

## Introduction from our Chairman – Andrew Booton

Stourport Civic Society plays an active, authoritative and constructive role in the improvement and conservation of Stourport. We believe town planning should be done with us not to us.

While we are not a party-political organisation, we operate within a political environment and believe in engaging openly and honestly with our local and national representatives to ensure the best outcomes for our town.

We believe that Stourport thrives when its voices are heard. Collaborative efforts between the councils and the community are vital for finding and implementing schemes that benefit everyone.

While we recognise the challenges faced by Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), we also note that Stourport Town Council (STC) has a critical role to play in representing the town's interests. Although STC has limited powers as the equivalent of a Parish Council, it is not without influence or options. We call on all 18 STC councillors, including the seven who also serve on WFDC, to be proactive champions for Stourport. Their visible commitment to addressing the town's challenges is essential. We encourage all councillors to reaffirm their dedication to the community they serve.

Stourport is a beautiful town with much to offer, but it faces ongoing challenges that require immediate attention and action. We seek clear, positive plans for improvement and will continue to advocate for meaningful commitments from WFDC and other stakeholders. The time has come to ensure Stourport is neither ignored nor neglected, and we stand ready to support efforts that drive progress.

To support this mission, we invite you to join us if you're not already a member. Please share this newsletter with friends and family to help amplify our voice. If you'd like to take on a more active role, we encourage you to volunteer - details can be found in the Volunteers section of this newsletter. Together, we can make a difference for Stourport's future.

**On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Rest well because I think we will be needing your fighting energy to campaign hard!**

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### In this newsletter:

Demolition in Raven Street , it's history and how it used to be.

Possible sale of Bridge Street (Georgian) car park

The arrival and departure of Stourport's railways (part 1)

Appeal for volunteers

Details of our programme through to July 2025

**JOIN US FOR OUR Winter Social & lunch Wednesday 22nd January 2025**

## Raven Street Old Bakehouse demolished! ... November 2024



In scenes similar to the demolition of the Crooked House pub in Himley last year, WFDC illegally demolished a heritage building that it was tasked to protect. Only six months ago, Wyre Forest District Council paid Insall Architects £10,000 to report on Stourport's Conservation Areas.

That report identified buildings at risk including the Old Bakehouse in Raven Street. Insall said they were in poor condition but were of some significance. They said that the buildings should be retained, restored sensitively and brought back into beneficial use. The report also reminded WFDC that the Council could serve a s215 notice, an urgent works notice or a repairs notice on the owners to require the owners to protect and preserve the buildings.

Instead, on Monday 11 November, the buildings were demolished by the owner. **The owner is Wyre Forest District Council.**

We calculate that this structure had a volume exceeding 115 cubic metres so WFDC **should have sought planning permission for demolition as it was inside the Conservation Area.**

As the local planning authority, WFDC's conduct should be exemplary, especially when it comes to heritage management and planning. What was the rush? Why didn't they apply for consent in a lawful way? Why was it demolished instead of being repaired? What are they hiding?

This historic and characterful building should have been saved and was capable of being saved. Instead WFDC took a bulldozer to it. And in doing so, the Council has committed a criminal offence.

Every time Stourport has a problem, Wyre Forest District Council's fingerprints are all over it. The Council needs to stop treating the people of Stourport with contempt and start engaging us in a constructive, transparent way so that the town can be developed for everyone's benefit not just for WFDC's convenience.

Coincidentally, we are led to believe that a planning application for redevelopment of the site will be submitted in early 2025. That would indicate the motivation for demolition was cash generation not heritage conservation.

WFDC's Planning Enforcement Officer has confirmed that he will be taking no action against the Council (why would he act against his bosses?) so we will be submitting a formal complaint to WFDC.

***Now read on for Margaret Cook's article from the Unlocking Stourport's Past project, funded by the Heritage Lottery, undertaken by Stourport Civic Society In 2006.***

## **No 3 Raven Street (The Old Bakery building)**

by Margaret Cook  
(former Civic Society member)

