

# The Black Pear Bulletin

*The Newsletter of the Battle of Worcester Society*

**Issue No. 12 ~ Autumn Edition 2015**



Welcome to the second quarterly edition of the *Black Pear Bulletin*. It is hoped that all members are making full use of our website where every effort is being made to keep the site bang up to date.

Much has happened since the last edition of the Bulletin, with one significant event which has affected the Society greatly. Our Chairman, Grant Simmonds, decided to stand down from his position as Chairman, following the news that his wife was to receive treatment for a life changing illness. Grant is much missed by the Executive Committee especially, but I will do my very best to keep up the standard that he has so far achieved.

## CIVIL WAR NIGHTS

Before standing down, Grant had gone to great lengths to book a host of distinguished speakers to appear during our Civil War Nights' Season in the Great Hall at The Commandery.

Season two began with Oxford University Professor Diana Purkiss talking on *The People's Civil War*. Coincidentally, she appeared in an historical documentary on Channel 5 on the same evening! The following week one of our local academics, Dr Andrew Hopper spoke on *Turncoats and Renegades: Changing Sides in the English Civil Wars*. (Both of their books are still available from a good book shop near you!)

Our third speaker was none other than our illustrious President Benjamin Humphrey.

Ben's talk on *Worcester: City of Liberty* was a wonderfully woven piece of history connecting the many strands of Worcester's history including the Magna Carta, the English Civil War, the Boston Massacre, and the visit to Worcester of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson who later became the second and third Presidents of the USA. Ben made an audio tape of his talk and intends to put it onto the website for those of you who were not able to attend.

During the Worcestershire LitFest and Fringe Festival we had three speakers. Anita Seymour, author of *The Royalist Rebel* and Katherine Clements, author of *The Crimson Ribbon* explained their writing processes to the audience. It was interesting to hear that as much as 80% of their historical novels are fact, and that the fictional parts of their historical novels cover the grey areas about which very little is recorded. Our third speaker during that week was Chris Bryant, M.P., who dashed to Worcester after taking part in a parliamentary vote. He held the audience's attention with his masterful talk on *Parliament in the Civil War*. It was certainly worth the wait! Vaughan Wiltshire, one of our Executive Committee members started the evening off with a fascinating talk on John Perrins, Master Gun-Maker of Worcester and his two sons, John and Henry. We were very privileged to have two excellent talks for the price of one!



Grant's *coup* however, was to secure the appearance of Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C. who is an eminent barrister with an interest in history. His book *The Tyrannicide Brief: The story of the man who sent Charles I to the Scaffold* was the subject of the final talk of the Civil War Nights' season. Geoffrey too had a dash from London and had to dash back.

We thank all of our speakers for the most excellent of evenings, and a big thank you to Grant Simmonds for getting them all to come to Worcester.

### **FOLLOWING THE MONARCH'S WAY – In Poetry**

Dorrie Johnson, a member of the Society has written and published a book of her own poetry as she followed the Monarch's Way. This lovely little publication costs £5 + £1.50 postage and packaging. If you are interested, please get in touch with Christine on [seashells84@sky.com](mailto:seashells84@sky.com) and she will send one out to you. Dorrie has put so much into this book. Not only has she written a poem for each stage of the Monarch's way, but there is an explanation of the places where Charles Stuart sought refuge in words or pictures and there are lots of little nuggets besides. It is a book well worth reading.

### **SIDBURY GATE PLAQUE**

The Sidbury Gate saw some of the fiercest fighting of the English Civil War, and on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Worcester Civic Society, unveiled a plaque to mark the exact site of this gate. The gate, built before 1197, was demolished by public subscription in 1768. It once guarded the roads to London and Bath. A tantalising glimpse of the gate tower can still be gained in the cellar of what is now a tattoo parlour, Cookies Custom Tattooing. The plaque is on the wall above the word 'Custom'. Some of the fiercest fighting was in this location. The Cheshire militia stormed the gates and forced their way into the city while Charles Stuart fled towards the Cornmarket and escaped through St Martin's Gate after the battle on 3 September 1651.



### **VISIT TO HARTLEBURY CASTLE AND MUSEUM**

Also in April, David Nash, Commandery Manager and Curator of Social History, invited the Society to Hartlebury Castle and Museum to see the Civil War artefacts which are kept in store there. About twenty Society members went to the Museum and were fascinated by the huge variety of items kept in store. Sadly, they do not have a huge amount of Civil War stuff, but what we did see, we enjoyed.

