



# WORCESTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2018

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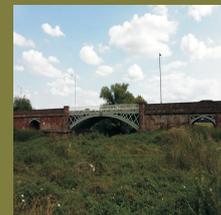
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## Worcester Civic Society List of officers 2018

**President:** Vacant

**Vice-President:** Stephen Inman

**Chairman:** Phil Douce

**Vice-Chairman:** David Saunders

**Hon Treasurer:** Vacant

**Hon Secretary:** John Wickson

**Membership Secretary:** Michael McCurdy

**Publicity Officer:** Sandra Taylor

**Chair of Planning Panel:** Dr. Heather Barrett

**Chair of Strategy Panel:** Chris Arnott

**Chair of Projects Panel:** William Edmondson

**Chairs of Programme Panel:** David Saunders  
Stephen Inman

**Newsletter Editor:** Cathy Broad

We welcome the following new members:

Mr Christopher Edmondson

Mrs Judith Gurney

Mrs Vanessa Haddleton

Mr Robert Holdsworth

Mrs Jill McDonagh

Mr Mark Oswell

Mr Mark Wyatt

[www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk)

# CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

## Is this the end?

Like all vibrant organisations the civic society movement is going through a process of retrenchment. The objectives of the founders of the movement in the 1950s have been achieved and the stalwarts who promoted them are getting older and less involved; they do not understand the changes in our society that have taken place.

When the Worcester Civic Society was formed it was on a wave of interest in history and heritage. At that time, we saw:

- **the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act;**
- **the establishment of Conservation Areas;**
- **the concept of listing buildings became popular;**
- **700 civic societies sprung up across the country;**
- **The Civic Trust was established.**

Nowadays members tend to join because they consider the Society to be carrying out good work; they do not see themselves contributing towards the work of the Society. We, in Worcester have seen only a trickle of new members for some years now. We need an infusion of new younger blood and ideas. It is said that younger people are not interested in civic societies because they do not offer anything that interests them.

Here in Worcester, the society is actually run by no more than six or seven people, who organise talks and visits, run the Blue Plaque scheme, attend and give talks to other organisations, run and maintain our web site. It is too much for six people. Unless we get a great deal more help from people, not just joining, but assisting in running the society, the Worcester Civic Society, like many others across the country, will close.

At the AGM last year, I said I would do one more year as Chairman which would be my fourth, which will end in November this year. We need someone to take over this role. Currently we do not have a treasurer, another job which has landed in my lap and which I do not want.

If you all want the Civic Society to continue, and I believe that we need one in Worcester, if we are going to preserve what is left of our heritage, then please either come and help us, or find us new members who will help. If between, say, every ten of you, you can find one new ACTIVE member, it would give us the new members we need. If we don't do this, ....

**Phil Douce**  
Chairman

### Membership:

Individual Membership	£20
Family Membership	£30
Corporate Membership	£50
Student Membership	£5

Cheques should be made payable to Worcester Civic Society

To Mr Michael McCurdy  
56 Camp Hill Road, Worcester WR5 2HG

You can contact Michael on:- 01905 353438  
or at:- [wrcivicsocietymem@yahoo.com](mailto:wrcivicsocietymem@yahoo.com)

# Unveiling of the plaque for Hannah Snell

On Monday 21st May 2018, the Civic Society unveiled a plaque to Hannah Snell at 25 Friar Street, Worcester, the house where Hannah, who was known as “Britain's Famous Female Soldier”, was born on 23rd April 1723.

The plaque was sponsored by the Ladies Crown Probus Group following a talk given to them on the Civic Society.

During the research on Hannah, a booklet on her life was found written by Matthew Stephens, who is a research librarian based in Sydney, Australia. I contacted him to get permission to use some of the information, as a handout for the unveiling. In his reply he asked if I would like to contact Hannah's six times removed grand-daughter, Amanda Houston, who lives just outside Brighton.

She and her husband travelled up to Worcester and the photo shows Amanda unveiling the plaque.

The Ladies Probus Group then took Amanda and her husband to lunch.

The unveiling was attended by over fifty people. BBC Hereford & Worcester radio interviewed me on the day and it was broadcast, and it was also covered by the local newspapers.

