

Heritage weekend in Stourport basins

The weekend of 10th & 11th September was an entertaining weekend down at the basins although the weather on Saturday was dreadful.

The 300th birthday of James Brindley, who brought the canal to Stourport, was celebrated with the visit of a very effective actor who brought his work to life most vividly. He was joined by "John Fennyhouse-Green" who demonstrated 18th Century surveying, very actively portrayed by Geoff Shaw of Stourport Forward. Members of the public were shown around the Working Boat Bramble, something I would highly recommend, and there were activities for children.

There was also an extensive display of the Brindley Boats. These had been decorated by schools, clubs, charities and shops and visitors were invited to vote for their favourite, which received a prize.

In the evening, in the Tontine Gardens, the Mikron Theatre performed their play "Pure" about the development of a chocolate bar! The large crowd was thoroughly entertained by the great songs and humorous story, thankful that the rain finally stopped. It was a perfect spot for open air theatre.

Photos from the weekend are shown here and on the back cover. Members of Stourport Forward and the Civic Society took part and you may recognise some of them.

"James Brindley", "John Fennyhouse-Green", Civic Society member Annette with Barbara and Tonto the Pack Horse in the Tontine Gardens



STOURPORT CIVIC AWARD 2017



Entries are now invited for the 2017 Stourport Civic Award offered by the Civic Society. The Biennial Award is offered to encourage and recognise schemes which contribute to the quality and environment of Stourport.

In 2015, there were two winners of the Civic Award, The Wyre Forest Crematorium and The Working Boat, Bramble, and previous winners have included; the Church House in Areley Kings, the Windlass Cafe, the renovation to the Engine Lane canal bridge and the development of Moorhall Marsh.

The projects will again be judged by a panel of assessors, with the successful entry receiving a commemorative plaque. The award ceremony will take place at our AGM on Thursday, 11th May 2017 and an exhibition featuring the entries will again be on display afterwards in the library.

Our Chair Pauline Annis said “We feel it is important to encourage developments and conversions which are sympathetic to the local environment and improve and enhance the appearance of the town. At a time of increasing change in Stourport, the people of Stourport need to have some way in which to give public recognition to good design”

The closing date for entries, when all work must be completed, will be March 3rd 2017.

Nominations can be made by builders, owners or members of the general public who would like a scheme to be recognised. Any suggestions, from members, of possible entries would be most welcome, by phone or email as below.

Entry forms and further information can be obtained from David More on 01299 878718, or by email davidmore@btinternet.com



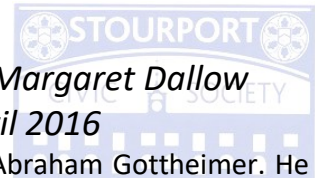
Moorhall Marsh,
a winner in 2010



Church House, a
winner in 2006



Wyre Forest Crematorium a
winner in 2015



The 'Crooked Member of Parliament for Kidderminster' *by Margaret Dallow* *April 2016*

Albert Grant was born on 18th November 1831 in Dublin, given the name Abraham Gottheimer. He also used the title Baron Grant, which had been conferred upon him by the King of Italy. Albert claimed to be a financier, and promoter of companies, making a vast fortune by playing upon the gullibility of people, as he floated companies which were not what they appeared!

Before he reached the age of 30 he had launched his first company. Several of these companies had tempting names, including Cadiz Water Works Company, and Central Uruguay Railway Company. However it was Emma Silver Mine which was to be the most convincing, shares were acquired for this venture for £20 each, resulting in £1M being invested in just one day. However, just a few months later the shares were only worth one shilling (5p) each. Much of his fortune was spent on legal actions taken against him. During his financial career he floated companies with a capital value of £24M, of which he lost £20M repaying to angry investors. At one time there were 89 legal actions pending against him. Albert's connection to Kidderminster came when first elected as the Conservative Member of Parliament for the borough of Kidderminster from 1865-8.

On 24th January 1874, Parliament was dissolved with the General Election fixed for the 31st January. Selecting an MP for Kidderminster was of prior importance, but the Conservatives had difficulty in choosing their candidate. Their first choice had been Mr O'Malley, but the Party Chairman, Alderman Jeffries objected on the grounds he disliked the man who was teetotal. Therefore it was decided to approach Albert, who following the end of the term in 1868 had indicated he would be prepared to represent the town if required. Having duly accepted the invitation Albert arrived in Kidderminster on the 29th January where he spent two days on a whirlwind campaign. Meanwhile the Liberal Party had selected a local man, Thomas Lea, born on 1841. He was a local carpet master, a well respected gentleman, who had previously represented the town as its MP from 1868-74. During 1864 Thomas had commissioned the building of the iconic Slingfield Mill which subsequently became part of Brintons Carpets. Voting took place on 31st January, the result in favour of Albert, winning by 111 votes against Thomas. However, two separate allegations against him on the grounds of bribery and corruption, resulted in a petition calling for the results to be declared null and void.

