



## ...and now Baldwin in bronze by Betjeman's sculptor

**T**he long-awaited statue of Bewdley's most famous son - three-times Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, first Earl Baldwin of Bewdley - will be sited in the square outside the former HSBC bank

Richard Perrin, Society Chair and Chair of the Appeal Group to finance the bronze, said: "Submission of the planning application for a bronze has fuelled considerable and welcome interest in the media recently. It will be one-and-a-quarter life size on a three-feet plinth. The sculptor chosen is Martin Jennings, whose work includes his John Betjeman statue in St. Pancras station.

"Martin is working on a clay maquette at the moment and details of how the statue will look should be available soon. Then will start the hard task of raising the money for it!"



**Stanley Baldwin in bullish pose and sculptor Martin Jennings alongside his famous bronze of John Betjeman in London's St Pancras Station. The perspective will be roughly the same.**

The project has the support, among others, of the Society, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and the Town Council, and will see the creation of the first statue in the world of Sir Stanley, who served as Prime Minister in 1923-24, 1924-29 & 1935-37.





# Taking on the developers

**T**hank you Chairman. I am here to represent the views of the Bewdley Civic Society and neighbours. The Council's own Conservation Area Character Assessment was updated last year. It describes this area as one of period buildings, principally one or one-and-a-half storey cottages.

It is an area of quiet domestic architecture comprising many listed buildings. All commercial buildings are single storey in height. Recent buildings in this area have all respected and maintained that style, scale and character. No buildings that adjoin this site are over one-and-a-half storeys high.

This proposal is essentially one massive block some thirty feet high.

It is wholly out of character with the area by reason of its sheer bulk, scale and dominance of the area's lowly architecture and character. There is no historical precedence for a three storey building in this back land.

The Conservation Officer acknowledges this scheme would result in harm to the Conservation Area, but still concludes that, as this design complies with the flooding requirements, that this is sufficient to outweigh this harm. This we all feel is quite the wrong approach. A heritage townscape should have prime consideration.

The former WRVS building was roughly ten feet high and is now to be replaced by something three times its height. The neighbours are absolutely distraught by the effect of this building on their amenity.

Can Members imagine a 30-feet high featureless gable some two paces away from what is a very small private garden? The sheer scale of this gable will dominate and overpower their small amenity areas.

The latest plans have not been the subject of any consultation: I only found out of their existence late Friday last week. They were only put on your website yesterday. There is a major significance in these last-minute plans sufficient I think to look again at the layout. The new scheme now shows no accommodation on the ground floor, very different to the three-storey family accommodation promoted by the original scheme.

The ground floor is now simply an open carport and entrance hall. The new accommodation is akin to that of a flat...a very family-unfriendly design totally unrelated to its amenity garden. This runs contrary to the ambitions of the Town Council and the architect's own Design and Access statement. I have found out that the Town Council has also requested a re-consultation with these new plans.

What we now have is a scheme which upsets the Conservation Area in order to accommodate a car in a carport! What could be more wrong than that.

These revised plans are however very significant in that they point towards a possible solution. Remove this ground floor, lower the two upper habitable floors to the flood datum and reorganise the parking. This immediately improves every problem with this design.

The resulting lower building creates a more conducive and respectful scale in keeping with its location in the back-land and on the Conservation Area. It improves its relationship with the neighbour, relates the accommodation better to its amenity garden, *Bleep* Chairman: **STOP NOW!** What Martin would have said if he'd been allowed the time....and is a cheaper solution for the developer to construct and with no loss of accommodation. Sufficient car parking can be easily reorganised within the site.

When MARTIN GUARD went to a Wyre Forest District Council planning meeting to lodge an objection - by the Society and neighbours - to a Lax Lane development, he was first frustrated and then elated. The committee chair announced brusquely that he would impose the three-minute rule...*rigorously*. He did. He started the stopwatch before Martin even got out of his seat and then cut him off mid-sentence. (see left). Martin had to speak at 176 words per minute, a much faster rate than used by broadcasters and politicians! **HOWEVER**, it proved to be worth the trial. His objection was upheld and the application refused.

