coulsdon, Surrey. He died, aged 50, two weeks later at Guy's Hospital in London.

Augustus Anson, won his Victoria Cross when he was a 22 year-old Dragoon captain at the defence of Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny. His citation illustrates his amazing bravery.

Lance assault

The Sepoys had blockaded the gate of the city so he launched a solo lance assault and *"knocked the drivers off their carts...and rode into the middle of the enemy, who fired a volley at him, one ball passing through his coat...he has shown the greatest gallantry on every occasion, and has slain many enemies in fight"*

His gallantry was also rewarded with promotion to brevet-major (one of the youngest in the army).

On his return to England, he married the daughter of the Bishop of St Albans, was promoted to the staff rank of Lt. Colonel and in 1859, still only 24., he was elected as MP for the family seat of Lichfield. Despite an overwhelming victory for Gladstone's Liberal Party, at the 1868 General Election, he lost his seat.

Thus, it was his family connections that brought him to Bewdley at the next by-election.

He looked set for a high-profile parliamentary career but sadly an untreated cold developed into a lung infection and he was forced to retire in 1874 at the early age of thirty-nine.

He went to live in the more-forgiving climate of Cannes but died there three years later.

A family affair



Few local politicians can have been so well-connected as Salway Winnington, Bewdley's MP in 1694. He was the son of a cabinet minister, brother of the MP for Droitwich, married to the sister of a government peer and inevitably, the father of yet another future MP.

He took the seat in a by-election caused by Sir Henry Herbert's elevation to the peerage

He was born into politics...the eldest son of Sir Francis Winnington, who had been Solicitor General in the 1670s. He himself also entered the Middle Temple to study law. Probably because he wasn't convinced of Salway's abilities, his father endowed him with the manors of Rochford and Tenbury when he was just twenty.

He did qualify for the Bar but it was only after he married Anne Foley, of the well-connected Worcestershire family, that he started moving in the right parliamentary circles.

It was Edward Healey [who was to become the Speaker] who first suggested he stand as a candidate in 1690 but it was four years before Bewdley became available when Henry Herbert went to the Lords. Salway Winnington was returned unopposed at that by-election and elected again at subsequent general elections.

Despite his family connections, he did little more than labour diligently as a government teller... carefully scrutinising parliamentary business to ensure there were no undesirable hiccups in the smooth running of House business.

His son Thomas [right] became the MP for Droitwich in 1871 and had a much more successful career and rose to be Paymaster General and member of the Privy Council. Horace Walpole said of him in his memoirs:

He had infinitely more wit than any man I ever knew. His style was a little brutal; his courage not at all so; his good humour inexhaustible: it was impossible to hate or to trust him.

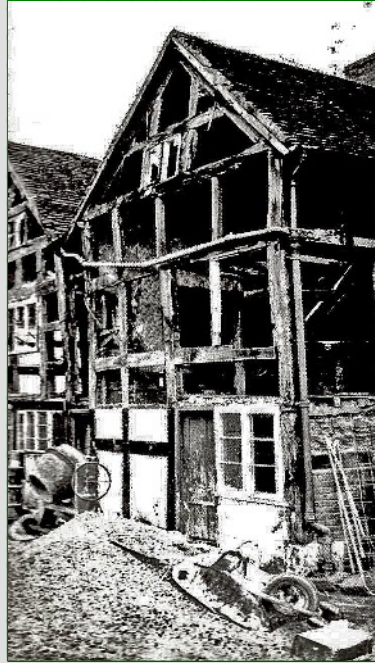


faded Glimpses of a black-and-white past

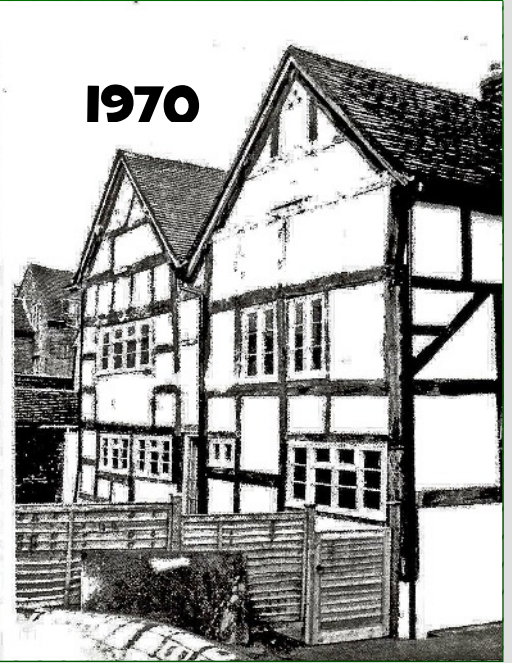


1930

The Prattinton house in 1930, when, quaintly, it was called Redthorne Homestead.



