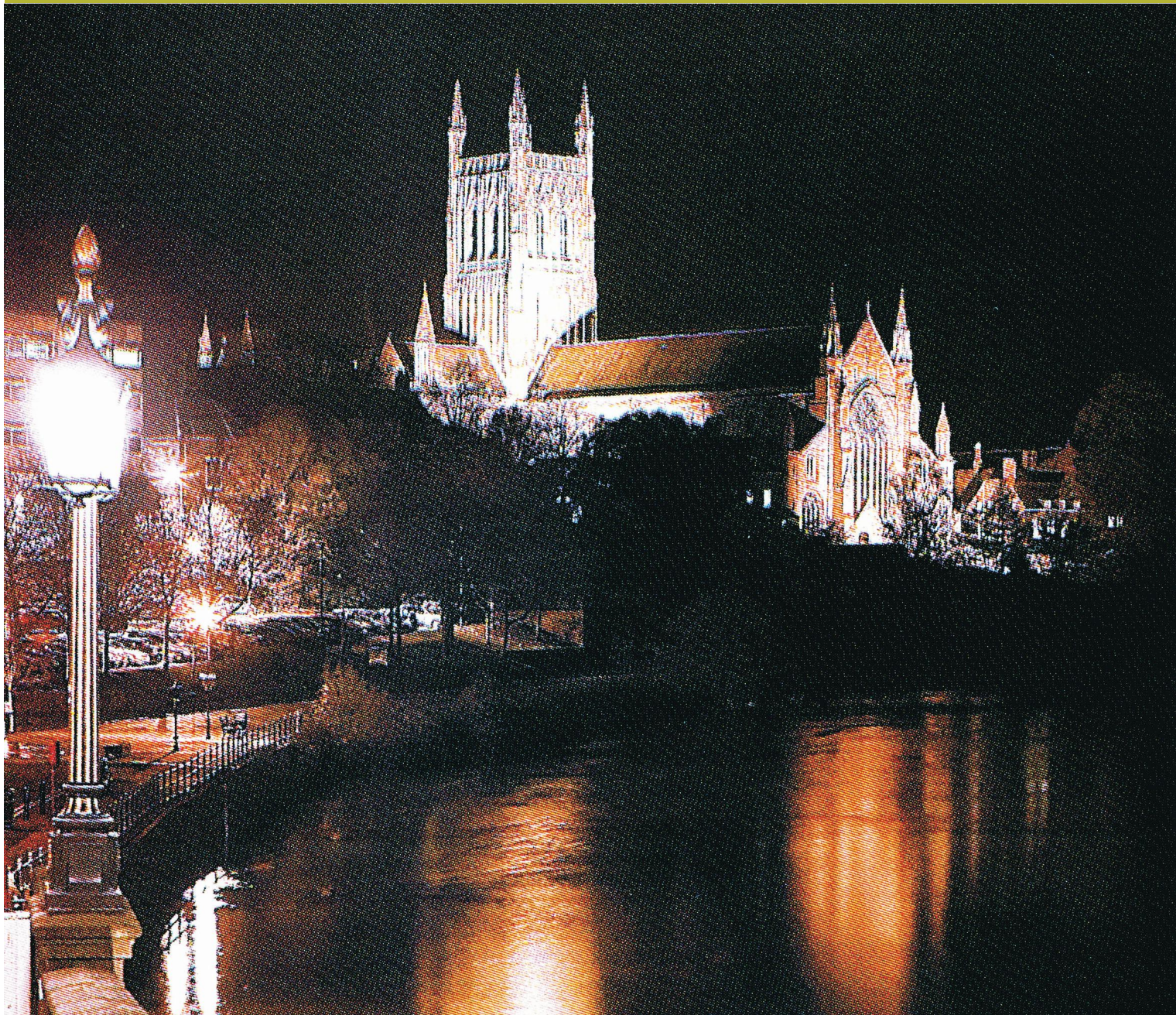




WORCESTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1



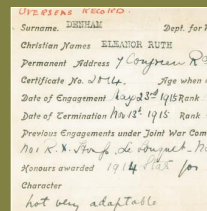
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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Since our last newsletter I am pleased to report that we have had a number of new members and the membership is still growing. So if you know of anyone who might want to join, please let me know or pass their names on to Les West our membership secretary.

