

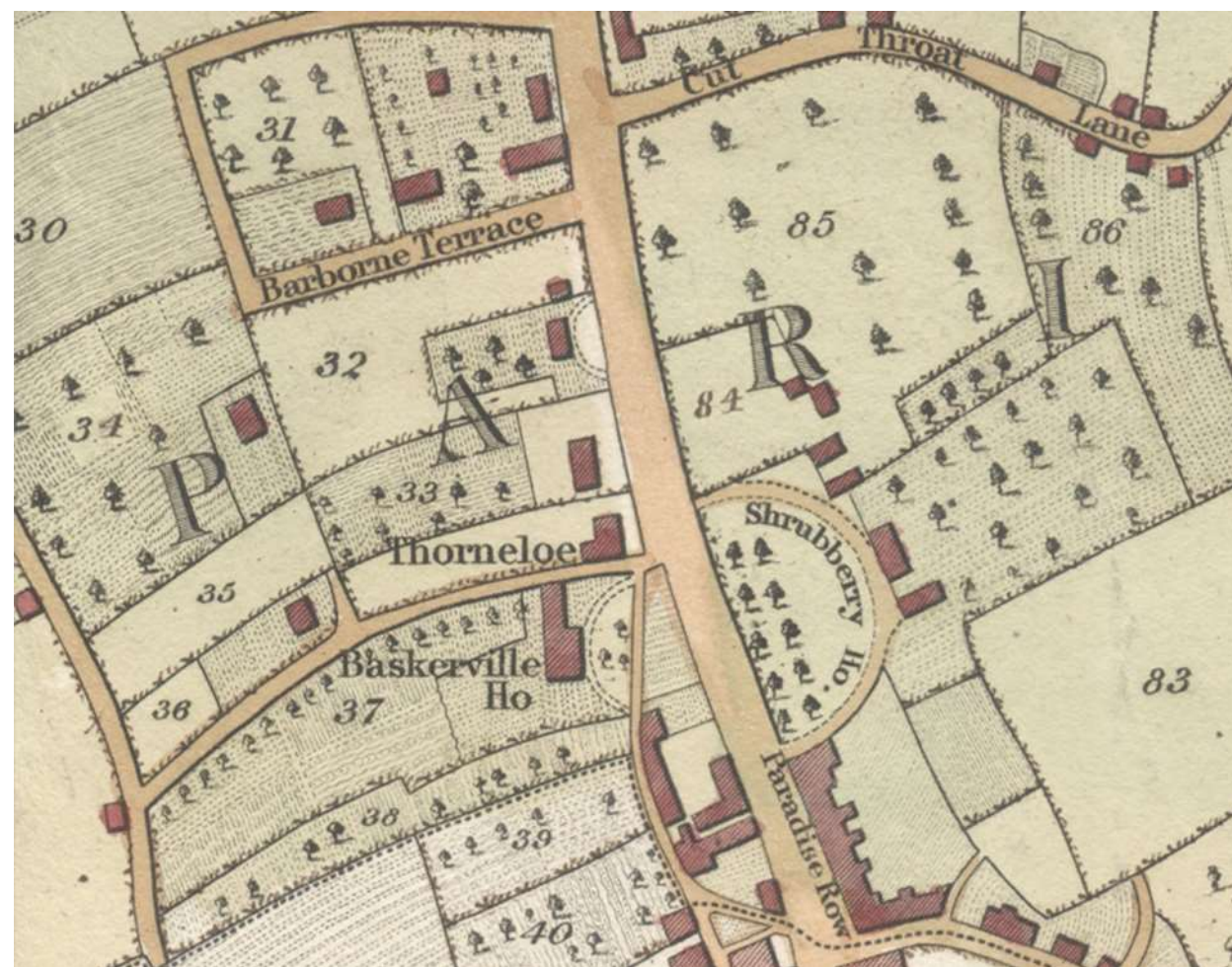


NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025

Issue No.105

A Georgian House Through the Centuries



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Old Baskerville House, Barbourne

Images: Front of Old Baskerville House; 1822 (Mainley) map indicating Baskerville House; & Old Baskerville House in the Baskerville font