1970



TRANSFORMATION. The before-and-after record of the renovations at 58-60 High Street in 1970

This sporting life I



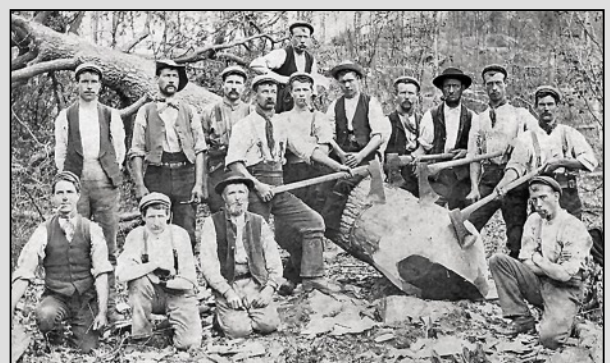
This sporting life 2



1918

The lady
on the
motor-bike

The bark-cutters



Cherry ripe!



**CHERRY FAIR 2021 JUBILEE GARDENS 10am-4pm
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY JULY 24/25**

Covid precautions mean that this year, the Civic Society stand will be in the safer open space of Jubilee Gardens. But Brian Stephens, as always, will be leading a small group selling cherry trees just as was done at the first Cherry Fair in the nineteenth century. Then, Bewdley was the centre of a flourishing trade with acres of cherry orchards on the surrounding hillsides where the soil and slopes ensured rich harvests of many different varieties from those producing almost-black fruit to creamy white.

Brian will be able to tell you more about the history of the cherry in Bewdley and about the Cherry Fair which, in conjunction with the Museum, the Civic Society revived in 2011. Despite Covid constraints, we will generate interest and awareness of the heritage.

You will be able to buy your own tree for just £20.



We hope to create a large-scale map showing the location of cherry trees around the town already recorded by Brian Stephens and we invite your notification of any trees which you know about. We will also include each sale we make during the two-day fair. For further information contact jyg@cix.co.uk

Didn't they do well!



The Society planted this splendid specimen tree in 2013 to mark the Queen's Jubilee in Riverside North Park



[left]. It's good to know the tree is in fine fettle with a nice lot of blossom. Sadly the plaque has gone missing.

The road from Bewdley to Rock runs through orchards of cherry trees. It is impossible to imagine anything more lovely RIDER HAGGARD

RIDER HAGGARD used this lyrical description in the *Daily Express* of June 24 1901 after being invited by Bewdley and District Horticultural Society to inspect the local smallholdings, many of which included an orchard.

Best known as the author of *King Solomon's Mines*, Rider Haggard was eager to do more than write the adventure stories which he called 'romances' [some of which Rudyard Kipling helped plot].

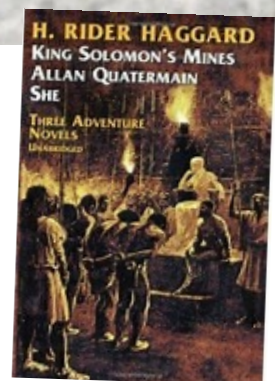
Concerned about the dire state of farming in England, he became an expert in matters agricultural and rural. In 1899 he published his previous year's diary, *A Farmer's Year* and in 1901 and 1902 he travelled throughout England and Wales to write about farming conditions for the *Daily Express*. Published in 1902, the two volumes of his *Rural England* described the many shortcomings he found and suggested ways of upgrading methods.

To return to Bewdley, who remembers the orchard towards the bottom of Park Lane?

Interestingly, although the 1785 map of Bewdley's Crown Lands depicts a cherry orchard there, it seems

possible that at least part of it was an apple orchard in the time of John Prattinton (1672-1732, grocer of Bewdley).