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The first event in our 2016 programme took place at Fownes Hotel on Tuesday 22nd March. The speaker was Val Hibbitt who gave a talk on the glove industry in Worcester. We chose the venue because of its links to the glove industry and just under 60 people attended, which was more than attended all our talks last year. The speakers for the rest of the year will be as good, so please keep on attending.

The War Memorial programme in Worcestershire is going well and we have now held two workshops to train volunteers. If you can help with this survey, please let me know. It is a national survey and in Worcestershire we need to survey over 500 memorials. Nationally the target is the recording of 20,000 this year.

The programme to replace all eight City Gate plaques has been completed and we now plan to publish a guide to the location of these plaques for visitors to the city. This guide will also include the Blue Plaques we have erected over the last few years. There are several other names being considered for plaques. If you have suggestions for other nominees for a plaque, please let me know and we will add them to the list.

We will shortly have a new web site that has been developed for us by a student from the Heart of Worcestershire college as a project towards his qualifications. It is a more modern and more easily updateable web site so please let me have your feedback.

The Civic Society is heading up a consortium to establish a 17-kilometre Heritage Walk around Worcester. It is hoped that we can acquire some land to complete the four proposed Gateways allowing visitors to start the walk from various points around Worcester. The consortium consists of English Heritage, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Duckworth Trust, and a number of other interested parties. An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund will be made should the acquisition of the land become a possibility, but the project can still go ahead even without the land.

Phil Douce
Chairman

Worcester Civic Society Officers 2016

President: Professor Michael Clarke CBE DL

Vice-President: Professor Judith Elkin

Chairman: Phil Douce

Vice-Chairman: David Saunders

Hon Treasurer: Mike Ridout

Hon Secretary: John Wickson

Membership Secretary: Les West

Projects & Campaigns Chair: David Saunders

Planning Panel Chair: Heather Barrett

Publicity Officer: Nevill Swanson

Committee: Mike Sumpner

Sandra Taylor

Louis Stephen

Joan Stephen

Website: www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk

Membership:

Individual Membership	£20
Family Membership	£25
Corporate Membership	£50

Cheques should be made payable to Worcester Civic Society

To Mr Les West
1, College Green
Worcester, WR1 2LH

FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

This is the second of a series of articles about the various people and organisations who have received the Freedom of the City.

In November 2002, Sir Winston Churchill was named the greatest Briton of all time in a nationwide poll that was the culmination of a month-long BBC television series. More than half a century before, the people of Worcester had recognised the great man's qualities, when he was presented with the Freedom of the City on 20 May 1950.

The honour had originally been offered in May 1945, just as World War II was finishing in Europe, but such was the pressure of his political life that it would be another five years before Churchill could spare the time to visit the city to receive the Freedom. By then he was the Leader of the Opposition, having lost elections in 1945 and in February 1950. Historians hold that the reason for these defeats is that the British people were tired of war and did not feel that the man who had led the country through six long years of war was capable of leading the country in peace. Whatever the rest of the country felt, the people of Worcester felt differently.

Churchill arrived at Shrub Hill station from Edinburgh (where he had addressed the annual conference of the Scottish Unionist Association) at about 9.20 am, to be greeted by the Mayor (Alderman TS Bennett), the Town Clerk (Mr Bertram Webster) and the Chief Constable (Mr EW Tinkler). He was driven through the city to the Mayor's home at Lower Wick to join Mrs Churchill, who had spent the night there. After a short rest (and inspection of the Mayor's herd of Ayrshire bulls) Churchill was driven back to the Guildhall, standing in the back of an open car, escorted by two police cars, with people lining the streets and calling 'Good old Winnie'.

At the Guildhall, Churchill was presented with the Freedom of the City 'in recognition of his unequalled services to the Realm at one of the most desperate stages in its history'. In his speech, the Mayor anticipated those BBC voters when he said that 'it is my firm belief that in him we have the man of the century'. He praised Churchill's 'tenacious and pugnacious



Churchill in Worcester (May 1950)

temperament', and spoke for the country as a whole when he said that 'Worcester citizens, in common with others spread over the face of Britain, have longed for an opportunity to give expression of their heartfelt regard for this man who held the destiny of Britain, nay not only Britain, but I should say of the whole world, in his hands during those fateful early years of the struggle against Nazi oppression, and who bought our freedom with his own indomitable spirit'. Fulsome praise indeed.

The Town Clerk then administered the oath and read the Deed of Admission, which was presented in a Royal Worcester jardinière with an ebony plinth in which was a drawer that contained the document. The jardinière had been specially designed and made. Churchill signed the Roll of Honorary Freemen and replied that of all the honours he had received, 'none will rank higher in my mind than that to-day'.