**Phil Douce**



## MAYOR'S LECTURE

We were very lucky in April to have as our speaker, Lt. Col. Mark Jackson (retired) who served in the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regiment from 1971 to 2006. Subsequently, as well as being Chief Executive of St Richard's Hospice for 11 years, he also became chairman of the trustees of the Mercian Regimental Museum based here in Worcester, with its fine tradition of commemorating the deeds and actions of the original Worcestershire Regiment and its successors from its origins through to the present day.

Mark gave us a colourful summary of the long history of the local regiment of Worcester from the eighteenth century, via the First and Second World Wars up to the commitments of the present day, with the sad reflection that there are still so many conflicts in the world where British soldiers are putting their lives at risk.

The rich history of the army based in our City with its long association with the people of the City and the County is worth a long article in its own right. We hope that those attending Mark's lecture have been inspired to visit the regimental museum and to carry out some of their own research.

**David Saunders**

# FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

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

If you have ever visited Upton-upon-Severn, you might have stopped to admire the statue in the gardens near the Pepperpot. It is a bust of Admiral William Tennant, Upton's most famous son. Born near Bridgnorth in 1890, he joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman at the age of 15. He qualified as a navigator in 1913 and served in that capacity throughout World War I, seeing action in the battles of Heligoland Bight, Dogger Bank, Gallipoli and Jutland.

For the next few years he held various positions on a number of ships, travelling with members of the Royal Family on tours to India, Ceylon, Japan, Africa and South America, for which he was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order. He also served on the staff of the Royal Naval College and the Imperial Defence College, and was promoted to Captain in 1932.

On the outbreak of World War II, he became Chief Staff Officer and Personal Assistant to the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound. In May 1940, Pound put Tennant in charge of the evacuation of stranded British and allied soldiers from the beach at Dunkirk. As Beachmaster, it was Tennant who issued a request to Dover for 'every available craft' to assist in removing the men from the beach and transporting them to the ships offshore. This resulted in the famous rescue by more than 600 'little ships'. For his part in this action, Tennant was appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath and received the Legion d'Honneur.

He served as captain of HMS Repulse, taking part in battles against the German battleships

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, and later in the hunt for the battleship Bismarck. He was still with Repulse when she was sunk by the Japanese on 10 December 1941, three days after Pearl Harbor. In June 1944, Tennant was placed in charge of the naval side of the transport, assembly and setup of the two Mulberry harbours that provided port facilities for the invasion of Normandy.

In August, he supervised the laying of the Pluto pipelines between France and England, which provided fuel supplies for the ongoing conflict. For his efforts in the success of the Normandy invasion, Tennant was given a CBE and also received the United States Legion of Merit. He was promoted to vice-admiral in 1945, and knighted in December 1945 for his war service. Appointed commander of the America and West Indies Station in 1946, he was promoted to admiral in 1948, and remained in that role until he retired in August 1949. Retirement was a busy time for Tennant. In addition to serving as Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire from 1950 until his



Admiral William Tennant

death, he was also the county's chief magistrate, chairman of King George's Fund for Sailors, president of the Worcestershire branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Honorary Colonel of the Queen's Own Worcestershire

Hussars, founded Worcestershire Outward Bound Association, and served on many committees, especially those connected with education and children. He loved children, although his extremely happy marriage had produced none of his own.

The Freedom of the City ceremony took place at the Guildhall on 23 April 1958, in front of 400 invited guests. According to a report in the Worcester Evening News, as per the usual format of the proceedings, the presentation was made by the Mayor of Worcester, who stated that the reason for the award was 'in recognition of his outstanding service to the country in peace and war'. In his presentation speech the Mayor described the Admiral as 'so approachable, so modest and yet so efficient'. The First Sea Lord, Earl Mountbatten, sent a message: 'We are thrilled. None deserved it better. The whole Navy will be delighted.' In his acceptance speech Sir William, always rather shy and modest, said 'I know I do not deserve it one-tenth as much as dozens of others I can think of'. He accepted it 'as a token for the Royal Navy' particularly the Repulse's company, those who took part in Dunkirk, and all others he had served with.