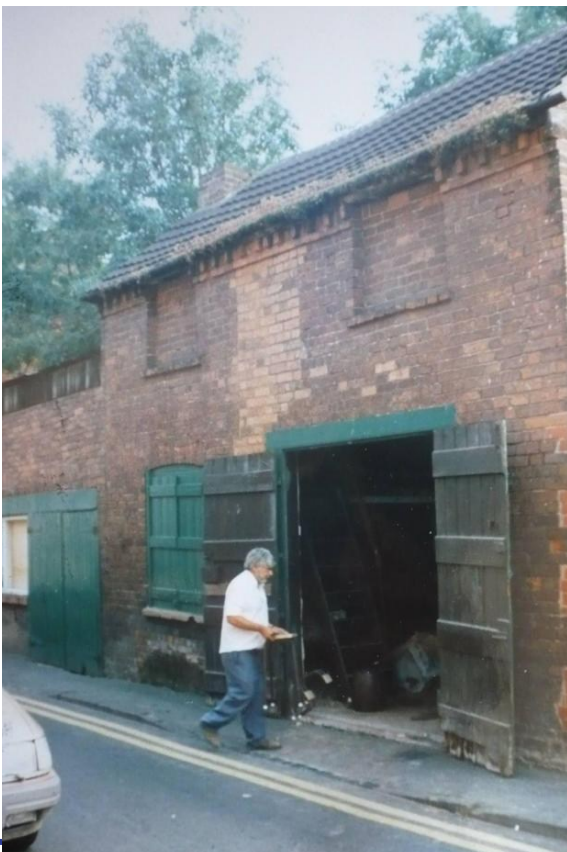


Trade Directories of 1879 show it as housing the Towns Fire Engine which was then horse drawn and on occasions later pulled by the local dustcart which was mechanized. The Trade Directory of 1889 show that a Roman Catholic Mission Room was somewhere in Raven Street and that in 1900 an elevated platform was added to increase sitting capacity. This leads the researcher to assume that No 3 was the building as a platform is installed inside on the left-hand side of the building. Later Trade Directories list a Primitive Methodist Church and a schoolroom (No numbers given for these) in Raven Street and No 3 seems the obvious building for such activities (see below)

The inside is in a poor state of renovation and used nowadays for a Carpentry/Fencing Company and is packed with timber and fencing making measuring and photography very difficult. On the edge of the platform there is evidence of a roller which probably connected a conveyor across to the elevated "now blind" window or door, two thirds up the wall. There is evidence of hoisting equipment on the outside gable. Could it have been used to transport flour across the platform when the building was used for storage by the Baker/Bread maker who lived across the road at No.8(1801 census).

The Yard and Garage at the rear and side are surrounded by original walls with evidence of a wooden lintel let into the side wall which could have led to a door and steps to a cellar. It is also known that a gate hung from these walls to close the road (a cul de sac) which led into Council allotments and the field where the horses lived that pulled the fire engine.

The wall running alongside the yard has an interesting oak lintel let into and extending a third of the way across the wall indicating it was a doorway or steps maybe, leading to a cellar. In 2006 owned by the daughter (Mrs. Pat Powell) of Mrs. Wainwright who owned the furniture business once run from its premises fronting onto Bridge Street. (early 1900 to 1960's).



**You can find further information about  
Raven Street and other historical  
buildings in Stourport at:  
[Unlocking-Stourports-Past.co.uk](http://Unlocking-Stourports-Past.co.uk)**

## The Arrival and Departure of Stourport's Railways – Part One *by Richard Cory*

Stourport is lucky still to have the Leapgate Old Railway Line Walk towards Hartlebury but otherwise little is now visible of the town's one hundred years of railway infrastructure. In the first of two articles we look at the coming and some of the growth of Stourport's railways.

The railway having first reached Birmingham from London in 1838, there followed a period of "railway mania" with many aborted plans including, in 1846, a branch to Stourport along the valley of the River Stour from a junction at Smethwick off the Birmingham to Wolverhampton line through Dudley. This main line was constructed but the Stourport branch never came before Parliament for approval. Thus our town had to wait another sixteen years before it saw a train.

The Severn Valley Railway company was formed in 1852 to link Worcester and Shrewsbury by rail along the River Severn, leaving the then newly opened main line from Oxford to Wolverhampton via Worcester at Hartlebury, passing through Stourport and then heading north-west alongside the river. This was not until after overcoming a vociferous protest from the Mayor of Kidderminster who wanted the junction in his town, not Hartlebury, thus bypassing Stourport. Originally the junction was to be south of Hartlebury station with Stourport approached through Tilton rather than ultimate choice through Wilden from a junction just north of the station.