The Mayoress then presented Mrs Churchill with a mahogany inlaid Hepplewhite Pembroke table dating from around 1795, given by local furniture manufacturers Messrs GT Rackstraw, and 15 pairs of gloves given by Worcester's glove manufacturers. On leaving the ceremony Churchill made a short speech to the assembled crowds, and was given an enthusiastic reception which he acknowledged with his famous V sign. A luncheon followed, and by mid-afternoon the Churchills had left the city to visit the Baldwin memorial at Bewdley.

There can have been few more worthy recipients of the honour of the Freedom of the City. As the Mayor said, 'We know him best as one who has marked the living pages of British history. Such men of example are few but such men are great, and Mr. Winston Churchill has earned his right to the position of the lionhearted hero of this island breed.' The British people obviously agreed – in October 1951 Churchill was once again Prime Minister.

Worcester's city archives contain documents relating to the planning of the event and photographs of the day itself. (<http://www.explorethepast.co.uk/2015/01/sir-winston-churchills-visit-to.html>)

Cathy Broad

PROJECTS AND CAMPAIGNS PANEL

City Gate Plaques



Trinity Gate
(Above Left)

St Martin's Gate
(Above Right)

The final two of the eight plaques commemorating the location of the Gates in the old city walls were unveiled by the Mayor, Councillor Roger Knight, on the morning of Tuesday April 19th.

The Trinity Gate plaque replaces the existing plaque on the wall of the Trinity Gate Dental Practice on St Nicholas Street and the St Martin's Gate plaque replaces the one on the wall of Actons Opticians in the Cornmarket.

James Dinn, the City Archaeologist, who has been very helpful in confirming the siting and history of the plaques, wrote the script for all the plaques.

The Society will be investigating the production of a city heritage map for visitors linking the sites of the City Gate Plaques with other important historic sites in the city. This will be one of the new projects for the Panel over the summer and autumn of 2016.

Presidents' Plaque

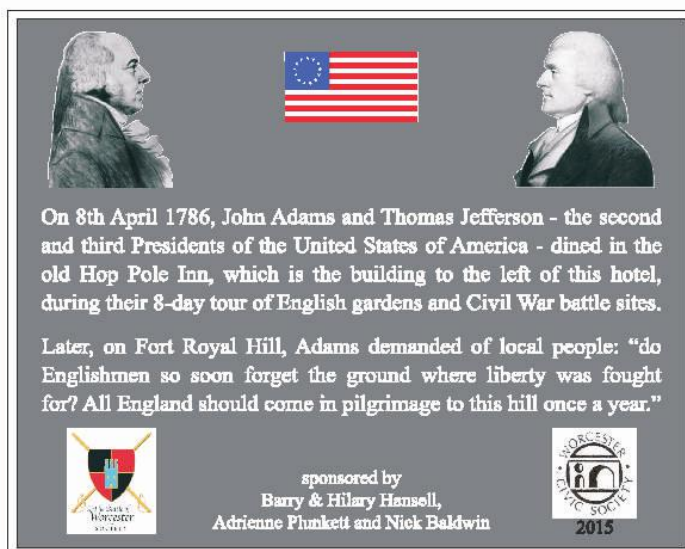
The plaque to commemorate the visit by future United States Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, was unveiled by the City Mayor, Councillor Roger Knight, on the morning of Friday, February 18th on the wall of the Whitehouse Hotel in Foregate Street.

The unveiling, which took place in glorious sunshine, was also attended by Lord Richard Faulkener, Worcester MP Robin Walker and the manager of the Whitehouse Hotel, Rachael Mitchell.

We were lucky also to have Councillor Adrian Gregson, the County Archive Manager, who wrote the script for the plaque and Liz Smith who is a member of the organisation responsible for the twinning of Worcester with Worcester, Massachusetts.

James Connell of the Worcester News, who gave us two separate articles on the plaque, the first on January 22nd, covered the event very well.

The two future Presidents were on their way to Blenheim on April 8th 1786 during their short tour of English gardens and Civil War sites.



John Adams was the first Ambassador to the Court of St James from the very new Republic of the United States who when he met George III, the King, turned his back on him. Thomas Jefferson taking over from Benjamin Franklin as Ambassador in Paris had a much warmer reception and became an expert in the much grander gardens of France as well as fine French wines. He obviously got the better deal.