## The winter lecture: Owain Glyndwr - the Reluctant Rebel

# The self-proclaimed Prince of Wales

**O**ppressed and disunited – that was the Welsh in 1400 but Owain Glyndwr changed all that, briefly. Tim Porter's lecture helped us to understand a very complex situation. Owain was himself descended from Welsh royalty but he had married an English wife, so he had a foot in both camps.

In 1399 that didn't matter as Richard II was on the throne and speaking sweet words to the dwellers of North Wales, who were still smarting from being conquered in the late 13th century.

Owain was something akin to a country squire, running two estates: one near Oswestry and one near Llangollen. He was about forty, so not a young man.

Change was afoot though. Richard II was deposed by Henry Bolingbroke, who took the title of Henry IV and ignored the claim of the eleven-year old Edmund Mortimer, who was next in line.

Late in 1400, there was a legal dispute involving Owain, which he lost and which (somehow) led to the sacking of the Ruthin. Suddenly there was violence everywhere. Perhaps it was the final straw for the Welsh or just a great opportunity to have a go at the English.

Tim took us through the events of the next nine years and showed how Owain, even if a reluctant rebel, proved a good leader for the aggrieved Welsh. Of course, eventually, the big bullies over the border crushed the Cymraeg and Wales was brought to heel.

One of the great mysteries of history is "What happened to Owain Glyndwr?" Tim suggested he was allowed to live out his life in obscurity – a very clever plan on the part of the English, much better to ignore him than make him a martyr!

This was a very informative and objective lecture. The only moment of controversy was when Tim declared there was no evidence that Owain and his troops ever camped on Woodbury Hill (near Great Witley)! Bang goes another myth.

Heather Flack



Owain Glyndwr  
Henry IV and  
speaker Tim Porter

## The restoration of the Birmingham back-to-backs



**M**ore than ninety people enjoyed the talk by Derek Clarke, the conservation architect in charge of the scheme.

The houses are the only ones remaining in the city, having been rapidly thrown up from the early 1800s as social housing for the influx of workers from the countryside. We were given a fascinating insight into the painstaking and skilled detective work involved in such a project, such as how twelve layers of wallpaper were separated from each other, and how a five-inch gap in what should have been a solid nine-inch wall was dealt with.

There was also the human side of the story. George, the West Indian tailor who owned two of the houses, donated many items, and still visits today. Then there were 2 sisters who arrived to have a look,



saying they had lived there as children. In their bedroom, one of them knelt down, lifted a loose floorboard and took out a doll. She gave it to her sister, confessing that she had hidden it there all those years ago! The lecture was the last of the current season, and the calibre of all our speakers this year has been exceptional.

Jenny Frow





The Baldwin Face, near view...which crisis etched which wrinkles?

# The consummate parliamentarian

A remarkable tapestry of influences, including the rigorous industrial discipline of the Baldwin Steel enterprise, close family connections with the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the literary world, the Establishment through education at Harrow and Cambridge and perhaps above all, an enduring love of the English countryside through his Worcestershire home, combined to make Stanley Baldwin, an unassuming, even unambitious man but in the event, a consummate parliamentarian, the dominant political figure in the turbulent inter-war years and undeniably Bewdley's greatest son.

It was this diversity which uniquely qualified him to protect the UK from the deadly conflict between left and right which was to bring politics in France and Germany onto the streets and into violent disorder. Striving to preserve the balance of the centre, Baldwin became a truly radical Conservative premier, inspiring a range of progressive social policies and nursing the Labour Party into the new and unfamiliar roles of opposition and government.

John Chester's second lecture to the Civic Society on SB's career, sub-titled *A Reputation Restored* covered the momentous events of the inter-war years, (through which his authority and popularity was at its height); his retirement in 1937 and the subsequent tragedy of undeserved disgrace.

The regard, almost affection, of the electorate, which enabled him to appeal to them directly, made his radicalism possible but it made him powerful enemies in the Conservative Party, the right-wing press and the business community.

The left-wing too was easily inspired to resent and fear anything resembling patrician government, so that, at the beginning of World War II, despite a garlanded retirement in 1937, an ailing Baldwin became a target for malicious attacks from both left and right, culminating in the more or less scurrilous booklet *The Guilty Men* (1940), penned under the pseudonym 'Cato' (but in reality the work of three journalists employed by the Beaverbrook press), a particularly offensive media campaign and the infamous incident of the Astley Hall gates.