Spotlight: Old Baskerville: A Chronicle of its Inhabitants

by Carl Jukes, Conservation Consultant

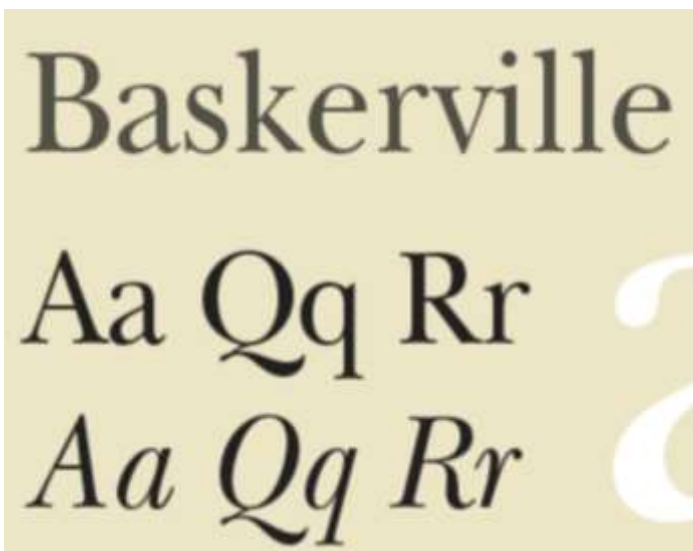
Old Baskerville House - its Namesake

Old Baskerville, Brewery Walk, Barbourne draws its name from John Baskerville, the celebrated printer and creator of the Baskerville font. Renowned for his innovations in printing, Baskerville also excelled in the crafts of japanning (a finish that imitates East Asian lacquer work) and papier-mâché.

"Old" Baskerville House is so called to distinguish it from New Baskerville House—a boarding establishment built in the late 19th Century for Alice Ottley School across the road in Shrubbery Avenue.

C18th: William Smart – Printer

Old Baskerville was built between 1770 and 1780 and was originally set within 4 acres of grounds. The house is thought to



Example of the Baskerville Font. Source Wikimedia Commons

have been commissioned by William Smart, a skilled bookbinder, bookseller, printer, and stationer. Apprenticed in Shrewsbury, Smart later moved to Worcester, where he operated a shop at No. 88 High Street (between the Guildhall and Tesco) from at least 1774.

Smart named the house after his “hero,” John Baskerville. Following Baskerville’s death in 1775, Smart paid his widow £100 (approximately £23,000 today) for the remainder of Baskerville’s printing equipment and book stock. In 1778, William Smart married Damaris Huxley at St. Martin’s Church. Although Smart was clearly a man of means, the origins of his wealth remain unclear. He died in Pershore in 1818 aged 81.

C19th: John Richards - Merchant & Politician

John Richards, a hop merchant from Hagley, became the next resident. He served as Member of Parliament for Knaresborough, Yorkshire, from 1832 to 1837. Richards was also High Sheriff of Worcester.

According to his 1847 obituary, Richards amassed considerable wealth as a hop merchant with operations in both Worcester and Southwark.

Richards' eldest son, Alfred Bate Richards, was born at Old Baskerville on 17th February 1820. After studying law, Alfred soon turned to writing and married the artist Emma Camilla Angela Maria Gaggiotti in 1849. Maria’s father, Camillo Gaggiotti, was the Minister of War in Rome.

Alfred Bate Richards published works include: the five-act tragedy ‘Cræsus, King of Lydia’; ‘Cromwell’ (1847); ‘and ‘Vandyck, a Play of Genoa’ (1850) in addition to poetry. Later, he edited the British Army Despatch and played a pivotal role in founding the Royal Voluntary Rifle Corps. Notably, he was the first editor of the Daily Telegraph, serving from June to December 1855.

Harriet Belson: Educator & Proprietor

From at least 1830, the next proprietor was teacher Miss Harriet Belson who ran a boarding school. By 1841, the house had 34 residents: 24 female pupils aged 10 to 17; Miss Belson herself; 2 relatives; 2 other individuals of independent means; 2 teachers; and 5 servants. The property was let by John Richards at an annual rent of £140. In 1843, Miss Belson left Old Baskerville.



