



The Wyre Forest Talking Newspaper *by Mary Johnson*

About 25 years ago I was asked by an old school friend if I would be willing to join the Wyre Forest Talking Newspaper organisation which had been in existence for about 10 years.

It had been started by a small group of volunteers who produced a weekly tape based on the local newspaper, the Kidderminster Shuttle/ Stourport News, so that people who were registered blind or partially sighted could learn about local affairs. Originally the recordings were made in a volunteer's home but, as the number of listeners and volunteers increased, better equipment and more space for the recordings to be made, multiple copies to be produced and proper postage wallets to be stored and used, was obviously necessary. With financial backing from the Lions the equipment was obtained and a studio was first set up in Kinver.

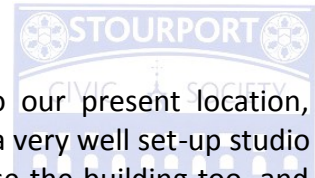
By the time I joined, the organisation had moved to Lea Castle hospital, where an excellent recording studio was set up and a room for the "Admin" was furnished with made to measure facilities for the returned wallets to be emptied of tapes, their labels checked to ensure all listeners were receiving their weekly news bulletins and the tapes themselves prepared for the next edition to be copied onto them. I always loved driving to our specially sign posted building- the countryside around Wolverley is beautiful!

Eventually we had to leave Lea Castle, but were allowed to move into SEC premises opposite the Kidderminster Police Station and not far from Harry Cheshire School. We fitted them out as best we could and several volunteers found that they had not so far to travel on Friday nights- a definite advantage in Winter! There are about 50 volunteers, including 4 technicians, 4 editors, who choose the items to be used and fix them to boards used by each reader, and the "Admin" people. The latter two groups belong to one of three teams:- the Puffins, the Early Birds and the Night Owls. I am the Liaison Officer, which means I visit the prospective new listeners, recommended by social services (who go by various different names) or often by other listeners.

The majority of our listeners are elderly and may well have a number of other health problems, as well as poor sight. At one stage we were sending out 300 recordings each week but now, the development of Lucentis (injections which can help "wet" Macula Degeneration) and other medical advances in the treatment of eye problems, mean that fewer people seem to require our service. We now have about 200 listeners and it is always a great pleasure for me to visit them to ensure that they know how to use the equipment (now since 2011 boom boxes and memory sticks) and to get to know them a little. It is sometimes difficult to locate them, perhaps they live in rather remote countryside spots or on housing estates with many cul-de-sacs. On these occasions I'm pleased to be helped by the co-ordinator of the Puffins, who deputised when I took an extended holiday. Map reading is a useful skill!

Over the years we have had a number of Chairmen (the word includes women too!) who have had the unenviable task of finding new premises when we have had to move on. After leaving the SEC we were grateful that the Headmaster gave us permission to use Baxter College's own

The Wyre Forest Talking Newspaper *continued*



recording studio, but it was a great relief when we finally moved to our present location, St Barnabas Community hall in Wolverley Road, Kidderminster. We have a very well set-up studio and "Admin" room, which I usually visit on my own. Other people do use the building too, and occasionally there are "interesting" occasions when they do not realise I'm there and put on the alarm- It is very noisy! We hope we can stay there for as long as our services are needed.

If you know anyone who might benefit by receiving our recordings, please contact me, Mary Johnson, 01299 823811 or Barbara Smith, 01562 751980. We shall be pleased to hear from you!

THE ORIGINS OF STOURPORT CIVIC SOCIETY *by Pauline Annis*

As we are now in our 45th year it is interesting to look at the founding of Stourport-on-Severn Civic Society which was born as a result of a public meeting called by the Chair of Stourport Urban District Council, Mrs Betty Gazard, in October 1968. Primarily the meeting was to discuss the forthcoming bicentenary of Stourport but it resulted in Brian Blench being invited to explore the possibilities of forming a Civic or Amenities Society. Prominent roles in the planning seem to have been taken by Mr T. Bayliss and Mr C.I.Walker.

