

The Black Pear Bulletin

The Monthly Newsletter of the Battle of Worcester Society

Issue No. 8 ~ July 2014



A WARM WELCOME TO LORD SELKIRK

The Chairman writes: "I am absolutely delighted to announce the news of the society's *two* new distinguished patrons. His Grace the Duke of Hamilton and the Right Honourable the Lord Selkirk of Douglas, nephew and uncle respectively, are both direct descendants of the 2nd Duke of Hamilton, who died leading the King of Scots' forces at Worcester. The Duke of Hamilton is the 16th to hold the title and was born in 1978. His Grace is married to Sophie Rutherford, and also holds the title Duke of Brandon. Lord Selkirk is a distinguished politician, having served in a number of governmental posts, and was called to the Scottish Bar in 1968. His Lordship is the President of the Scottish Veterans' Garden City Association and Chairman of the Scottish Advisory Committee, Skill Force, both national charities. Members will be able to meet both our new patrons at Old St. Martin's Church on Sunday 7th September at the Society's Annual Commemoration Service. His Lordship will be giving the Address despite only having recently undergone cardiac surgery. The society are most grateful to our new patrons for coming to the Faithful City on this special day. Lord Faulkner of Worcester, who has worked so tirelessly in the interests of the BoWS over the years, of course, remains our chief patron. The full list of patrons can be seen on our website.



His Grace The Duke of Hamilton



Lord Selkirk of Douglas

A NEW LOOK WEBSITE

The President, Ben Humphrey, and I have given the society website a major overhaul and I do hope that members will enjoy the new look. There are some improvements still to be made, but we are 95% there. Furthermore, the site will now be updated more frequently.

BLACK PEAR BULLETIN

We all lead very busy lives and getting out a monthly newsletter to members is not always easy. It is fair to say that the editorial quality of the Bulletin has not always been of the same standard as the content. These issues are being addressed and I trust that an improvement will be evident in the July Bulletin.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHANGES

As the move to charitable status gets ever closer there have been a couple of changes on the Executive Committee. Natalie Digger (Secretary) and Mark Digger (IT) recently resigned from the Society, and accordingly, as Chairman, I will also take on the Secretary's role, and President, Ben Humphrey, will be responsible for IT. I would like to take this opportunity to thank "Nat and Digg" for their contribution to the work of the Society and wish them and their family the very best for the future.

CHARITABLE STATUS PROGRESS REPORT

The Executive Committee are currently talking to various people with appropriate experience and expertise with a view to ask them to serve as trustees when the move to charitable status takes place. Already recruited is Tim Lawrence, a partner with solicitors Thursfields. We are delighted to have Tim on board and you will be informed as and when new trustees are recruited. The Society application will be made in September.



Mr. Tim Lawrence

BATTLE OF WORCESTER DINNER ~ FRIDAY 5th SEPTEMBER

The social highlight of this year's calendar will hopefully be a sell-out. Ticket sales are going extraordinarily well, but there is still room if you would like to join the party. At an all-in cost of £50, this black tie occasion is a night not to be missed! If you would like to purchase tickets please contact Richard Shaw or Vaughan Wiltshire.

BERKELEY SQUARE AT SPETCHLEY PARK

Our President, Ben Humphrey, wears a whole host of hats, but one that I was not aware of until recently was as a member of singing quartet, *Berkeley Square*, specialists in singing 1930s and 40s classic songs and are an excellent cabaret act. Following a recent meeting with patron, Henry Berkeley of Spetchley Park Gardens, it has been agreed that in the Spring of next year there will be a cabaret evening in the newly opened Wilmott Room on the Spetchley Park estate. As well as *Berkeley Square*, a three course meal and a full evening of entertainment will be included. Numbers will be limited to 60, so once the date is announced it will be a question of getting in early! All profits from the evening will go to the society.



The stunning grounds of Spetchley Park Gardens.