John guided us expertly, with the aid of political cartoons and photographs from the period, through a fascinating and, as Stanley Baldwin's 150th anniversary approaches, topical story, which looks in retrospect more like a Greek tragedy than a domestic one, for, though it is easy enough to detect some of the certainties of the waning British Empire in Baldwin's sincerity, it is very difficult to imagine how the precarious 'certainties' of global markets and international finance can foster trust in the same way. Perhaps it was not only SB's reputation, but an ideal of integrity in public life which suffered.

RWG



The simple memorial stone near Astley Hall, where Baldwin died in 1947



## Remember this?

While Paul Crane's impressive renovation and refurbishment of Redthorne House continues apace, this photo - from the equally impressive *Ken Hobson Collection* - shows the one-time night club called Steals. It was in the basement at the back of the house and was popular in the Seventies. Does that revive anyone's memories? Recollections welcomed for the Summer Newsletter, which will also include Paul's thoughts on the history of the Georgian building.

## Hedgerow re-planted

The 70 metres of hedgerow removed from a site on Long Bank, Far Forest, has now been re-planted after representations by the Civic Society and neighbours.

The NEWSLETTER is published four times in the year and contributions and photographs are always welcome. Please contact the Editor (Jock Gallagher) on 01299 403110 or per email [jyg@cix.co.uk](mailto:jyg@cix.co.uk)





# A walk on the seedy side of town



## REPORT by Pauline Lowe and Barbara Longmore

A walk through the town centre: from the Town Hall down to Severnside South, across to Severnside North, back up Load Street, round the church and back down to the Town Hall

PHOTOS: Jock Gallagher



Tourist Information boards in Load Street are unreadable because of planters blocking access.

ABOVE: Bang in the middle of the town is this dingy alleyway (adjacent to McColls). Top left is the acrid stain of a very large dog marking its territory...or more likely, a small-minded male too full of ale! Almost inevitably, there's the very un-Banksy wall art...and barrow-loads of general grime, sadly not uncommon throughout the town centre. Other alleyways are also generally filthy and unsightly...with urine, vomit, broken glass, rubbish and graffiti...in any combination.

## LEST THEY FORGET

The utility services, the Environment Agency, British Telecom and a host of other repair gangs seem a forgetful lot. Bollards and barriers and sandbags and other building bits seem abandoned. Please come and get them, chaps...soon.

This is an inspection of our primary streets as might be seen through the eyes of a visitor and resident

Cluttered pavements are unsightly...and a hazard to pedestrians. The covers to service points are also trip hazards. Streets are dirty and untidy with the inevitable blight of chewing gum and cigarette ends. Too many shop frontages are in poor repair. The litter bins are dirty and in poor condition. Railings are bent and need painting. There are too many weeds and blocked rain drains. Loose cables hanging from properties must be as worrying to occupants as they are to pedestrians.

# Bewdley needs a Spring clean...





# ...and perhaps something of a facelift



Rotting woodwork in Severnside South

● Poor condition of frontages with many instances of poor woodwork and decoration. Notable examples: The Mayor's Parlour (above) and Teddy Grays (below)



**PLUS PLUS PLUS** There is inappropriate patching of walkways with concrete in the conservation area: Load St and Severnside South (see Page 4). There are also several instances of loose cobbles.

The entrance to Load Street car park is hazardous to pedestrians: there's a sunken inspection cover and very uneven surfaces.

The growing number of empty premises (both banks, the former tile shop, Elbow Room and Totally Patched) are already becoming unsightly. Should they be made available for temporary use?

The telephone kiosk in Load Street is a disgrace: it needs adopting! Litter-bins are dirty and in very poor condition. Planters are not maintained.

A-boards are unsightly (and proliferating) and again constitute hazards.

There is the failure of "whoever" to remove cones, barriers, rubble and notices when their workmen have left site and a proliferation of chewing gum and cigarette ends!