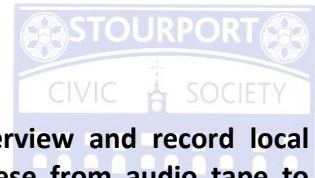
The inaugural meeting was held on November 26th 1968 and Stourport-on-Severn Civic Society became one of the 650 or so such societies in Britain. The Committee which was selected to pilot the Society consisted of:

Mr B. Blench, Chairman (Burlish Park)
Mr J.L.Alexander, Treasurer (Martins Bank)
Mrs F.Rimell, Joint Secretary (Church Walk)
Mrs R.Moss, Joint Secretary (Stagborough Way)

Mr J.Millican (Areley Common)
Mr J.E.Cousins (Lickhill Road)
Mr C.I.Walker (The Ridgeway)
Mr T.J.S.Bayliss (Mitton Gardens)
Mr D.Beddoes (The Birches)

In the Society's archive we have a copy of the first year's programme, starting in April 1969 when the guest speaker was Mr P.Stirling. In May they had a film evening viewing various films about conservation issues. The June meeting was dedicated to looking at Conservation Areas and local planning. July saw a talk on Industrial Archaeology by Mr Michael Rix and in August they had a barbecue (a practice which, perhaps, we should revive !). Canals and Inland Waterways was the topic for September followed by a contribution from Stourport Camera Club in October. In November Mr Bayliss gave a lecture with film about Areley Kings and in December they had a ball at the Civic Centre.

It would be interesting if any of our older members can remember any of these early committee members and their particular roles and interests. If you do have any memories of them do get in touch either with David More (editor) or Pauline Annis.



Anna Carter, our previous Chairman, undertook a project to interview and record local people talking about their lives and experiences. Having transferred these from audio tape to digital format on a computer, I have transcribed an interesting snippet from the first world war.

Doris Baynton tells Anna how she came to meet her first Americans during WW11. At the time Doris was in her early 20's and not long married. These are the words she used.

.....one day some men came around and asked how many rooms I had and I said three. He said "Oh you'll have to have some soldiers, oh yes you'll have to have two". So of course we didn't know you know what type they would be or anything about them, we just had to accept what they sent. So I said "alright".

Well I was on munitions at the time, I went to the Wire Works and I was in the Checking Office there. And one dinner time I was coming home along Brindley St. and there were all these soldiers sitting on the wall with their tin hats on and they did look a grubby lot. And I thought oh its two of these I've got to have and I went on ahead of them and I thought OH DEAR. Anyway I got home and I kept pacing about waiting to see what would happen. Well I should have gone back to work on that afternoon but I kept hanging about. Well eventually the policeman then came. I knew him very well and he crossed the door and he said "Oh Doris" (he got there with him two fellows) "these are your two soldiers". They were a couple of Americans.

Well I'd never seen any Americans and I said "Well alright Jack", well I said "come in". They came in and they looked so uncomfortable and I was uncomfortable as well. They looked so black, they had been on the water for six weeks. They belonged to the 47th Field Hospital Unit and they were going to be stationed in the Vale Road. They had great big tents there, each either side of the road. One side where the Catholic Church is, and the other side where the garage is and they were going to be stationed there. I showed them to their rooms upstairs and I could hear them pacing about, I was downstairs not knowing what to do. I asked them if they would like a bath and they said "Yes please". Of course my husband had not come home then and still they did not come down. At dinner time, 4.30, they did brave downstairs. They were only 20 odd as well.

"Ah" I said to them "my husband will be home just now but really I should be going to the Womens Voluntary tonight to do some work". I used to go there at night to help the troops with their sandwiches and tea, and that because my aunt was one of the head ones there. (Anna) "Where was that?". That was at the parish rooms in Bewdley Road where the Christadelphian Church (Hall) is now. It used to be the Parish Rooms which belonged to the Church, they used to hold it there every night for the troops. Anyway when I said to them I'll tell the woman I can't come to-night but my husband might come in the mean time. I didn't realise until after of course, they must have been frightened to death. They told me afterwards how worked up they were of my husband coming home and finding them in the house. Anyway he came home but I had got home by then. I said "We got two Americans". He said "What!". "We got two Americans". He said "Oh." Anyway eventually he said to them "Hello Fellers", like that to them. They said they were the best words they had ever heard!

Dora and her husband became good friends of their Americans and after the war often travelled to America to stay with their families. The Americans stayed with them for three months and she was paid one shilling a night for keeping them.