He was presented with a Royal Worcester Porcelain bowl hand-painted with a picture of the Cathedral on one side and his personal coat of arms on the reverse. The bowl was the same shape as the one that was presented to Sir Winston Churchill at his Freedom ceremony in 1950. It was designed and gilded by Ivor Williams and painted by Harry Davis, two of the best artists to have ever worked at the porcelain factory. Co-incidentally, in 1952, Sir William, in his capacity as Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, had presented to Harry Davis the British Empire Medal, awarded for his services to the porcelain industry.



Designs for the Tennant presentation bowl. By kind permission of the Museum of Royal Worcester.

The bowl stood on an ebony plinth containing a drawer which held the Deed of Freedom, mounted in maroon Morocco covers. On the front was Admiral's Tennant's monogram and his admiral's insignia. The Mayoress then presented to Lady Tennant a case of gloves for herself and one for Sir William, which had been made by the glovers of Worcester. The usual celebration lunch followed.

Admiral Sir William Tennant died in Worcester Royal Infirmary on 27 July 1963 and was buried in Queenhill churchyard, south of Upton. More than twenty years later, some citizens of Upton decided that their most famous son was insufficiently memorialized, and a committee was formed to raise funds for a permanent memorial.

On 4 April 1987, the memorial bust, sculpted by Leslie Punter, was unveiled in the Old Churchyard in Upton, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach performing the honours. The remainder of the money from the memorial appeal was given to Outward Bound to establish the Admiral Sir William Tennant Memorial Trust to provide bursaries for young people in Upton – something of which Sir William undoubtedly would have approved.

Anyone who wishes to know more about this very distinguished naval officer would do well to read a most informative biographical booklet by Roger Corbet-Milward, which is available in the Local Studies section at the Hive.

**Cathy Broad**

# CIVIC SOCIETY MEETING WITH CITY COUNCIL

Members of the Civic Society met with Andrew Round and Philippa Smith on 30th September, as part of our regular meetings.

The agenda had a number of items that we wished to discuss.

## **1. City Master Plan**

We saw a draft copy of the plan which is due to be made public on 9th October. It consisted of a number of reports covering all aspects of the changes envisaged for the City. It followed consultations that took place at the beginning of the year. Whilst it is a very comprehensive piece of work, and follows at least four previous plans, one has to ask who is going to fund it all?

## **2. Role of the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) previously Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)**

The role of this body, which meets monthly, was discussed and the Society suggested that the process needed to be made more transparent. All planning applications for work on listed buildings and/or Conservation Areas should be passed to the panel for review. If the panel makes suggestions or comments about an application, then those remarks should be passed to the planning committee, which, in most cases, happens. However, if the planning officer disagrees with CAP's comments, he should have to justify those objections at the committee stage. It was agreed that this would be looked at.

## **3. Worcester Heritage Plan**

We asked why Worcester did not have a Heritage Plan. It was mentioned that the society had, over a period of three years, tried to work with the City's Heritage Officer to have one, but with no success. The council said that it was on the agenda and that one would be started before the end of the year.

## **4. Tree preservation and policy**

We discussed the council's policy on tree preservation. Instances were given of council workers turning up unannounced to cut down trees and an instance when a letter was found telling a developer not to worry about a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) on a tree that would stop access to a particular site, as they would put the notice on another tree. The council agreed to review the current policy.

## **5. Planning Statistics**

Philippa provided details of the current planning department levels and said that they were still trying to recruit more staff. She said she was hopeful that new staff would be recruited very soon. She provided statistics of the outstanding planning applications, which showed that although there were close to two hundred, things were improving.

## **6. Old Co-op building in St Nicholas Street**

We had discussions as to whether this building should be refurbished or demolished. Many options were discussed but the council confirmed that any option would be investigated.

## **7. Future of Queen Elizabeth House**

As most of you know this is currently being used as a storage facility for costumes for the Swan Theatre and an office for Chris Jaeger. The society pointed out that this is an historic building and should be open to Worcester residents and visitors to see. It was accepted that money would need to be spent on getting the building to the point where access was possible. However, at present the council seem to be more interested in getting an income from the building, than giving access to the public. We need far more pressure from the public if we are going to succeed in getting this building open.