Emma Camilla Angela Maria Gaggiotti. Self-portrait 1853 ©Royal Collection Trust

The boarding school continued under the new ownership of the Misses Collisson. In March 1860, the Collissons put the house and its contents—including furniture, pianofortes, and paintings up for sale.



No 88 High Street, William Smart's former shop

Spotlight: Old Baskerville House: A Chronicle of its Inhabitants cont/...

C19th: Jasper Taylor Hall - Soldier, Plantation & Slave Owner

Jasper Taylor Hall was born in Jamaica in June 1797, son of Jasper Hall. His father owned Hector's River Estate, St Thomas-in-the-East, Surrey in Jamaica. The estate produced sugar and rum. Records indicate that Jasper Taylor Hall owned at least 380 slaves (most likely inherited from his father). Jasper Taylor Hall joined the Coldstream Guards in June 1815, becoming Lieutenant in 1819, rising to Captain and Major in subsequent years.

Hall's stay at Old Baskerville was brief. The Misses Collisson advertised the house for sale in 1860, and Hall died a week after the 1861 Census was completed.



Rear of Old Baskerville House with scrolled-heart design balconettes

1861–1884 – a Variety of Occupiers

Following Hall's death, the house was most likely let over the subsequent twelve years. Unfortunately, little documentation survives from this period. The 1871 census draws a blank, and no relevant newspaper records have been found.

From 1873, there follows a quick turnover of occupants over the next ten years. These range from: solicitors (Alfred Catchmayd Hooper); members of the clergy such as Rev. Pilkington; and a public analyst, Horace Swete MD, FGS, FCS.

During the 1890s, ladies and gentlemen of independent means lived in the house, and the property was simply known as Baskerville.

In 1884, the former Worcester Brewery owned by the Stallard family was acquired by the Spreckley family - the brewery being adjacent to Baskerville House. From about 1900, Herbert William, one of the two Spreckley brothers bought Old Baskerville House.

20th Century and Beyond

From 1908 to 1940, there is only one potential notable inhabitant - Cedric Fiddian. An internet search reveals only one such name - Cedric Moulton Fiddian, a former Latin and Classics lecturer at Cambridge University. The most likely reason he was living at the property was that he was teaching the same subjects at the Royal Grammar School Worcester.

Claire and Terry Wardle's book 'History of Barbourne' states that from "1889 it was owned by the "Six Masters" governing body of the Royal Grammar School and in that year was rented by Mr Jerram who kept twenty boarders there.....".

Old Baskerville was sold in 1965. It was possibly at one time the home of the Chairman of GUS catalogues and shopping empire, Sir Isaac Wolfson.

Since its beginnings in the 18th Century, Old Baskerville has had later additions and alterations including conversion into flats in 1975. The house was sold in 2016 and following this acquisition the flats were subsequently refurbished.



Entrance hall: open-well staircase with winders, wretched handrail, square baluster & modillion plaster cornice



Old Baskerville House – Ionic-style front porch with swags to frieze

Planning Watch

Introduction

And so, the summer is over. The kids are back in school, Parliament's back in session, and yes—planning is back too. But while the sun was shining and the ice creams were melting, the planning world didn't stop entirely. Here's what's been happening while you were busy pretending to enjoy your staycation...

More Outdoor Advertisements

Because nothing says “vibrant urban realm” like a six-metre LED billboard flashing payday loan ads at unsuspecting pedestrians. Fortunately, the proposed 3m x 6m digital billboard at Silver Street was refused, as it was assessed to cause harm to the visual quality of the conservation area. We welcome this decision.



Silver Street, Lowesmoor. Source: Replyshort Ltd

The Arches & Student Accommodation

If you thought we'd reached peak student housing, think again. One of the latest schemes proposes a 3-storey building in 'The Arches' passage. This is largely a resubmission of a previously withdrawn scheme that was of poor design.

Unfortunately, this new one isn't much better. What they've proposed is a lot of grey and an external bin store... because nothing screams 'Welcome to Worcester' more than a series of overflowing bins. Fortunately, this application has been withdrawn.



Existing modern extension – the proposals would extend to the right. Source: Masefields

Roller Shutters

Ah, roller shutters. The architectural equivalent of saying “we've given up.” The debate rages on - are they a necessary security measure or just a way to make every high street look like a post-apocalyptic film set?