A case was brought against Albert, who was called upon to appear before Judge Mellor, at the High Court of Justice, held at the Music Hall in Vicar Street, later forming part of the Town Hall. The hearing took place on the 7th July 1874 and lasted nine days. On the 16th July the judge having found the petitioners' allegations proven, declared the election null and void, the evidence being he had bought the Music Hall by bribery and presenting these premises to the Borough of Kidderminster.

Despite Albert being revealed as a crook and unsavoury character, he did, however, legally purchase Leicester Square Gardens in London which he improved engaging James Knowle as its designer. He also restored the marble statue of William Shakespeare, by Giovanni Fontana, the centrepiece of the gardens, and the only truly outside sculpture of the Bard. The sculpture was a copy of the original marble figure by Peter Scheemakers which stands at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. The statue in the gardens is inscribed as follows - *"The enclosure was purchased, laid out and decorated as a garden by Albert Grant Esq. MP, conveyed by him on the 2nd July 1817 to the Metropolitan Board of Works, to be preserved forever for the free use and enjoyment of the public"*. The statue was recently restored during 2014.

It was probably Albert's public humiliation that led to his bankruptcy in 1875 with debts of £2M. He died disgraced and penniless in 1899.

Stourport Eyesores

by Pauline Annis

In this, the year of our biennial Civic Award, I think it is time to draw attention to some of Stourport's "Eyesores" to see if we can get something done about them.

There are some obvious ones: the upper floors of some of the shops in Bridge Street; the ever-expanding funfair; the remaining "protected" buildings on the former Carpets of Worth site, near Tesco's and the former caravan sales site on Vale Road.

We are asking you, our members, to draw our notice to any more "eyesores" which need action. Once we have a list, we will produce photographs and ask the Town and District Council for comments and action.

Speculative Developers Target Stourport

by Pauline Annis

Having their plans resisted in Bewdley Gladman Developments are now targeting Stourport with proposals to build up to 150 houses in Astley across the Wyre Forest border in Malvern Hills. Such a proposal will need planning permission from Malvern Hills but Wyre Forest will have no say in the decision. It is a win-win situation for Malvern Hills who will achieve their housing targets and benefit from the Council Tax payments from the new properties but Wyre Forest roads, schools and other facilities will have to provide for the new housing.



The proposed site borders Areley Common , Redstone Lane and Marlborough Drive.

Another area close by, the Pearl Lane development, was given outline planning permission for 62 homes by Malvern Hills DC in April 2014.

Gladman failed to win planning approval from Wyre Forest for their proposals in Bewdley which met with massive resistance

so they now seem to have turned their sights to Stourport. These are not local people but property developers who buy up land in advance of seeking planning permission. They have no commitment to or interest in the local area. Like the people of Bewdley we must resist them and their attempt to over-develop the outskirts of our town. Bewdley set up a dedicated website to fight them, perhaps we should do the same ? If you are reading this electronically then click on the link below underlined in blue to see the full details. Otherwise, the rather extended website address is also shown in bold below.

[Gladman Land housing plans for Areley Common](#)

www.your-views.co.uk/uploads/images/Astleycross/Information%20Leaflet/Leaflet_Large.pdf

Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

by *Annette More*



Worcestershire County Council is in the process of consultation on the 4th Local Transport Plan covering the next 5 years.

Transport networks are the key to the local economy, providing access to the services and facilities that residents need to enjoy life. Similarly, our businesses rely on them to provide access for employees, the movement of freight, raw materials and finished products.

The LTP aims to set out how Worcestershire County Council will attract and support economic investment and growth, by delivering improvements to our transport networks, increasing capacity and operational efficiency, It also aims to improve access to travel information, helping to improve journey times, reduce congestion and improve quality of life.

All documents are available to view on line, see below:

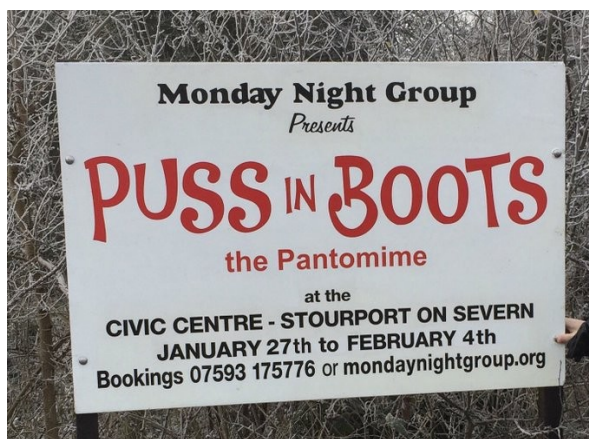
www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/7676/local_transport_plan_4_-_main_document

Whilst this is a strategic County wide document, it does contain details of proposals and projects for individual towns and areas. It seems to me that the vast majority of its content is focussed on the major infrastructure schemes and is weighted towards the south of the County. Whilst accepting this can partially be explained by the availability of external funding being for the development areas around Worcester it does seem that our area, and in particular Stourport itself is largely ignored. It also seems very car-orientated, with little in way of public transport strategies, apart from some costly rail projects eg Worcestershire Parkway Rail station.

What do you think of these policies? Where should the County be focussing its limited transport budget? What do you see as the transport issues in Stourport? How would you like to see them addressed?