KINVER CERAMICS

"Worcester's Traditional Skills in High Quality Porcelain Manufacture are Still Alive and Well!"

A small highly skilled unit in Hallow, just outside Worcester, called Kinver Ceramics, is successfully continuing the city's historic tradition in high quality bone china porcelain manufacture well into the new century and making its presence felt around the world.

It was set up in 1999 by Rick Davis, whose grandfather Harry was one of Royal Worcester's most renowned ceramic painters, and other former employees, and now has a thriving business run by Rick and his wife Julia. They have markets as far afield as Saudi Arabia and America.

Products include thimbles, meerkats, horses (one was stolen at this year's Cheltenham race meeting!), lampshades and Fabergé-like eggs, replica covers for Worcester vases, china painting blanks - anything from one-off items to longer runs.

The manufacturing process is based on the use of plaster of Paris moulds and slip casting, followed by firing in kilns at controlled temperatures, never forgetting the special expertise of hand painting.

Harry Davis was born in Worcester in 1885. His father, Alfred, was a china figure maker who worked for Royal Worcester and his grandfather Josiah Davis was one of the most talented gilders ever to work at the factory.

Harry started work for Royal Worcester at the age of thirteen and was apprenticed for seven years under the talented landscape artist Ted Salter.

As you can see a long family tradition carries on at Kinver Ceramics.



Rick Davis at work on a horse sculpture



Finished model of the horse



Finished painted plaque

LASLETT'S ALMSHOUSES

Richard Pedley is currently researching the story of Laslett's Almshouses and the history of the site, and it is hoped that a book will be published later this year.

The story of the site goes back to the early thirteenth century, when the Franciscans arrived in Worcester and were granted the land, on which Laslett's now stands, by William de Beauchamp.

In the course of the following centuries, this important family proved to be the Franciscans' main benefactor.

They were there until the Dissolution, during the reign of Henry VIII. Whilst in Worcester, their Friary grew in size and they built a chapel, surrounded by a cemetery, on the land just north of where 'The Fownes' Hotel stands today.

They were renowned for their preaching and simplicity of life, and went out into the city offering charity and poor relief.

During development and rebuilding in the mid-nineteenth century, hundreds of bones were found, but only one coffin, possibly that of a member of the Beauchamp family, but it has disappeared without trace. It was the Benedictine monks at the Priory - now the Cathedral - who insisted on their chapel and burial ground being outside the city walls, so a gate, Friar's Gate, was inserted into the wall - marked today by a plaque - and a bridge built over the wide city ditch, known as Frog Brook, in order that they could reach their church.

When the Friary was closed in 1538, most of the buildings were demolished and the stone used to repair the city walls, but one building remained until the early nineteenth century, the Refectory, which was rented by the City Corporation in 1724, as an early gaol.

In 1822, a new gaol was built, but it proved hopelessly inadequate for Worcester's increasing criminal fraternity, and was sold at



Laslett's Almshouses as seen today.

auction in 1868 to Mr. William Laslett.

Initially, he used the former gaol cells to house poor inmates rent-free, and gave them a weekly allowance. He acquired land and estates during his lifetime to create a charity, which, after his death, would provide income for the running and maintenance of the almshouses, and which would be managed by a board of trustees. At his own expense a chapel was built on the site, and all those buildings remained until 1912, when the present almshouses were designed by the architect, Lewis Sheppard, who did a magnificent job in creating harmony between the appearance of the almshouses and the Tudor half-timbered buildings in Friar Street. It was Mr. Laslett's lifelong friend, Thomas Southall, who carried out the dream of the founder, and to whom the sundial obelisk in the grounds is dedicated.

The chapel is well worth a visit and contains five magnificent icons, commissioned by the trustees, from a Romanian artist. The chapel is dedicated to St. Lawrence, who was the patron saint of the Franciscan order, so it is good to know that one tradition has continued for 800 years.

Richard Pedley

Living Over The Shop

I believe that we can and should encourage many more flats above our city centre shops. It is happening, in places, at the margins but the pace of progress is slow.

We do need more houses. There is pressure to build on green field sites, but just saying “No!” is not enough, we need to create viable alternatives. More should be done to encourage building on brown field sites and crucially to create more affordable flats above Worcester's city centre shops.