Back in 2016, 18-20 Silver Street had a positive makeover with sash windows and a unified black shopfront design. This all changed when the site was sold off. We are now left with a Mini Mart and a Hot Food Takeaway, with only the dog grooming parlour vaguely following the coherent design. The Mini Mart installed an external roller shutter this summer.

As we always say, security should be considered at the design stage, using the 'Secured by Design' approach. Security should, as far as possible, be integral to the shopfront, avoiding a 'tacked on' effect. We have raised an enforcement complaint and await action.

Article written by Chris Evans, Planning Panel, Worcester Civic Society



The definition of a 'tacked-on' security approach!



Silver Street. Source: Google Street View 2017



Silver Street. Source: Google Street View 2015

The Planning Panel, led by Dr Heather Barrett (Chair), examines and comments on key strategic policy documents affecting Worcester's development. It also considers individual major developments and smaller developments affecting listed buildings and conservation areas in the city through its engagement with the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP).

Powick Old Bridge Update

In early August, representatives from Worcester Civic Society (WCS), The Battle of Worcester, and MP for Worcester Tom Collins met Worcestershire County Council at Powick Old Bridge to discuss its safeguarding and restoration. This bridge is a Scheduled Monument due to it being a multi-span medieval bridge and for its historic role in the English Civil War.

This visit allowed our President David Birtwhistle, Conservation Consultant Carl Jukes as and Tom Collins MP to discuss restoration challenges and their related concerns. We are also in regular contact with Historic England (HE) over the restoration plans. We are keen to continue to work in a collaborative manner with



Councillor Alan Amos, Worcestershire County Council (WCS)

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as well as being grateful to Worcester MP Tom Collins for supporting our campaign.

Cllr Alan Amos has helped in facilitating communications with Worcestershire County Council officers and is committed to the bridge's restoration:

"I'm determined to see the bridge reopened as soon as possible and I am in regular contact with the County Council's Highways Department. I shall continue to fight extremely hard to get the funding needed to get the work done. Then, we will be looking at how we can enhance and commemorate Powick Old Bridge and the area as a tourist attraction, involving and working with a range of local groups, organisations and individuals. I want to harness the experience and ideas of everybody with a love for our history and this bridge."

The design and plans for the restoration of Powick Old Bridge when completed will be submitted to Historic England in compliance with Scheduled Monument requirements. Historic England reviews these submissions and provides recommendations to the Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media & Sports - who makes the final decision. Historic

England grants consent to the applicant on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Worcester Civic Society still has concerns over the long-term flood/debris mitigation plans as well as planned and proactive bridge maintenance. However, work commenced at the end of this September to clear years of plant growth (including trees) within the structure of the bridge and abutting it.

Tom Collins, MP for Worcester, stated:

"Powick Old Bridge is a key part of our history and it's important that we preserve it. We need to look at the bigger picture, not only repairing the bridge but also protecting it against future damage as the river changes. I'm hoping to bring a wider group together to secure this vital work".



Left to right: David Birtwhistle (WCS), Tom Collins MP, Phil Douce (WCS), Carl Jukes (WCS), Guy Little (Battle of Worcester Society), Michele Jones (Worcestershire County Council) and Dee Bruce (WCS)

Worcester Civic Society Visit to Diglis Island

On the 24th July, members of the Worcester Civic Society had a very interesting visit of Diglis Island as well as the opportunity to go inside the viewing chambers of the Diglis Fish Pass.

The locks and weir at Diglis were completed in 1844 under the direction of the Worcester engineer, E. Leader Williams based on a design by William Cubitt. They were created along with similar constructions at Bevere, Holt and Lincomb upstream to maintain navigable water-levels regardless of season. The overall objective being to increase the consistency of trade along the mid-section of the River Severn and their construction, plus regular dredging, enabled ships of four feet draught to reach Worcester.

The workshops and lock cottages on Diglis Island were built as part of the engineering works. The cottage was initially the centre for managing the engineering works and then became the lock-keeper's cottage. Five generations of the Bradley family performed the lock-keeper role until the 1980s. These cottages are now 3 houses, built in a Domestic Tudor style with painted brick with gabled Welsh slate roof.