Stourport buses under threat

by Annette More



Some of you may be aware from recent media coverage of the proposal by Worcestershire County Council to totally remove all subsidy from local buses in the County, as part of its actions to save £98M from the budget.

What this means for Stourport is **the only bus service to continue would be service 3** from Areley Kings and the Walshes through Stourport to Kidderminster.

ALL other bus routes through Stourport are likely to cease from September 2014. There will be no buses to Worcester (Service 294/295), Bewdley Road and Bewdley (15), Wilden, Hartlebury Park, Power Station estate (15), Lickhill and Burlish (192) and Halesowen for connections to Birmingham (192).

There is a public consultation exercise ongoing at the moment, running until 17th January 2014, with the final decision to be taken in February 2014 once the consultation responses have been considered.

It is therefore very important to respond to this consultation. In previous consultations there has not been a good response from Stourport residents. We need to make our views heard loudly and clearly to have any chance of these cuts **not** going ahead or being scaled down. Even if you are not currently a regular bus user you might like to consider the social, economic and environmental impact for the town and the wider area.

If possible WCC would like residents to respond on line, but paper copies of the consultation document are available from the library.

See <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/busservicereview> for on-line version and more details, or telephone the Worcestershire Hub on 01905 765765 to request a copy of the document.

Please pass this information on to friends and neighbours, and make sure your County Councillors are aware of your views - **This is our only chance to save Stourport's bus services.**

The Anna Carter Archive

by Alan Millward

The Anna Carter Archive consists of material accumulated throughout the life of Stourport Civic Society. However, the vast majority was collected after Anna Carter became involved with the Society and through her efforts we have the legacy named in her memory.

Anna built up the archive through her own endeavours and kept it to hand at her house in Lichfield Street; being well organised she knew where to locate items and where to file incoming information, this being prior to computers being as common as they are today. After Anna's untimely passing in 2001 the material was 'temporarily' moved to the home of our then secretary until permanent accommodation could be found.

In late 2011 the Archive was moved from there into space provided by Stourport Forward at their office in Severnside, solely as an emergency measure.

In the spring of 2012 the Civic Society was offered a room at Stourport Workmen's Club in which to store our Archive, this being gratefully accepted. The room measures about six feet wide by fourteen feet long with a shelf along both sides of the longer walls. Together with our own three 'Dexion' type shelf racks and floor standing filing cabinet everything is contained neatly within the space available.

The various moves between premises, combined with the fact that in order to facilitate their physical

The Anna Carter Archive *continued*



movement many documents had been transferred into boxes and cartons, meant that some degree of mixing had inevitably taken place.

Fortunately the material stored in lever-arch files largely remained intact.

Now began the task of listing what we had, the method adopted being based on guidance received from the Carpet Museum in Kidderminster. Our contact had advised that listing items by subject / location held / category / sub-category should initially be sufficient for our needs; further refinements could take place later. Following this advice a simple database was set up in 'Microsoft Access' to assist with the sorting and cataloguing of the archive. The database allows each of the four columns to be sorted alphabetically, meaning that the subject column can be re-set in alphabetical order after a new batch of items is entered after each sorting session. In addition to this, by allotting a category type to an entry, items in the same category can be grouped together. The sub-category can be used to further refine a search for a particular subject.

Currently there are 17 x cartons, 20 x A4 archive boxes, 34 x lever arch files, 14 x ring binders, 76 x document wallets, 14 x A3 paper boxes and 8 x cardboard tubes holding documents, photographs and many other items relating to a wide variety of subjects.

We have a set of document wallets each of which relates to a street in the town. Lever-arch file number LA18, entitled 'RIVER', contains 167 items but is thankfully the largest file!



From The Anna Carter Archive

Nearly 50 years ago the Swan Hotel was the premier establishment in Stourport, where it stood resplendent in its position at the top of High Street. In the right-hand distance can be seen the canopy which was the entrance to the Haven Cinema, closed September 1976. The circular street sign to the right of the hotel window proclaims "NO WAITING THIS SIDE TODAY". The plate was hinged across the centre to allow the message to be changed on alternate days. *Photo T.J.S.Baylis*

Buften's Cash & Carry Hardware Store in Bridge Street, photographed in July 1977. In the 1980s it became 'Stourport Shopping Mall'.