Lizzie Hill of the Historical Research Group has found from the 1748 Crown Lands Survey that he erected on what is today the east corner of Park Lane and Orchard Rise "a Dwelling house" and, further east (in the area of today's Snuff Mill Warehouse) "buildings for making cyder." That house was still there at the time of the 1883 Ordnance Survey map but it had been rebuilt by the time of the 1903 map. On the 1901 Census the house there was referred to as "The Orchard", the name it still had when demolished in 1967 as part of the Park Lane road widening scheme. If anyone has an illustration or photograph of the earlier house then it would be really fascinating to see what it looked like. **Sue Brown**



Rider Haggard called his stories romances



Covid fund brightens up Bewdley

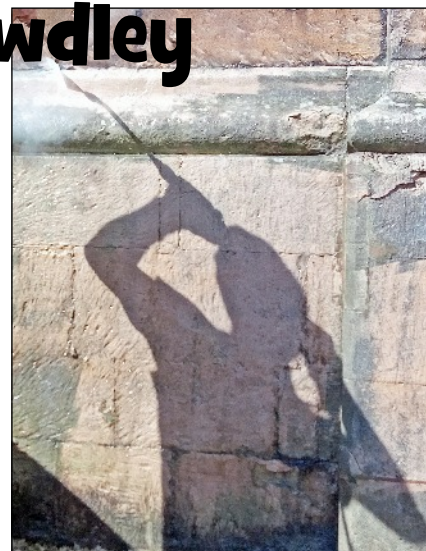
In a previous newsletter and in the 2020 Annual Report, I advised members that the Society had been invited by Wyre Forest District Council to accept a grant of £10,000 under a scheme related to the effects of COVID-19. We checked with our accountants and gratefully accepted the offer. The Executive Committee agreed that, although income did suffer to some extent, the funds would be allocated to good causes. Feedback on the Society's decision to accept the grant has been modest but a favourable response has not been unanimous. I would like to advise members of the relevant causes we have supported to date.

1. £500 for half the funding required to floodlight the bridge at Christmas.. This Town Council initiative was by way of a thank you to residents for keeping spirits up during a most difficult period.

2. £615 for half-funding to buy and install a bench in Riverside North Park in memory of Covid 19 victims. (see page 5).

3. £670 to fund experimental cleaning of a small section St Anne's church (right). The Society has been lobbying for the building to be cleaned for many years and we support the PCC's wish to get this job done. A white instead of a blackened building in this location would transform the appearance of the town centre and serve to provide a welcome uplift in peoples' spirits during the pandemic.

The Committee will be very pleased to hear from members with any suggestions as to how we may add to the good causes supported to date.



FROM THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES

Annual Report 1947/8

Although not specifically mentioned the Chairman was now Dr GS Lawrence, the much liked Wribbenhall GP, who went on and to serve in the post for some 20 years; he had replaced Christopher Moore.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr JF Parker of Tickenhill recorded with great regret, the death of founder President, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley. The Society was grateful that Viscount Cobham, Lord High Steward of Bewdley, had consented to become President.

The Society had placed contracts for the instalment of electric light and town water in each of the three almshouses at a cost of £200. Work had also started on removing the gravestones and levelling the ground at the old Christchurch burial-ground in Wribbenhall. This was being converted into a garden of memory and rest at an estimated cost of £350 the money being raised by the Society.

Four lectures were held during the year plus three external visits to the fruit nurseries at Newnham Court, Hagley Hall and Stanley Old Hall Bridgnorth, respectively. Richard Perrin (NB Can anyone tell us if there is a current Lord High Steward of Bewdley? Ed.)

BALSAM BASH 2021

THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN will run over the five days Saturday July 24 - Wednesday July 28: Meet below the Telford Bridge on Severnside South at 10 a.m. If you are able to volunteer some time and join us you will be most welcome. Stout boots and gloves and clothing that covers arms and legs is advised. Himalayan Balsam is innocuous but nettles and brambles are a minor hazard. Hope to see you there!

STEVE BENT

Steve recommends a very good article on the subject on this link <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/07/himalayan-balsam-uk-volunteers-urged-to-help-to-battle-invasive-weed>