# A messy mosaic of concrete patches



**...chewing gum**



**...and  
cigarette  
butts**







# Men at work...but not recently



ABOVE and LEFT: Unfinished business. Temporary barriers take on a look of permanence as they and associated detritus are abandoned by the district's hard-working workmen.

BELOW: Very much finished business. Five properties in Load Street have closed their doors to customers. When they might re-open is anybody's guess...as is the likelihood of more charity shops.







# Weep no more for the willow. It's gone!



Winter 2016

Winter 2013

In the Christmas issue we recorded the ill-wind damage but now the savagery of the chainsaw has destroyed the beauty of the weeping willow that for many years presented such a glorious entry to the town and an idyllic fringe to the Severn. Assuming the experts have got the pollarding right, the willow will flourish again...but not any time soon.

BEWDLEY  
CATS



## Henry knew his place

**M**olly – previously mentioned in the Newsletter and currently resident in and around the High Street – is the latest of a number of moggies that have captured the hearts of Bewdley residents.

An earlier favourite was Henry, who lived under the Medical Centre for many years. Indeed he slept in a lovely cat house donated by SVR.

He was originally fed by Betty Breakwell, whose cry of '*enerry*' was a familiar sound, as she left him his food in an empty Fray Bentos tin.

When she was no longer able to, the receptionists took over and many patients would leave a tin of cat food "for Henry" when collecting prescriptions or making appointments!

We had a rota over Christmas and I recall going down one Boxing Day to feed him!

When Henry had an infected tooth our petty-cash book had an entry which read "necessary dental treatment." He was much loved but knew his place and never once did he venture over the threshold. Many people missed Henry when he died but he had a good life with so many carers watching over him.

**Jenny Frow**



# The greatest battleship clash in history

This year is very resonant of Great War centenaries, not just of the Battle of the Somme in July but also for the anniversary of the greatest battleship clash in history, the Battle of Jutland. This confrontation between the British and German navies took place 80 miles west of the Danish coast on May 31 1916. Release of naval personnel files has revealed two sailors with Bewdley links who became casualties in the opening stage of the battle, where British battle-cruisers proved unexpectedly vulnerable to German naval gunnery, despite advantages in speed and armament.

While the strategic outcome of the battle left the Royal Navy in continuing control of the sea around Britain, tactically the Germans were able to inflict damaging losses.

Sydney Mulliner (born Arley, December 16 1892) was the son of Mary Morris (1861-1945) and George Mulliner (1859-1918), who worked as a gardener, living at Dallicott Hall Claverley, Shropshire, house of Thomas J Franks JP. In the early 1890s, his family consisted of Thomas (11), Ellen (9), George (7), Mary (5) and Cecelia (just 1). They were certainly in Upper Arley for Sydney's birth in 1892; by 1901 the family also includes Charles (5), Rose (2) and John (2 months). Mary Mulliner was still resident at Copse Mill, Upper Arley, when the Commonwealth War Graves compiled their register in the early 1920s.

Sydney joined the navy as a stoker on April 1, 1912 and was given the service number SS111980. He gave his occupation as 'farm labourer' and his height was 5ft 6ins. He first served at *HMS Victory II*, a training depot in Portsmouth, then on *HMS Renown*, an older ship built in 1895 but used as a stokers' training vessel. He served aboard two submarine depot ships, *HMS Bonaventure*, an old 1892 cruiser, and *HMS Maidstone*. His next posting was more prestigious, being to the brand-new battlecruiser *HMS Queen Mary*; Sydney served aboard this famous ship from her commissioning on September 4 1913, for the remainder of his career and he went down with her.

The *Queen Mary* was assigned to the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron (BCS) commanded by Rear Admiral David Beatty, and made a port visit to Brest in February 1914, and Russia in June. She took part in the Battle of the Heligoland Bight in 1914, but was refitting in January and February 1915.