"My Links with Stanley Baldwin" © Part 1

A talk given by Audrey Lilian Cooper in December 1997



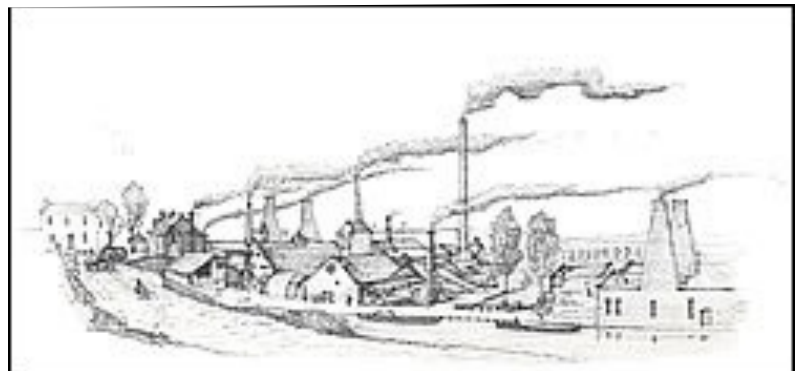
Audrey Cooper was a member of the Civic Society for many years before her death in 2007

The following was transcribed from the original by her cousin Michael Bourne.

This coming Sunday, the 14th December, is the 50th anniversary of the death of Stanley Baldwin, onetime M.P. for the Bewdley West Division of Worcestershire and three times Prime Minister. I am no political animal, so can't offer much on that aspect of his life and times, though I do remember that with the Parliamentary Boundary changes of 1948 when Stourport and Bewdley were thrown in with Kidderminster, it was met locally with some antagonism, and considered to be a downgrade not an upgrade step. This short talk (you'll be glad to hear it's fairly short) is called "My links with Stanley Baldwin" reminds me of two stories by the American humorist James Thurber, one called if I remember rightly 'The night the bed fell', and the other 'The day I met D. H. Lawrence'. These events became embedded in his family legend, though in fact, neither actually happened, merely by coincidence they might have done. Similarly; my links are at best, decidedly tenuous.

I think the first vague connection came when I was a child. My Mother, who was born in 1896, used to tell me of the many occasions during her school dinner time (from the Girls School at the bottom of Church Avenue) when she had to dash home to Tan Lane and collect a hot dinner to take to her Father, then a tin millman at the Wilden Ironworks. Quite a fair sprint in a short time, but she did it willingly since she idolised her Dad, though was quite concerned at the heavy work he did and the heat of the furnaces. This must have been before 1908, the year she left school and the year Stanley Baldwin became an M.P., taking the Bewdley seat on the death of his father Alfred. When Stanley and my Grandfather were both at Wilden in those days, I naturally assumed they must know each other, and well they might, since Stanley was said to know and greet all the workforce by name.

Wilden Works in 1854



Actually, my Grandfather John Bourne always known as Jack, and Stanley, did have certain things in common, though they both came from the opposite ends of the social scale. They were both born in Bewdley with less than a year between them, my Grandfather the end of September 1866 and Stanley the beginning of August 1867. Both families came originally from Shropshire, the Baldwins iron makers from Broseley, the Bournes, employed as brick makers from Coalport. Both boys moved in their early years to Stourport, Stanley to Wilden House, my Grandfather with the remnants of his large family (he was the youngest) to Tan Lane. His father was now a Waterman. Their education obviously differed somewhat. My Grandfather was working well

"My Links with Stanley Baldwin" © Part 1 *continued*



before 1880 as a 'forge box packer' roughly at the time that Stanley setting out for Harrow, and subsequently, Cambridge. He joined the family business in 1888, apparently neither enthusiastically nor reluctantly, and worked a bit more or less actively for 20 years, first from Wilden House and after he was married cycling over from Dunley Hall, and later from Astley. This is his account, somewhat idealised, one might imagine, of the Wilden works:

"It was a place where I had known from childhood every man on the ground, where I was able to talk to men, not only about troubles in the works, but troubles at home, where strikes and lock-outs were unknown, and where the fathers and grandfathers of the men who had worked and their sons went automatically into the business. "

"It was also a place where nobody got the sack, and where we had a natural sympathy for those who were less concerned in efficiency than this generation is. There were a large number of old gentlemen who used to spend the day sitting on the handle of a wheelbarrow and smoking their pipes.