By this time the initial railway mania "bubble" had burst and construction did not commence until 1858 after parliamentary delays and difficulties in arranging finance. The latter nearly caused the whole scheme to be abandoned and local investors became indifferent because of the lack of promised progress. However, support from local industrialists Pearce and William Baldwin, whose family we will come across again later, kept Stourport's interest alive. Although laid as a single track, many of the earthworks and foundations, with the exception of any tunnels, were built for eventual double track which never materialised. This is best seen when walking the embankment and viaduct over the River Stour between Stourport and Wilden. Heavy rain and landslips, which still plague the current Severn Valley Railway north of Bewdley, delayed the opening of the whole line at a cost of £325,400 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 1862.

The cutting through Wilden, now part of the Leapgate Country Park footpath, was constructed in an unusual manner when the railway had to be excavated through a sandstone ridge, this proving to be one of the heaviest pieces of engineering on the line. It would have been easier to tunnel but this would have yielded insufficient spoil for the embankments either side, particularly above the Stour valley on the Stourport side. In fact a tunnel was initially bored from several shafts and a line of rails was laid through. Wagons were then positioned under a shaft and, once filled with spoil from above, were run out and tipped to form the desired embankments without the spoil having to be laboriously lifted into the wagons. Thus opened up, the tunnel became a cutting, a third of a mile long and 60ft deep, with Wilden Top Road then carried over the cutting on a lofty 54ft arch, the largest brick span on the line."

*View from the railway cutting up to Wilden Top Road*



*View of the viaduct over the River Stour and Stour valley*



## The Arrival and Departure of Stourport's Railways – Part One *continued*

The original station building at Stourport with two platforms was similar to the majority on the Severn Valley line, being almost identical to Buildwas and Bewdley. Interestingly Bridgnorth station building, constructed at the same time, was unique. As at all the principal stations on the line, Stourport was also provided with a goods shed, yard and sidings, the latter much extended over the years as we will see.

*Stourport station*



*The restored railway and canal interchange basin*



Eighteen months later any notion of independence was curtailed when the company was taken over by the Great Western Railway, the GWR, and remained so until becoming part of British Railways at the time of nationalisation in 1948.

By the 1880's Wilden Ironworks, then under the sole control of Alfred Baldwin, were flourishing and 1884 saw the start of construction of an interchange basin with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal where it was crossed by the railway, with such restored basin still visible today. A steep descent led down from the goods yard to a single siding and transhipment shed to the south side of the basin and two sidings with end wagon turntable to the north side. In a rather time-consuming manner, iron from South Wales and coal from whatever source, much of it from Highley, were brought in by rail, transferred into barges for the short journey north towards Kidderminster up the canal to Pratts Wharf (apparently incorrectly shown on maps as Platt's Wharf) and transferred again to smaller barges for an even shorter journey into the works by the partially canalised River Stour. Later some of these barges continued along the canal onto Stourvale works, another Baldwin enterprises just north of Kidderminster town centre. It is said that, although uncommon, runaway wagons down the steep incline made a dramatic canal entry! Probably discouraged by difficult ground conditions, it is surprising that a short branch line was not later constructed into the works, these being only about a mile from the railway, as Alfred Baldwin was appointed to the GWR Board in 1903 and became its chairman in 1905.

In 1898 the Kidderminster & Stourport Electric Tramway opened, one of Britain's earliest electric tramways. It ran from the top of Comberton Hill in Kidderminster, through the town centre having passed the town's station, and on to Stourport. The railway was crossed on the level at the very west end of the platforms at Stourport station and on to the terminus at the bottom of Bridge Street. A direct link was therefore provided between the two towns whereas by train you had to travel via Bewdley or Hartlebury.' The trams were an immediate success, carrying a high volume of passengers in their first year but eventually themselves succumbing to motor buses and being taken out of service on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1928.

The early 1920's saw a private siding constructed at Wilden as a new sand quarry was opened with extraction ceasing during World War Two, the siding then being used for stabling empty power station coal wagons.

## The Arrival and Departure of Stourport's Railways – Part One *continued*



*Looking north towards the site of the old Burlish Halt. In the distance are the Burlish Crossing gates*

By 1930, on a 70-acre green field site, a new factory had been built for Steatite & Porcelain Products (now Morgan Advanced Materials) employing up to 700 people which justified a new halt being built at Burlish Crossing, opened on 31 March 1930. An existing siding was extended with an original private extension into the works via a crossing on the Bewdley Road which only remained in use until 1933. Despite this, "the Steatite" continued to tranship over 70% of their production out of the works by rail, for example 422 tons leaving by train in the final quarter of 1936.