Philip Harold Knowles was born in Birmingham on October 8 1890, the son of William Knowles (1863-96) and Mary Elizabeth Ennis (1865-1944). She was from the Pensax/Martley area and her father was William Ennis, a carpenter from Porchbrook near Rock. In 1891 Mary Knowles and baby Phillip were visiting Emma Slater at Gorst Hill, a relative of her stepmother Sarah Reece (nee Patrick). His sister Ada was born in Bewdley in 1892, and Philip is described as a 'Native of Bewdley' in Commonwealth War Grave Commission records. By the time of Philip's death in action, his mother had remarried and was 'Mrs R. Betts' at '28 Shireland Road, Smethwick...formerly of Nechells and Bewdley.'

Philip was a career sailor who served 10 years at sea, and who joined the navy for twelve years on his eighteenth birthday, and whose civilian occupation was a 'fitters' assistant'. In an extensive naval career he served on over twenty ships and shore stations. Intriguingly the *New South Wales Police Gazette* of January 25 1911 describes him as 'deserted' from the cruiser *HMS Encounter* at Sydney, which formed part of the Royal Navy's Australia Squadron.

He is described as '5ft 8ins...dark brown hair, hazel eyes, fresh complexion...(tattoos) flower right forearm, bird and woman left forearm....eagle right upper arm.' Knowles was, however, back aboard *Encounter* for the 1911 census in April when moored at Tonga in the South Pacific.

His entry in the National Roll of the Great War records he served on *HMS Agamemnon* in the Battle of the Heligoland Bight and Dardanelle but naval records suggest service on *Indefatigable* from December 1913.

*Indefatigable* did indeed take part in the bombardment of Dardanelles forts in November 1914 but was sunk on May 31 1916 while also serving as part of Beatty's Battlecruiser Fleet: she was hit several times in the first minutes of the "Run to the South", the opening phase of the battlecruiser action.

Shells from the German battlecruiser *Von der Tann* caused an explosion which ripped a hole in her hull and a second explosion destroyed the ship. Only two of the crew of 1,019 survived.

Twenty-five minutes later, *Queen Mary* was hit twice by the German battlecruiser *Derfflinger*, and her magazines exploded shortly afterwards, leaving only nine survivors.

Sydney Mulliner and Philip Knowles rest with their shipmates in the North Sea but are commemorated on the Portsmouth and Plymouth Naval Memorials.



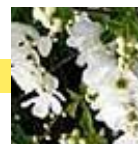
HMS Queen Mary



HMS Indefatigable


**SIMON FIELDING**





Dr Lillie died on Boxing Day 2014. 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. This is the second and final part of her reminiscences of what she called *Society and Working Life* and covers the creation of the NHS.

# A snapshot of the town's health

In 1946, the diseases we treated were very different from today, although Sulphonamides had made a wonderful revolution in the treatment of infections, especially pneumonia. Penicillin was only just appearing and scarlet fever was taken very seriously, the complication of acute nephritis in children dreaded. TB was common especially in Wyre Hill and the bovine TB of bones and glands in the neck with abscess formation often seen. Milk was still being delivered in pails straight from the cow and the fight to make sure the herds were Tubercular tested was only just being thought of. Apart from TB, whooping cough and measles epidemics; the dread of polio haunted us. We had a very bad epidemic in Bewdley losing two teenage girls. As the early symptoms were like 'flu everyone had to be watched carefully. It was not until the arrival of Salk vaccine in 1955 that polio disappeared. Measles was severe and left many children with chronic otitis media (inflammation of the inner ear) and deafness, and whooping cough epidemics were horrible. Great benefit was thought to be derived from a walk up the river past the gas works, you can smell the gas to this day although the works have been demolished for years – very smelly gas we had in Bewdley in those days.

Some of the busiest weeks of the year were the factory holidays – last week in July and first week in August. It felt as though all Birmingham and the Black Country arrived on our doorstep and queued at the bus stop outside the surgery. They camped all over the place, cut and burned themselves, sprained their ankles, were bitten by wasps, bees and mosquitoes, got fish hooks



Factory fortnight in the Fifties

imbedded in various parts of their anatomy and on a few occasions, tried to drown themselves. Fortunately Bob Miles was very good at resuscitation and knew his river and there were surprisingly few fatal accidents.