### **MAGNA CARTA CELEBRATIONS**

As part of the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta by King John, whose tomb is in Worcester Cathedral, Sir Robert Worcester (founder of the Mori Poll) visited Worcester to give a talk on 28 May 2015. Together with Executive Committee Member Vaughan Wiltshire, we were members of a party who were hosts to Sir Robert for the day. He was given a Battle of Worcester themed tour which included a visit to The Commandery and Fort Royal Park.



### **FORT ROYAL PARK – CENTENARY**

Fort Royal Park was founded by Canon James Wilson and the City Council on 29th June 1915 to preserve a green space for the people of Worcester. Friends of Fort Royal Park and Worcester Cathedral organised a celebration on 29th June 2015. The programme commenced with a welcome to all dignitaries by Councillor Lynn Denham and ended with an open-air service which was led by the Reverend Canon Dr Michael Brierley and accompanied by the Worcester Cathedral Choir. The weather was beautiful and the event was very well attended. Local poet Bob Woodroffe read out his poem which expresses eloquently the ethos of the Battle of Worcester Society:

Come make pilgrimage to this green hill.  
Come, gaze in wonder at your city.

Here, where your own cannons were turned  
on your Cathedral, levelled your city walls.

Here where English justice was fought for,  
where King John still stirs in his tomb.

Here, where men of renown made pilgrimage  
from far across the western ocean wide.

Here, where they stood in reverence,  
on this hill, where democracy was born.

Here, where they could not understand  
how we forgot where liberty was fought for.

Loud rings the bell from that far shore,  
proclaiming liberty throughout the land.

Tall stands the statue, freedom's icon,  
enlightening the world.

Here, where the grant of liberty was fought for,  
the gift to live in freedom first given.



### **MONUMENT MEETING ON FORT ROYAL HILL**

The Society's current project is to raise enough money to place a statue of Presidents Adams and Jefferson on Fort Royal Hill. Our first task is to ensure that the owners of Fort Royal Park, Worcester City Council, give us permission to place such a statue in the park. To this end a meeting has been arranged with all interested parties on 21st August 2015. More to follow in future bulletins.

### **FUTURE EVENTS**

#### **29th, 30th, 31st August 2015**

The Commandery is holding a Battle HQ event. Our re-enactors Roger Fairman and Brian Bullock will have a Battle of Worcester Society stall and will be taking part in events throughout the weekend. They would love to have your support.

Two members of the Society are giving talks at The Commandery during that event. On Saturday 29 August at 2.30 p.m. Vaughan Wiltshire will deliver his talk entitled *The Battle of Worcester in Historical Context*.

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August, also at 2.30 p.m. Richard Shaw will be talking about the *Slaughter at Fort Royal*.

Ken Potts, our very own Sculpture will be displaying maquettes and sculpture of the Civil War at 1.30 p.m. onwards on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2015**

Our Annual Drumhead Service is at 7.00 p.m. We gather in The Great Hall at The Commandery from 6.00 p.m. onwards and then march together to the top of Fort Royal Park. Refreshments provided by The Cardinal's Hat. This year we have an additional event, the launch of *The Papers and Diary of Henry Townshend 1640-1663* by the Worcestershire Historical Society. Townshend lived through the two month siege of Worcester in 1646 and gives a fascinating account of life in Worcester at this time. The book is normally £36 but will be on sale at a special Drumhead price of £24.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> September, 2015**

Third Trustees meeting. 6.30 p.m. Room 1 at The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester

#### **12<sup>th</sup> November, 2015**

It is the Battle of Worcester Society's A.G.M. starting at 6.30 p.m. It will be held in The Studio, The Hive, starting at 6.30 p.m. Please show your support.

**His Grace The Duke of Hamilton ~ Lord Faulkner of Worcester ~ Lord Selkirk of Douglas  
Sir Tam Dalyell Bt. ~ The Hon. Lady Rosalind Morrison ~ Mr. Henry Berkeley ~ Ms. Diane Rappaport**

**President:** Benjamin Humphrey FRSA  
**Chairman:** Richard Shaw ~ **Vice-Chairman:** Vacant

#### **Executive Committee**

Kenneth Potts FBWS ~ Christine Shaw ~ Roger Fairman ~ Brian Bullock ~ Vaughn Wiltshire

#### **Black Pear Bulletin Editorial Team**

Grant Simmonds ~ Benjamin Humphrey ~ Christine Shaw