For years Stourport's riverside was dominated by the power station, using water from the river rather than massive cooling towers. Station A, with a rail connection for the delivery of coal, was authorised in 1918 but not opened until 1927, albeit without the railway branch. With no such railway access nearly all the required inbound coal came in 30-ton barges from mines around Sedgley or Cannock, areas with canal access, or in 100-ton river barges bringing in Welsh steam coal. Expansion came in 1936 with the commissioning of Station B and a requirement for increased coal supplies, some of it coming from the goods yard by commercial tractor and large trailer, manned by railway staff.

With the final infrastructure nearly complete, here are some traffic figures. Freight received and dispatched at Stourport in 1903 was 76,174 tons, by far the highest figure on the whole of the line when excluded the coal output from Highley. By 1937 this had risen to 153,781 tons with much of the increase being coal into the power station but by this time Highley had been knocked off top position with the opening of the vast power station towards the north of the line at Buildwas. A year later in 1938, passenger and parcels revenue from Stourport was £4,078, the highest on the line although much of it parcel type traffic. Passenger tickets issued that year were 16,269 but mostly short journeys.

**With our town's railways on a high, we will leave the history of the line during World War Two and its subsequent decline and eventual closure for the next Newsletter.**

## Bridge Street car park

by Andrew Booton

You will have seen our hard-hitting and proactive campaign to preserve the public interest in Bridge Street car park.

The car park was bought (not compulsory purchased, as some keep saying) by Wyre Forest District Council from Lloyds Garage to enable the implementation of the Bridge Street Redevelopment Scheme. That scheme, which is current planning policy (from 2005), is set out in WFDC's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/41sQpbt>

Without any prior warning, even to Stourport Town Council, WFDC tried to run a low-key 2-week consultation to remove the car park from its Car Park Order. But we heard about it and ramped up the community to respond. The community lodged a massive number of objections, but WFDC has remained tight-lipped on its next step. We expect WFDC to ignore all these objections and to announce its intention to remove the car park, and then to sell it.

However, in the meantime we have registered the car park and 8 Bridge Street (the building on the corner of Engine Lane) as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), which WFDC's Solicitor has accepted. If the land is put up for sale, WFDC must notify us in writing. An interim **6-week** moratorium is then triggered to enable us to express an interest in bidding. A full moratorium period of **6 months** is then triggered if we express that interest. That gives us time to assemble a bid and, if successful, complete the purchase.

[See Andrew Booton's video explaining the process and our interest on our Facebook page here:](#)

Please follow us on Facebook (search Stourport Civic Society) for updates. We will try to keep you informed in a timely manner through those pages. We will also be looking to hold more public meetings to keep everyone informed.

As the local planning authority, WFDC's conduct should be exemplary, especially when it comes to heritage management and planning. What was the rush? Why didn't they apply for consent in a lawful way? Why was it demolished instead of being repaired? What are they hiding?

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## How Can You Help?

### Volunteers

Stourport Civic Society is run entirely by volunteers. We have no paid staff, and our income is only from donations and membership fees. So, we need your help to work efficiently and effectively and to make a real difference.

If you believe in and support our work to improve and conserve Stourport, please consider giving us an hour or so a week of your time.....



We are looking for volunteers, including:

**New Committee Members/Trustees.** Our constitution requires us to rotate committee members regularly, we would love to have some new faces and new ideas for our committee and are also seeking some replacements for retiring trustees. We especially need a new Secretary. The role of the secretary can be divided up – maybe you could take on organising our programme, or taking minutes at our meeting, or maintaining our membership records? Do have a think and see if you can help.

**Events Team.** help us organise our events including public meetings, talks, members' meetings and social events. If you like meeting people, and are well organised, this could be the role for you.

**Comms Officer.** As you've seen, we're raising our game when it comes to the way we communicate so we're looking for extra help with communications. Are you imaginative, articulate, have good written English, enjoy using social media including Facebook, X and Instagram. A sense of humour always helps too!

**Spread the word.** We need people to help support our campaigns. We need volunteers to help with activities such as leaflet drops, social media commentary, public meeting organisation, fundraisers etc. You may have other ways to help too so we're open to ideas.

If you are interested, please contact any of the committee for an informal chat and/or email us at [Stourport.civic.soc@gmail.com](mailto:Stourport.civic.soc@gmail.com) or DM us on [Facebook](#).

### How EVERYONE can help

We urge all our members to be active communicators for us.