As well as the on-line consultation they are organising a number of events, where you can discuss your thoughts with members of the team. The most local to Stourport currently planned is **19th January 2017, 2.00pm to 4.00pm: at Kidderminster, Tesco.**

Make your views known by responding to the consultation, which closes 17th March 2017.

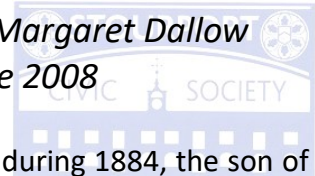


Don't Forget — the best show in town coming soon!

Francis Brett Young, Physician and Writer

by Margaret Dallow

June 2008



Francis was born in a Victorian villa, known as The Laurels in Halesowen, during 1884, the son of a doctor, who for many years was the Borough Medical Officer.

Francis attended a prep-school in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, believed to be Vesey's Croft, from where he went to Epsom College. Later he studied medicine at Birmingham University, where he obtained his medical degree. Upon qualifying, his first appointment was as a surgeon aboard a ship. However this was cut short due to the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, when he enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was posted to East Africa, where as a medical officer in the Rhodesian Regiment he served under General Smuts. It was while serving in the army that he began writing. He had 3 novels published, 'Deep Sea' in 1914; 'The Dark Tower' and 'The Iron Age' in 1916.. His war experiences inspired him to write 'Marching in Tango'. It was due to this success that after being demobbed from the army he decided to follow a career in writing, and not return to Halesowen as a medical practitioner.

Due to poor health, he decided to leave England and live abroad. For the next 10 years he and his wife Jessica lived on the Isle of Capri, where he had 12 books published. However he was homesick and he decided to return to England and subsequently acquired the lovely Georgian manor house, Craycombe House, near Fladbury in the Cotswolds, built during 1791 by the architect George Byfield. Here Jessie and Francis spent a few happy years, despite Francis's poor health. Whilst at Craycombe he continued with his writing, using Worcestershire and the Midlands as the setting of his novels, vividly portraying the countryside around Wyre Forest. Using the pseudonym of Halesby his novels portrays his life in medical practice in his home town of Halesowen. In 1928 he published 'My Brother Jonathan', which became his most popular novel, later made into a film of the same name starring Michael Redgrave. 'The House Under the Water', based on the flooding of villages in Mid Wales during the construction of the Elan Valley Reservoir, to supply water Birmingham, was made into a play for television. Also while at Craycombe, he compiled a collection of poems on the history of England, which he entitled 'England'.

From an early age he was interested in cricket, and for a while became a member of the committee of Worcestershire County Cricket club. Francis also became involved with fruit farming in the Vale of Evesham.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Craycombe House was requisitioned and the British Red Cross converted it into a Convalescent home for servicemen. Jessica and Francis moved to Cornwall, where he compiled 'The Island'. During the late 1960's, the manor house was converted into a Country Club and restaurant. In 1944 he wrote an article especially for the Americans, entitled 'Wartime in Worcester', written for the citizens of Worcester, Massachusetts.

By now, Francis's health was giving cause for concern. Therefore taking medical advice that he should be in a warm climate, Jessica and Francis left England during 1945 and settled in Capetown, South Africa. Here they remained for 9 years when, during 1954, at the age of 69, Francis died. Jessica returned to England with his ashes. He had requested that his remains should be buried in Worcester Cathedral, by saying 'I command that my body and soul to God and St Wulstan'.

Francis Brett Young, Physician and Writer (continued)

by Margaret Dallow
June 2008

Following a memorial service held in Worcester Cathedral attended by his many admirers, his ashes were placed beneath a slab on the North Transept, where there is a memorial plaque.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG
1884 - 1954
PHYSICIAN, POET, NOVELIST

There is another memorial tablet in Halesowen Parish church, which is inscribed:

Francis Brett Young MD CLBD LITT
Novelist Doctor

Although his novels are no longer popular, the Francis Brett Young Society ensures this son of Worcestershire will not be forgotten.

A Change to our Programme of Speakers

Please note there is a change to our speaker on Thursday 6th April 2017.
Brian Draper will now give his talk "Wildlife of the River Severn and where to spot it"

Civic Society outings this Spring and Summer

We have two visits planned for the Spring/ Summer.

Our speaker in February will be talking about his career in the carpet industry and we are hoping to organise a guided visit to the Kidderminster Carpet Museum in March/April.



Also in May/June we are planning a visit to Great Witley Parish Church, Britain's finest Baroque church. This will include a tour of the Crypt which has recently reopened for public viewing. Members might like to combine it with a visit to Witley Court and/or take refreshments in the excellent Garden Tea Rooms close by. This will be a midweek visit due to the popularity of the church for weekend weddings.

Group size of each visit will be limited to about 15 and priority will be given to members.

We will arrange transport where possible.



Mikron Theatre performed their production “Pure, a story of chocolate” in the Tontine Gardens. The Barge locks provided a very distinctive and evocative backdrop.



Laurence Gough Butchers decorated boat — one of the many colourful entries for Brindley’s Boats

A

Alan and Rita, Civic Society members, and Bramble the Working Boat.