Encouraging more flats right in our city centre could also reduce future increases in our city's traffic congestion. Building on the edges of a city creates more traffic as residents seek to access the city centre amenities. In contrast, building in city centres allows people to access amenities as well as bus and train stations on foot.

More people living in our city centre will help us to create additional income for shop keepers and freeholders to support a more vibrant city-centre economy. Additional people living in the city centre will support food shops, pubs and the restaurant economy.

Our city centre changes in nature from a busy shopping street in the day time, to a ghost town in the early evening to a fairly lively party atmosphere at night. Some people see the city centre as a no-go area in the late evenings. Hopefully more people actually living in the city centre will create a more family-friendly environment and in time those people living and “owning a stake” in the area will have a moderating effect on the worst excesses of the rowdy night club, heavy drinking culture that frightens many people from being in the city centre at night.

There are many obstacles to overcome. The newly created Living Over The Shop (LOTS) organisation is at the start of a journey that is focussed on the years ahead. This is not a mission that will be completed in weeks and months. To be successful LOTS needs to be non-political, inclusive and most importantly needs the support of people who care about Worcester. For more information or to support please contact me by calling 01905 359 509 or emailing Louisjosephstephen@gmail.com

Louis Stephen

John Williams of Pitmaston, Worcester

Renowned plant breeder

John Williams (1773 – 1853) was born in Worcester and inherited his father's distillery in Tybridge Street. He married Dorothy Wigley at Claines in 1800 and later he moved into Pitmaston House in Malvern Road around 1803 or 1804. A report of a visit to Pitmaston by the Horticultural Society of London (now the Royal Horticultural Society) in 1848 records that vines planted some 40 years previously were seen there. Williams learned about the deliberate breeding of cultivated plants from Thomas Andrew Knight of Downton Castle near Ludlow in about 1807. Knight was elected President of the Horticultural Society of London in 1811.

Williams commenced plant breeding and introduced several types of fruit, including Pitmaston Golden Wreath apple, Pitmaston Champagne gooseberry and Pitmaston Duchess pear, some remaining with us today. No doubt he passed on his knowledge of the technique with the Worcester Pearmain apple produced by Mr Hales of Swanpool in St. Johns.

An interest in climate led to experiments on controlling the environment in the conservatory at Pitmaston House for growing grapes. His book “Climate of Great Britain” was published in 1806. At Knight's instigation he conducted experiments on the effect of galvanism on the growth of germinating broad bean seeds following experiments at Worcester Infirmary by Dr Wilson Philip.

Williams' political views at the time of the 1832 Reform Act caused him to build the protective grey walls bordering Malvern Road. A blue plaque was placed on these walls in 2015 by the Civic Society with sponsorship by Jim Jenner of Pitmaston House.

Murray Mylechreest

Planning Panel: Report Spring 2016

South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP):

It's finally here! After a process taking over five years (more if you count work on the plan that preceded this version), the government inspector concluded in January that the SWDP was sound and legally compliant and it was formally adopted by the three councils (Worcester, Malvern Hills and Wychavon) at the end of February. It sets out a long-term vision for south Worcestershire up to the year 2030 and includes plans for 28,400 new homes as well as land for retail and employment. The plan covers the period from 2006 to 2030, so some of the development proposed has already taken place.

On a positive note, adoption appears to have precipitated Miller Homes' decision to withdraw their appeal against refusal for development at Middle Battenhall Farm, which was not included in the SWDP for development. However, the Society remains concerned about the provision of infrastructure associated with the planned development of the two large urban extensions to the south and west of the city.

There will be further consultation taking place on some of the supplementary planning documents linked to the plan.

Information about the plan, including maps and a full copy of the inspectors report can be found at: www.swdevelopmentplan.org

Major development proposals: There has been some unwelcome news in relation to two major development proposals:

- GTech – unfortunately the Planning Committee did a U-turn and granted permission for the application to build this facility on green network land close to the historic Warndon Church and Court, despite objections to the plans topping 900! Whilst this is a good development in principle it is in the wrong place and should have been part of the new 'Worcester Six' business development, rather than impacting on the setting of this important heritage asset.
- Royal Porcelain Works – sadly the revised scheme for this site was approved by the Planning Committee despite considerable objections both from within the city and from national bodies. The scheme is now mainly housing and involves the demolition of most buildings save the listed showroom and the front wall to Severn Street. This is a sad loss to Worcester's industrial heritage and it is a pity that the site could not have included more retained buildings and mixed uses including creative spaces and business start-ups.