**Phil Douce**  
Chairman

# RAF MUSEUM

Dennis Williams came to St Peter's Baptist church on May 17 to lecture the Society on the history of the Royal Air Force in Croome. Dennis has been heavily involved in the creation of the splendid RAF museum at Croome and is currently the museum's curator.

In this, the 100 year anniversary of the creation of the Royal Air Force, it was particularly apt to learn of the very important contribution to the war effort which was made at Croome and the associated facilities in Malvern.



The base was a large facility, mostly now gone, which initially was a Bomber Command Operational Training Unit before it became dedicated to the development of radar systems for the bombing war and the introduction of navigational and ground mapping radar fitted into the Lancasters, Halifaxes and Mosquitoes of Bomber Command.

It was during the development of radar systems that Bernard Lovell discovered that annoying interference on the screens was exploding stars and galaxies and not the Luftwaffe. Bernard Lovell, of course, went on to found the Jodrell Bank Observatory in Knutsford near Manchester.

Dennis's lecture was full of fascinating detail and superbly illustrated. If you haven't been to the RAF museum at Croome make sure that you visit it soon.

**David Saunders**

## THE PROFESSOR MICHAEL CLARKE AWARD

Last year, following a project to save 250 bound copies of Berrow's Worcester Journal, that were stored in a warehouse in Hartlebury and were about to be destroyed, we finally found a home for them in the library at the Worcester Sixth Form College. As a thanks to the college, the Civic Society decided to make an annual award for the best extended project by one of its students.

At the same time, our long-standing President, Professor Michael Clarke, announced he would be standing down.

It was decided to call the award, The Professor Michael Clarke Award.

Following discussions with Matt Hall at the college, the award for 2018 was made to Charlotte Coby for her dissertation called "Can local elections predict the results of a General Election?". Charlotte was awarded an A\* for her work.

The picture shows Chairman Phil Douce presenting the trophy, with the Principal Michael Kitkatt and Matt Hall.



**Phil Douce**

# Civic Society Visit To Huddington Court

Monday 11th June 2018

On Monday 11th June, 16 members of the Civic Society, with friends, visited Huddington Court in Worcestershire. Huddington Court is the home of one of our members, William Edmondson, whose father and grandfather acted as our hosts.

Huddington Court is a 15th century, Grade 1 listed, moated manor house in the village of Huddington, and was described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as “the most picturesque house in Worcestershire”. It was the home of the Wintour family, of which the Gunpowder Plot conspirators Robert, Thomas and John Wintour are the most notorious.

Our party was split into two groups and spent two hours touring the house and gardens. The estate is over one thousand acres in size and a survey of 1650 suggests that the house was once much larger.

On the tour of the house there were many signs of parts of the old house that had been used in the modern version. The attic in the east bay was used as a chapel and in the main bedroom, etched into the glass in the window, are the words “past cark, past care” reputedly carved by Lady Wintour with her diamond ring while her husband hid in the woods around the house before his capture. However, this is untrue, and is in fact by a priest by the name of William Clerke, who was hiding there in the summer of 1603 following his implication in the Bye plot.

The house has two priest holes, one behind an oak panel in what was the chapel, where mass was said by a resident priest. The other hiding hole is in the room opposite and is a door made to look like part of the wall leading into a quite sizable room that was discovered only in the 1920s.

It is a pity so few members attended this visit, as they missed a treat, and we are very grateful to the Edmondson family for allowing us access to their home and this fascinating glimpse into the past.

**Phil Douce**



# Powick Bridge in the English Civil War

*"Worcester, where England's troubles began and are happily ended" ... so declaimed Hugh Peters, Chaplain to the Parliamentary Armed Forces. Of course, he was referring to the initial skirmish near Powick Bridge (23 September 1642), which incidentally lasted only about twenty minutes, with Prince Rupert very much the victor, and the final battle of the so-called English Civil War in and around Worcester (3 September 1651) when Oliver Cromwell led the Parliamentary Forces to an overwhelming victory against a largely Scottish army led by Prince Charles (later Charles II) and the Duke of Hamilton; this lasted several hours.*

The skirmish at Powick Bridge, for it was nothing more, was an attempt by some junior Parliamentary Officers to intercept the royalist baggage train which was carrying silver obtained from the Oxford colleges in the hope of getting it to King Charles I who was by then based in Shrewsbury. They, the Parliamentary Officers, bungled the attempt and the silver was safely delivered to Charles so that he was able to pay his soldiers. Exactly one month later, the two armies mustered near Edgehill at Kineton Edge and the first major battle of the Civil War took place with neither side achieving victory.