**Share** all our posts on Facebook and X.

**Comment** constructively on our social media posts to sustain the debate.

**Share** our newsletter with your family and friends and encourage them to join us.

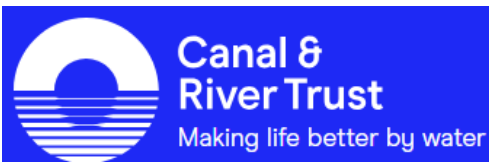
Encourage people to [JOIN US - membership is just £1 a month - £12 a year.](#) It gives you special access to our events and your participation helps to sustain an active community group.

## Make A Difference



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Our websites: [stourporttown.co.uk/organisation/stourport-civic-society/](http://stourporttown.co.uk/organisation/stourport-civic-society/)  
[Unlocking Stourport's Past](#) - Our Heritage Lottery funded project from 20 years ago  
Find us on [Facebook](#)  
Find us on X (formerly Twitter)



With editorial licence and as one of the Canal & River Trust volunteer Lock keepers in Stourport, I would like to draw your attention to the fantastic work they do. If you have Facebook, click the CRT logo and watch the video of some of our work. In 2024.

*Enjoy! David More (Editor Stourport Civic Society newsletter)*





**Our January meeting is our Winter Social / Lunch  
on Wednesday 22nd January ...**

Our festive lunch will be held on **Wednesday 22nd January 2025**, 12.30 for 1pm, at the **Severns Club in Lickhill Road** . There is level access and plenty of free parking. To book your place, please reply by Wednesday 15th January with your choice of food, either by [email](#) or phone 01299 878718.  
See below and opposite for menu options.

## **Basket Meals & Sandwiches**

### **Southern Fried Breaded Chicken strips**

**Golden Battered Crispy Cod Fillet**

**Golden Breaded Scampi**

**Crispy Cod Fish Fingers**

All served with Chunky Gourmet Chips

**7.95**

### **Loaded Fries**

Served with either Chilli & Cheese or  
Crispy Bacon & Cheese

**7.95**

### **Thick Crusty Bread Sandwiches**

**Ham & Wholegrain Mustard**

with Mixed Leaf Salad & Crisps **4.95**

**Cheese & Red Onion Chutney**

with Mixed Leaf Salad & Crisps **4.95**

**Ham & Cheese**

with Mixed Leaf Salad & Crisps **5.45**

### **Soup of the Day**

Served with Thick Crusty Bread

**4.95**



## The Famous Severn's Loaded Pies

### Steak & Ludlow Ale Pie

Tender, slow-cooked beef steak infused with the deep flavours of Ludlow Ale and caramelised onions enclosed in a crisp buttery pastry. Topped with shredded pulled beef, crispy onion rings, and accompanied by a jug of rich, dark gravy. **12.95**

### Fish Medley Pie

A luxurious blend of Alaska Pollock, prawns, and smoked haddock in a creamy leek sauce. Topped with crispy scampi, butterfly prawns, and a jug of fragrant parsley sauce. **14.95**

### Chicken, Ham & Leek Pie

Succulent chicken, tender ham, and leeks enveloped in a velvety sauce in a buttery pastry case. Topped with pulled Chicken and crowned with a whole field mushroom, golden crispy onion rings, and served with a jug of rich, savoury gravy. **12.95**

### Spicy Bean Pie (v)

A hearty mix of butter beans, red kidney beans, and chickpeas simmered in a rich, spicy tomato sauce in a flaky pastry. Topped with a smoky Quorn and kidney bean cassoulet, crispy onion rings, and a jug of flavourful veggie gravy. **12.95**

**All served on a bed of fluffy mashed potatoes or hand-cut chunky gourmet chips, with a side of baton carrots and garden peas.**

**10% discount on all food & drinks for members!**

Allergies: Food in our restaurant may contain milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, and tree nuts. If allergic, please tell your server. Gluten free options available.

# Talks Spring/ Summer 2025



**13<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**Midland Mystery Tour**

**Buildings and sites in Worcestershire and West Midlands.**

*Ian Bott*

**13<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Pirates: Fact & Fiction**

*Max Keen*



**10<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**A Monk's Life - the Benedictines at Worcester Cathedral**

*Howard Robinson*

**8th May 2025**

**Inside Worcester Crown Court**

*Marguerite Collins*



**12th June 2025**

**AGM & Chairmans Address**



**10th July 2025 (Summer Social)**

**Looking at Shops**

*Ned Williams*

**Bonus pictures of Stourport's railway**



*Burlish Crossing with the track lifted but the gates still in place*



*Burlish Halt*