News from Conservation Areas Advisory Committee:

- Applications to CAAC continue to reflect the changing landscape of Worcester, with a number of applications for changes from suburban pubs and city centre offices to residential uses.
- Old Infirmary Silver Street – we have had a preliminary consultation on revised plans for this important building which will hopefully lead to its sensitive refurbishment and reuse.
- Conservation Area Management Plans – the city has begun a review of its older conservation area designations and plans with a view to updating these. Reviews of the Claines and Lowesmoor conservation areas are currently underway. These will come out for public consultation soon.
- Shrub Hill Station – good news that Network Rail will be refurbishing the old parcel bridge.

*Heather Barrett
(Planning Panel Chair)*



War Memorial National Survey

In July 2014 the government announced £ 5 million of funding towards war memorials as part of its activities to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

As a result a partnership was established between Civic Voice, Historic England, the Imperial War Museum and the War Memorial Trust.

The overall aim is to encourage communities to become guardians of their local war memorials in helping to conserve and protect them for the future.

Historic England's role is to add 2500 war memorials to the National List for England giving them greater protection for the future and providing conservation training to building contractors through online resources and devise an education programme on war memorials for schools.

The Imperial War Museum created and populated a website (www.ukwarmemorials.org) which will act as a record for the public to find information about war memorials. This was launched on January 28th 2015.

The War Memorial Trust will deliver specialist advice on the conservation, repair and management of war memorials, overseeing and distributing around £ 2 million in grants for the war memorial conservation.

Civic Voice will undertake a programme of workshops to train 5000 volunteers across England to carry out condition surveys to provide a picture of the condition of England's war memorials and to help the War Memorial Trust to identify where grant funding for conservation work is most needed. Civic Voice will also support Historic England in the listing of memorials by training volunteers in how to apply to have memorials listed and provide training in what grants are available for conservation work.

There are estimated to be 100,000 war memorials in the UK about 85,000 of which are in England. It is an estimate because there is no definitive record of their style or location.

The volunteers will find and record the location and condition of these memorials and the target is to record 20,000 in this centenary year.

In Worcester we have an excellent database from which to start run by Sandra Taylor (www.rememberthefallen.co.uk)

Phil Douce



WORCESTER CIVIC SOCIETY BLUE PLAQUES

In October 2011, Worcester Civic Society decided to start a programme of placing Blue Plaques for Worcester citizens who had made a contribution to the city.

A request was placed in the Worcester News asking the public for names of people whom they thought deserved a Blue Plaque. Twenty-four names were suggested and it was agreed that the Society would try to unveil two plaques a year.

The first plaque was for Benjamin Williams Leader, a prominent watercolour artist who for a while lived at what is now Diglis House Hotel. We approached the hotel which was more than happy to have a plaque on the steps from the quayside leading to the hotel. In fact they asked for a second plaque that they could erect over the front door to the hotel. The plaque was unveiled on 8th February 2012.

Since then we have unveiled plaques to Alice Ottley, Godfrey Brown, the 1936 Olympian, "Tip" Foster the Worcester and England Cricketer, John Williams the horticulturist and Sir Edward Elgar.

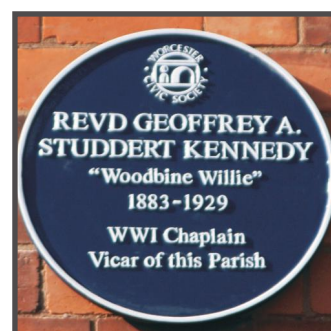
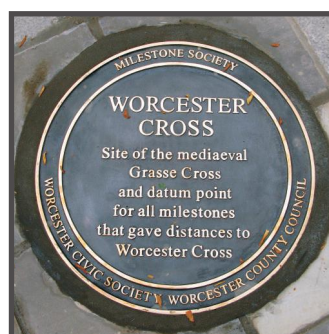
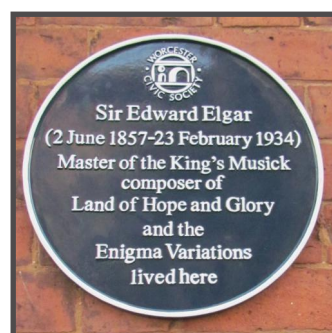
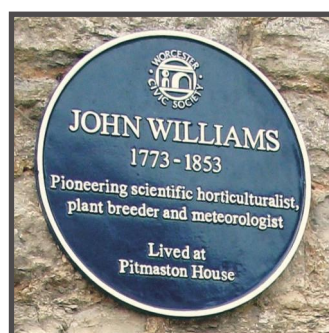
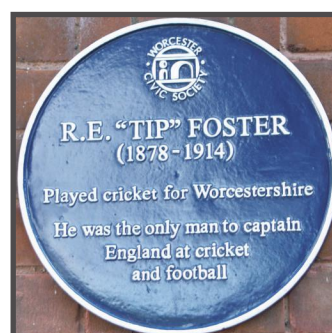
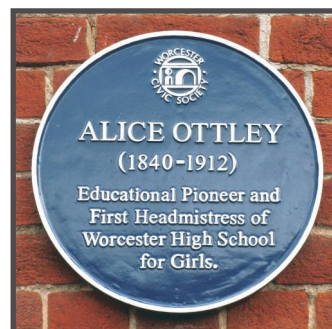
We have a number of other people on the list including Ernie Payne, the 1908 Olympic cyclist.