Between 1844 and the 1990s, canal and river lock gates were constructed on the island with the Victorian workshops used for this purpose. The workshops were from both hand-cut and mechanically made bricks — likely sourced from one of the brickworks in Diglis. All workshops are of red brick in English bond with blue brick sills and feature cast-iron lattice windows.

Windows in the northern part of the workshop retain red and blue glass, indicating this section was a chapel or 'Bethel'. The buildings also include a blacksmiths forge, a store and paint shop.

A key focal point is a Scotch Derrick crane built by Butters Brothers in Glasgow in the 1890s. Originally used at Cardiff docks, it was moved to Diglis Island in the 1950s to handle large timbers and lock gates for river barges. The workshops and the crane were recently renovated by the Unlocking the Severn project.

Article written by Caroline Attwood-Reusser, Canal & River Trust

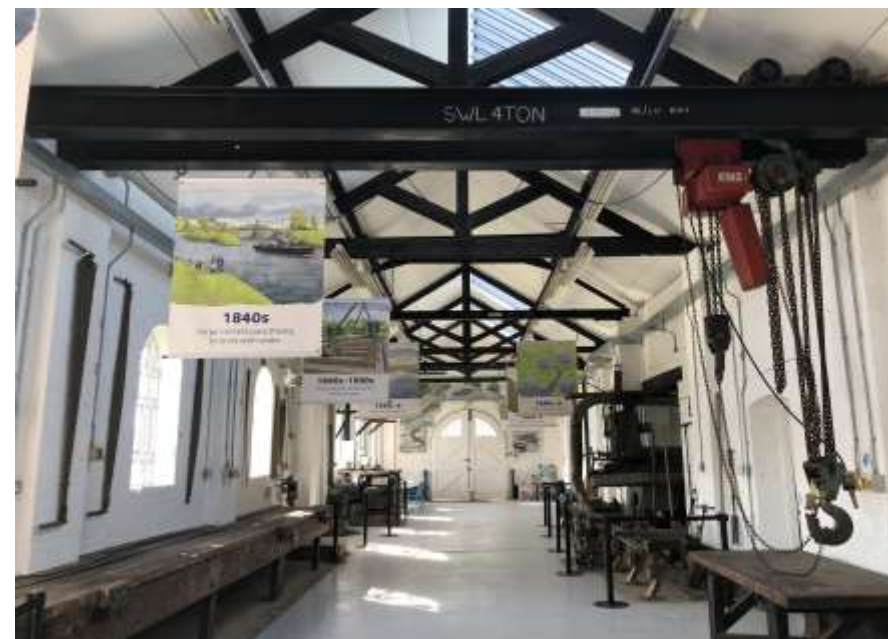


Workshops and restored crane

There are other opportunities to visit the island. See link for available tours.
<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/museums-and-attractions/diglis-island-and-fish-pass>



Members of the Worcester Civic Society on Diglis Island



Inside one of the Victorian workshops



Aerial photo of Diglis Island:

Spotlighting Worcester's English Civil War History

Worcester has taken on a bold new look as a major public art project commemorating the English Civil War reaches its first milestone. A set of fifteen hand-painted 'trial run' historical banners are now proudly displayed along Copenhagen Street, celebrating Worcester's pivotal role in the conflict between 1642 and 1651.

Worcester is the first city in the country to instigate such a "Living History" project, bringing together art, education and public history in a unique and engaging way.

The Worcester Civil War Banners Project, led by The Battle of Worcester Society in

collaboration with local schools and colleges, has transformed part of the city centre into a living tribute to its Civil War legacy.

Each banner was a meticulously researched reproduction of regimental colours used during the war. These were created by students from Worcester Sixth Form College, Royal Grammar School Worcester, and Heart of Worcestershire College.

Commemorative Parade & Drumhead Service

To further mark Worcester's Civil War legacy, a commemorative parade and drumhead service, organised by the Sealed Knot and The Battle of Worcester Society took place on Saturday 23rd August.

This civic occasion offered a moment to reflect on those who lost their lives during the Civil Wars, and to experience Worcester's newly installed banners in their historical and ceremonial context.