What Powick Bridge, at the start of the war, showed was (a) the importance of good prior reconnaissance and intelligence, and (b) the power of a decisive cavalry charge as demonstrated by that most dashing of cavalry leaders, Prince Rupert ... and in this instance, the cavalry didn't dash off and seek glory elsewhere as happened in later battles of the Civil War, but were disciplined in that, having achieved their goal, they retired to fight another day.

The Battle of Worcester eight years later was another matter, with Cromwell in charge. He put in place a brilliant strategy of building a bridge of boats across the Severn in order to move half his army across the river round to the west side of the city, thus pinching the Royalists who were then defeated for the final time.

*Howard Robinson*



# Worcester Civic Society Planning Panel Report: Autumn 2018

Since my Spring Newsletter Report, it has been a summer of anticipation for the arrival of key planning documents which will have an impact on the city's future development. By the time you read this the new **City Centre Masterplan** will hopefully be out for public consultation (due to start on 9<sup>th</sup> October for a month). We understand that the draft masterplan will be able to be viewed online, using social media as well as via a free-standing exhibition. The council will be holding an event to launch the consultation and will also be promoting it through the press and on their website. This is a key document that will inform future development in the city centre and the development of the Worcester City Centre Transport Strategy promised in Local Transport Plan 4. So do look to make your views known during the consultation – the Planning Panel will look to make a response on behalf of the Society. The masterplan is due for adoption in early 2019.

The process reviewing the **South Worcester Development Plan (SWDP)** continues. Over the summer there has been a call out for new sites for development. Sites suggested will be assessed for their suitability for development and a preferred option document will be out for consultation around November 2019. We will be asking the City officers whether any further sites within Worcester have been proposed for consideration (we are mindful that there were sites that developers favoured that were not in the current SWDP, such as Middle Battenhall Farm, which need protection). Currently there is a consultation on the methodology to be used if a development boundary review is deemed necessary. The issue of development boundaries is mainly one for villages in South Worcestershire, but it is important that we check whether there are any implications for the city and its development boundaries, which in the current SWDP definition include the urban extensions. It is the view of the Panel that if the urban extensions are considered in Worcester's development boundary then surely the City should lead on development here rather than the districts. It is important that these development schemes integrate with and enhance the city rather than being bland suburban dormitory areas.

**News from the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP)** – there continues to be pressure for residential development in the city centre. Whilst conversion of redundant space over shops for housing is broadly welcome some proposed schemes represent overdevelopment and a detriment to the character of listed buildings and conservation areas. Two recent proposals that CAP have objected to are:

- **Land adjacent to 18-20 Silver Street** (corner of Lowesmoor) – a large HMO block with commercial space on the ground floor. The proposed building is too big and does not respect neighbouring buildings or the conservation area character of Lowesmoor. We hope that the developers can be persuaded to develop a better scheme for this important site that better respects the area.
- **38 Foregate Street (Citation House)** – a scheme for conversion to 38 dwellings. This again represents too dense a development with extra floors added to the already overbearing and ugly rear extension which dwarfs the listed building to Foregate Street and which has no provision for affordable housing. Historic England and the city conservation officer have also voiced concerns about the scheme. We want to see the building reused but with a much more sympathetic scheme that provides some affordable housing. That this scheme was approved by the City Council at its August Planning Committee is regrettable and undermines policies which seek to protect our city's historic assets and, those which seek to provide desperately needed affordable homes.

Finally, we are also monitoring the progress of proposals for the old Swimming Pool site on Sansome Walk. No planning application has been submitted yet, but we will keep checking the CAP agenda to see when an application comes in – this is a key site for development that must be handled sensitively and look to enhance this area.