Beside the Blue Plaques for people, the Civic Society has also had plaques unveiled to mark the position of the old Worcester Cross, which is in the pavement at the Cross. We also worked with Worcestershire County Cricket Club to have a Blue Plaque erected on the Whitehouse Hotel, which when it was the Star Hotel held the inaugural meeting of the Club. The plaque celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding.

Early in 2015, the Society undertook a programme to replace all the eight City Gate plaques, a project we believed would take two to three years to complete. Thanks to the generosity of local people, we have just completed the unveiling of the last two plaques.

We still need ideas for names for the Blue Plaque programme. If you have suggestions please let me know. One condition is that whomever it commemorates cannot be living.

Phil Douce



WORCESTER GUILDHALL WW1 MEMORIAL

The roll of honour in Worcester Guildhall records and commemorates 4,988 men and two women from Worcester who served or died while serving during the Great War. Of the 4,990 names listed, 752 died/were killed in action, and these are denoted by a gold cross beside their name.

To date no records have been found as to how the names were gathered but it is most likely they were put forward by relatives of those who died and those individuals who survived.

There were certainly more than two women from the city who served as VADs, worked in local munitions factories or took on other male work roles and as they are not listed on panels, it is probable that when the initial list was compiled, it showed only those who had served overseas. Certainly Sister Ruth Denham and Nurse J. M(a)cLeod served overseas.

However, over the many years since the Roll of Honour was compiled, names have continued to be added at the request of various individuals who feel they or their ancestor's name should be added.

Whilst the listing of names is alphabetical, the surnames under each letter are not and this explains why some of the names are repeated.

As with all memorials, there are often interesting and poignant stories connected with some of the casualties. On the Guildhall Memorial these include the three Ashburner brothers, Charles killed in action 6th August 1915 aged 23, Frank killed in action 25th January 1917 aged 17 and Walter killed in action 10th August 1915 aged 18, just four days after brother Charles.

OVERSEAS RECORD.

Surname. DENHAM Dept. for References J. h.

Christian Names ELEANOR RUTH Miss or Mrs.

Permanent Address 7 Courteen Rd. Loughborough.

Certificate No. 2014 Age when engaged 42

Date of Engagement May 23rd 1915 Rank Sister Pay

Date of Termination Nov 13th 1915 Rank Sister Pay

Previous Engagements under Joint War Committee, if any: and where.
No 1 R. X. Troop. Le Bouquet - No 2. A. B. Troop. Calais

Honours awarded 1914 Star for Brussels Aug 15th 14 to Oct 17th 14

Character
not very adaptable

Eleanor Ruth Denham - Overseas Record

Also included are:

- Carlton - Lawrence Barnard, only son of Arthur Carlton, High Sheriff and Alderman of Worcester.
- Dancox - Frederick George, Victoria Cross recipient.
- Oakey - Gerald Vane emigrated from Worcester, enlisted in the Australian infantry and was remembered by his family still living in the city.
- Rudge - Alfred Arthur, Canadian forces after emigrating from Worcester.
- The Spreckley brothers, Arthur, Guy and Ralph, three of four brothers to die during the war.