Historical banners, Copenhagen Street



2025 © Lee Thomas www.leept.co.uk

Procession by 17th Century reenactors, 23rd August 2025 Copyright Lee Thomas



2025 © Lee Thomas www.leept.co.uk

Commemoration service led by the Dean of Worcester Cathedral, Stephen Edwards. Copyright Lee Thomas.

Programme of Events 2025

Date & Time	Event	Location
Thursday 30 th October 12.00 noon and 1.30pm (2 groups bookable separately)	Worcester Cathedral Library Tour – This medieval library and archive has existed since the late 7th century. It moved into its current location in the 1370's. It contains over 290 medieval manuscripts and these were mostly collected by the Benedictine monks of Worcester. The manuscripts that survive at Worcester include many university texts that the monks studied, as well as liturgical, medical, and legal manuscripts and some examples of Books of Hours. Perhaps the most famous of Worcester's manuscripts is the Worcester Antiphoner dating to 1230. Please note that due to the steep stairs, this visit is not suitable for those with limited mobility and heart conditions. Pre-booking is essential.	Worcester Cathedral College Yard Worcester WR1 2LA
Thursday 6 th November 7:00pm to 9:00pm Doors open at 6:30pm	Worcester Civic Society Annual General Meeting - After the AGM, Caroline Pearson from Worcester Past will be holding an informative Worcester quiz which will include interesting photos from Worcester's past. Worcester Past's Facebook page has lots of fascinating information on Worcester and has over 13,000 followers.	Swan Theatre, The Moors Worcester, WR1 3ED

Events & Talks Programme - 2026

Our Events Officer is working on a stimulating programme of events and talks for 2026 which we will confirm in our winter newsletter and following newsletters. This will include the Mayor's annual charity event and keynote speaker at the Guildhall; a Worcester Cathedral talk at the Bishop's Palace as well as other talks. We are also organising private tours including of: the Tudor House Museum (with tea and cake); the gardens & grounds of Worcester Cathedral & the Bishop's Palace; and of Madresfield Court & Gardens. In addition, we are planning an exciting re-launch of the Worcester Blue Plaques scheme. Lots to look out for in 2026!

Please see our website for more detail and event updates: www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk
If you have any ideas for future events, please email us on worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com with email subject matter of 'Events'

Ticket Source – helping to enable effective management of our events programme

As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance our event speakers, locations and attendance, we are now using a new free booking system, Ticket Source. This system is used by many other charities including Malvern Civic Society, This booking system is free to the Civic Society as well as to users. Please note we are only using this system to ascertain the numbers of attendees to an event to help us plan-ahead. You will never be asked for a payment via Ticket Source. <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/worcester-civic-society>

Mount Battenhall – Another of our recent visits



Contacts:

In August Worcester Civic Society organised two visits to Mount Battenhall. This large Italianate style suburban mansion of c. 1867 is Grade II*. The mansion has outstanding late-C19 interiors which has survived well and with their original fittings. Prior to being converted into a retirement village, Mount Battenhall was home to St Mary's Convent School.

Mount Battenhall is now a very attractive retirement village for the over 60s. It offers a range properties to buy or rent, both in the original building and in more recent modern apartments.



An inspirational space for refreshments!



Members of the Civic Society inside the chapel



The atmospheric bar

- President:** David Birtwhistle
Vice President & Hon. Treasurer: Stephen Inman
Chair: Phil Douce
Hon. Secretary: John Wickson
Membership Secretary: Dee Bruce
Chair of Planning Panel: Dr. Heather Barrett
Conservation Consultant: Carl Jukes
Events Officer: Lorraine Preece
Archivist: Chris Wilkinson
Newsletter Editor: Liz Demaison

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Website: www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk

Please contact Liz Demaison for comments, articles or ideas for inclusion in this quarterly newsletter to: worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com

2026 content deadlines:

Winter - 28th November

Spring - 1st March

Summer - 1st June

Autumn - 1st September

Worcester Civic Society is a registered charity (No. 505346) and is independent of political parties. Our members meet jointly with the City's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) and regularly meet with the City's Planning and Regeneration Officers. The Society is a member of the national body Civic Voice.