Those were the days of public transport, when it was almost impossible to buy a new car and Bewdley was a famous place for a holiday (*see photo above*)

The advent of the NHS in 1948 was a great revolution. The profession worried a lot about loss of freedom etc but it was a wonderful help to the patients. The first hurdle they had to face was the filling in of the forms to register. We had a great time helping the less able folk achieve this. It was surprising how few of them actually knew where they lived or how to spell their names.

Thank goodness the practice was fairly small in those days and when all the cards arrived from Worcester E.C. they all went into six boxes. A few people were doubtful about the NHS and remained private patients but very soon only about 130 remained - thank goodness!

The dispensary was gradually replaced by record cards but it remained a do-it-yourself concern until Valerie Pritchard joined us in 1950 and took over reception and secretarial work. Before then all the record keeping, filing, phoning, and record card sorting was done as we went along. At the end of surgery, phones were switched through to the duty doctor's house, correspondence and minor surgery and dressing were all part of the way of life accepted as normal and done without expecting any assistance. A small concern, yes, otherwise it would have been impossible. Molly Elwell was our first practice nurse.

Wribbenhall was run by Dr Lawrence, later with the assistance of Dr Young. The Spring Hill estate was only partly developed. On our side of the river, Hales Park was a cherry orchard not developed until 1966 and the Lakes estate was much later.

Jock died in September 1960 and soon afterwards, Dr Lawrence retired and Dr Young joined the practice with his Wribbenhall practice and branch surgeries and we became responsible for the whole area.

Increased numbers soon made us aware of the inadequacy of the Load Street surgeries and started the dream of a purpose-built modern Medical Centre, realised at last in 1965. You will all appreciate how pleased we were to have a room each and plenty of space for the record cards and staff.



Encouraged by the positive feedback we have been getting about our Newsletters, we have decided, once again, to produce a Spring edition to accompany the Annual Report – with apologies to our deliverers for the added weight they have to carry round the town's streets. I hope you enjoy reading it and we are very grateful to Jock Gallagher, our Editor, for putting it together in such a professional manner.

**Spring Clean**  
Bewdley is a lovely place to be in the Spring and we are fortunate to live in such a beautiful town. But that doesn't mean there is no room for improvement. Indeed a gallant band of members from the Executive Committee, led by Pauline Lowe, recently undertook a survey of the Town Centre to find out places we consider are in need of a Spring Clean. Their observations are shown on Pages 4-7 and it will now be the intention to persuade relevant proprietors to take necessary action.

#### Annual General Meeting

The AGM is nearly upon us and I hope as many members as possible can attend. This year is somewhat special since we shall be electing a new President. The meeting will be followed by a showing of one of Kenneth Hobson's excellent videos entitled *Victorian Kidderminster*, which will be introduced by local historian and carpet manufacturing guru, Melvyn Thompson.

#### 2016/17 Programme

Our usual Programme of Events is also enclosed. We really are pleased that all of our functions in the past 12 months have been so well attended. I hope you will find the forthcoming programme just as attractive. We start off with an outing to Aldenham Park, Morville, on May 24 and a separate sheet is enclosed which provides full details.

I look forward to seeing you all ere long

Richard Perrin

## A capital rail service

Extract from the *Guide to Bewdley & Arley* of 1895  
(in the Ken Hobson collection)

"There will be found a capital service of trains between Bewdley and Birmingham and Wolverhampton, there being about twenty running daily to and from the principal Midland towns, per G.W.R.; while from Birmingham, there are excursions on every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday during the season. Every information can be obtained from the genial station master, Mr MT Appleton."



GWR locomotive 1895



#### SOCIETY AGM

**7 30pm Wednesday April 20**

followed by Kenneth Hobson's film of Victorian Kidderminster introduced by Melvyn Thompson



Aldenham Park: venue for the outing on May 24

**CHERRY FAIR**  
**July 23/24**  
**in Load Street**



#### Lecture *TITANIC: the Midlands Connection*

by Andrew Lound  
September 16  
St George's Hall



Madresfield Court - outing September 28

**October 1 - 2 Harvest Fair BCS Guided tours**

**October 7 - 16 Bewdley Festival**

**October 18 Lecture *Ruskinland: the story of a Woodland Utopia* by Neil Sinden**

**November 18 ANNUAL DINNER St George's Hall**

**for further programme details ring 405823**