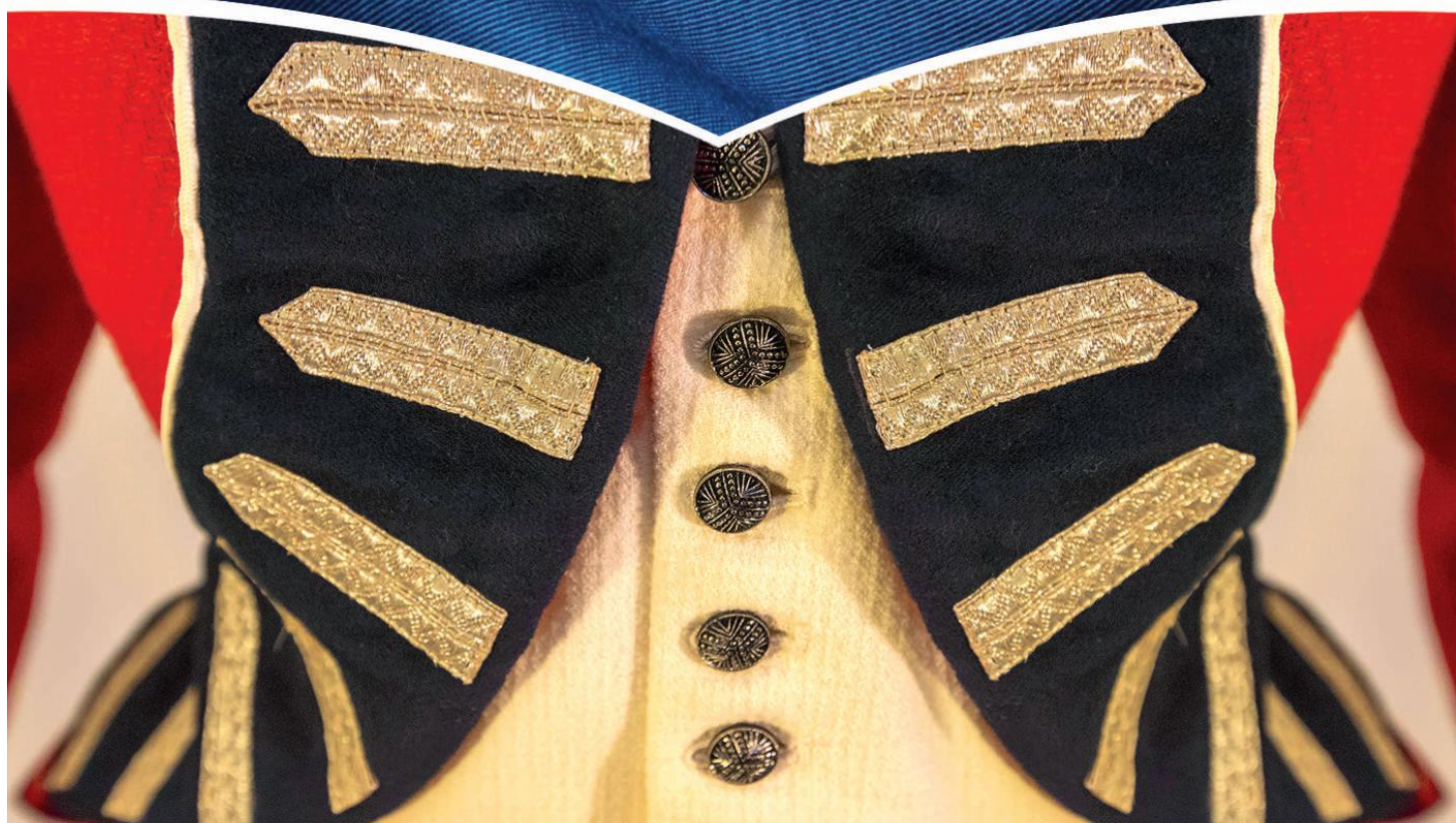
Their full stories and those of over 22,000 names that appear on Worcestershire war memorials and rolls of honour can be found on the website: www.rememberthefallen.co.uk

Sandra Taylor
Researcher and Administrator
www.rememberthefallen.co.uk

1ST - 29TH AUGUST 2016

DRESSED *for* DRAMA

An exhibition of period costume from British television and film,
set in Worcester Cathedral's stunning 12th Century Chapter House



Dressed for Drama features period costumes from British television and film including:
Mr Selfridge, *Downton Abbey*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Scandalous Lady W*
and features beautiful dresses worn by stars such as Caryl Mulligan and Natalie Dormer.



WORCESTER
CATHEDRAL

To pre-book tickets, telephone
01905 732900

For further information visit worcestercathedral.co.uk

 @WorcCathedral