**Heather Barrett**  
Chair, Planning Panel



# A RICH NEWSPAPER RESOURCE

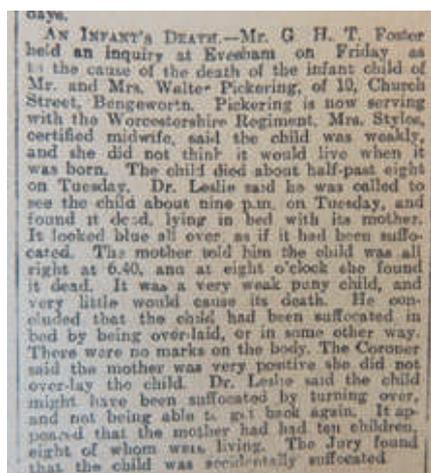
Newspapers are a rich source of information for anyone researching family or social history. They often reveal interesting stories, notices and advertisements that one can find in no other sources, providing us with a glimpse of the daily life of our ancestors. In Worcestershire as in other counties throughout the UK, a variety of local newspapers were published over the centuries, some of which are still in publication today. *Berrow's Worcester Journal* is one such newspaper, with its claim to be the oldest newspaper in the country. Until recently one needed to go to The Hive to read the surviving digitised copies on microfilm.

However, several years ago, Worcester Civic Society saved over 200 large bound volumes of *Berrow's Worcester Journal* from being destroyed. Stored safely for two years, they were deposited at Worcester Sixth Form College in Spetchley Road, Worcester, where they are now stored under archival conditions and looked after by the college librarian. The newspapers are bound by year and date from around 1800 up until 1945, although some years are missing and many are in a fragile condition due to their age. However, all volumes are available for the public to view and photograph free of charge. The only requirement is the need to ring Worcester Sixth Form College and arrange with the librarian a suitable day and time to access the newspapers.

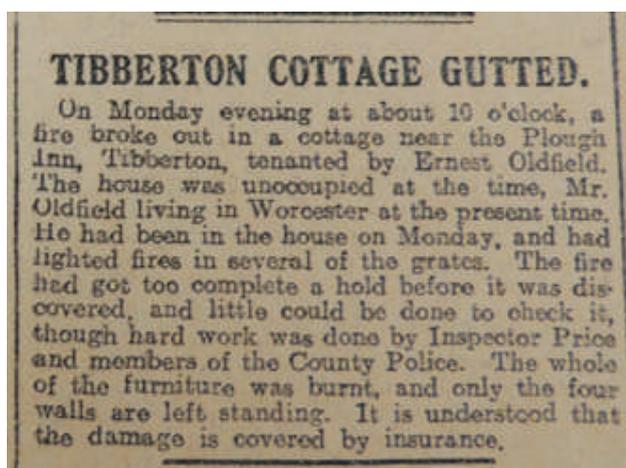
As many researchers can testify, once one starts looking through old newspapers, it is very easy to be side tracked by many of the stories that bear no relation to what one is actually researching! Alongside reports on elections, royalty, national government, local cricket matches and fetes, one can read news items relating to murder, criminal activity, coroners' inquests, funerals and weddings where they list the names of all who attended, court proceedings giving sentences that included among other punishments, whipping, jail sentences and transportation, and many other interesting and informative stories, not all of which are of a serious nature. For example, one can find a short piece on a shop keeper who, whilst delivering some goods to a customer, left his horse and cart beside the river. The grass proved too tempting to the untethered horse who wandered nearer and nearer to the water before eventually falling in, taking the cart with him! Or there is the short report from Worcester County Police Court at Hallow of the two drunken labourers, Walter Hankins and Ralph Weaver of Wichenford, who pleaded guilty to a charge of being drunk in charge of a horse and cart. They were fined 7s 6d and costs each, or 10 days hard labour. They decided to pay the money!

With numerous stories to read, you are sure to find something of interest whether it be social history relating to workhouse, orphanages, court proceedings, suffragettes and more, or items relating to family history such as funerals, in memoriam columns and in times of war, casualty lists, awards for bravery, VAD hospitals and large battles such as Gallipoli, Ypres and the Somme. With such a wonderful resource freely available, all you need are a spare few hours in which to lose yourself in the world of our ancestors and their daily lives.

Sandra Taylor



Berrow's Worcester Journal 3 Apr. 1915



Berrow's Worcester Journal 16 Mar. 1915



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