"Oddly enough, it was not an inefficient community. It was the last survivor of that type of works, and ultimately was up in one of those great combinations to which the industries of the country are tending".

As for Stanley and Grandfather, they both walked a great deal in their spare time, Stanley for the love of it, at home and abroad on his longish holidays, in and out of Stourport apparently to visit Stanley Barten's tobacconists in High Street, my Grandfather out of necessity. To do his courting he had to walk to Astley where she came from, or Hartlebury where she was living in service at Waresley House. He was the first to marry in 1890, and stayed in Tan Lane. Stanley, whose intended, Lucy Ridsdale, came from Rottingdean, in 1892. For the first ten years they rented Dunley Hall, then moved to Astley. Later in his affluent days they also kept a house in London. Thereafter both families grew: my Grandfather had 8 children, 3 sons and 5 daughters, and Stanley 6, 2 sons and 4 daughters.

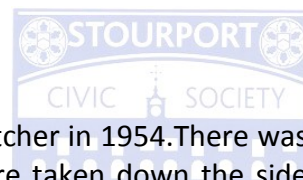
Sadly my Grandfather died in 1923, the year Stanley first became Prime Minister, and the year I was born. From then until 1937, Stanley continued to represent Bewdley, so called, though actually stretching from near Tenbury to near Malvern, and had two more spells as Prime Minister. During this time he was spending less time at Astley apart from Christmas and short holidays, but finally after the Abdication of Edward V11 aged 70 he came back here to spend the last ten years in less than happy retirement.

In 1947 I was beginning my love affair with Herefordshire, but a few years ago, back in Stourport, I went to a series of lectures which brought Stanley Baldwin back into focus. The subject was the famous MacDonald sisters, part of a well-known Wesleyan Methodist preacher's family which came to settle in Bewdley. One of the sisters became Stanley Baldwin's mother, one Rudyard Kipling's mother, and two had married famous artists, Edward Burne-Jones and Edward Poynter, later President of the RA, so that Stanley had a selection of eminent Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. Stanley's second son Windham has written an excellent book about them all.

The second and final part of the story will appear in our next newsletter

Bentleys of Stourport on Severn

by Jim Bentley



Bentleys shop in High Street was purchased from Fred Tunkis, a butcher in 1954. There was a slaughterhouse at the rear of the property and sheep and cattle were taken down the side entry to be killed. There were also 2 stables for horses which were in use until the late 1950's. These were then turned into our stock room. Down the entry were also 4 cottages which are still in use today.

Bentleys shop started business selling Leather goods and china as well as a few toys. It was run by myself, Tom Bentley, and my sister Jean and husband, Paul Opitz (a POW). The card shop, as we all know it, came about 8 years later. Paul died 20 years ago but Jane, my wife took over the paperwork and our daughter, Emma, assisted from age 12 to 36. My wife also ran, Cameo Hair Design for forty years. The property is now rented out by us, and the name remains. We sold the business 5-6 years ago to Steve McHale and he runs the business in our name.

We also ran a shoe repair business in Lombard Street, opened in 1934 by my father. In 1968 part became a launderette and 1972 the remaining part a dry cleaners. The drycleaners was sold and redeveloped 10 years ago, and Dolly Tub 3-4 years later. And the Lombard Street connection included my sister Betty and Stan Gardner who bought and ran the Severns Club/ Workman's Cub for 20 years.



In Brief

- If any members would like to attend our meetings but have a problem getting there, please contact Annette More (Tel 01299 878718) who will be able to help arrange a suitable lift.
- Members are reminded that our Festive event will be on Thursday 9 January 2014. This is a members only evening and we will enjoy our usual and popular shared supper. Please bring a suitable sweet or savoury dish for our buffet. Any unwanted Xmas gifts would make great raffle prizes.
- Thank you to the members who have agreed to receive information and newsletters by email. If you are still considering this please remember it will save the society the cost of printing and postage and you will be able to view the articles in full colour. Email davidemore@btinternet.com If you would like to receive communication by e-mail. *Please also remember to advise us if you change your email address.*