BOSCOBEL HOUSE VISIT

On Saturday 14th June (the anniversary of the Battle of Naseby!) a small coach party of society members undertook a visit to the English Heritage property, Boscobel House. With Vice-Chairman, Richard Shaw, our driver, we arrived late morning and were met by a charming young guide who took us on a tour of the House and told us a host of fascinating stories about the house – how many were true even she wouldn't hazard a guess on. The house which was built in 1632, less than 20 years before it earned a permanent place in our history, was much larger and more accessible than I had imagined. Priest holes abounded, as one might expect, but I was particularly taken by the beautifully carved “Boscobel Chest”, made in the 17th century from wood taken from THAT Oak Tree. Speaking of which, the original oak tree no longer exists, but we were assured that the current oak, much supported, was taken as a sapling from the original. There is a “grandson” and “great-grandson” being carefully nurtured for the future! The famous Oak now stands isolated and guarded by iron railings in a field, when originally it would have been part of a heavily wooded area adjoining the House. All had a great time and we spent lots of money in the souvenir shop. The subsequent pub lunch was delicious, though the service did leave something to be desired. We were back in the Faithful City by late afternoon, leaving those foolish enough such as myself, plenty of time to prepare for the England World cup game that evening. A big thanks to Richard and Christine Shaw for a lovely day out. Another similar visit is already being discussed.



Our merry band.

CIVIL WAR NIGHTS AT THE COMMANDERY

Michael Arnold, author of the highly successful Captain Innocent Stryker series of Civil novels, was our penultimate speaker at the Commandery for the first season of “Civil War Nights”. The occasion, supported by *Waterstones* and *Worcestershire LitFest*, was both entertaining and enlightening. Michael, a society member, travelled from Hampshire especially to speak to us, and returned the same evening!

After speaking about how he came to write his first novel, Michael outlined the chronologically structured plots of the series so far. With a new book about to be released, Michael was beginning work the following day on the book that will cover the Battle of Marston Moor.

During the Q & A session, Michael, who had not visited Worcester before, confirmed that subject to still being commissioned by his publisher, there will eventually be a book that will cover the Battle of Worcester

and that he would like to take Stryker's story through to the Restoration. It is hoped that at some stage TV may take an interest, and we may have a "Civil War Sharpe" in every sense.

Michael stayed on to sign books and talk to members of the audience and pose for photographs with the likes of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman! Michael was presented with a Society hoodie, which I'm sure he appreciated much more than a fee! Thank you so much, Michael, a marvellous evening for everyone present.



L. Chairman Grant Simmonds C. Michael Arnold
R. Vice-Chairman Richard Shaw

RICHARD SHAW IN FOCUS

Richard Shaw is the Vice Chairman of the Battle of Worcester Society.

Q. When did you first take an interest in the English Civil War and the Battle of Worcester?

Although I was born and bred at Norton Barracks, Worcester I did not know much about the English Civil War, it was never taught at school. After seeing the film 'Waterloo' and then reading books about Arthur Wellesley who became the Duke of Wellington in 1814, I was always keen on that era. I joined the police force and after 12 years serving in Shropshire, I came back to Worcester in 1988 on promotion. The Commandery was a Civil War Centre in those days and I recall visiting it one day and Malcolm Atkin was in full Cavalier outfit. I bought his book, 'The Battle of Worcester 1651', which he signed and I've been fascinated by the history ever since. I joined the Battle of Worcester Society three years ago, and became the Vice Chairman last year.

Q. Is this shared by any of your family?

My wife Christine became the Treasurer of the Society in February this year, but she is not really a Civil War fan, just a great support to her husband!

Q. Are you excited by the prospect of the new strategy for the Commandery?

Very much so. The city desperately needs a Civil War focus to educate the people of Worcester on the importance of our city during the Civil War, and on our national heritage. I'm sure some tourists visit Worcester expecting to see something about the battle which ended the Civil War, but at the moment there is very little. I was hooked when I visited the Commandery in the late 1980s and I'm sure many others will become similarly hooked if, with 21st century technology, we can make a good Battle of Worcester presentation, which may even attract tourists.

Q. How do you feel about the head of steam that is now behind the branding of Worcester as the Civil War City?

It was our Chairman, Grant Simmonds, who first thought of this phrase so I hope he took out a copyright on it! Experts on the Civil War may correct me, but I do not know of any other place in Great Britain that can claim more Civil War history than Worcester. We had the first battle of Powick Bridge on 23 September 1642; a brief siege in June 1643; a second siege from May to July 1646 and the final battle on 3 September 1651 which, historians agree, in terms of men involved (42,000), puts us second only to Marston Moor. (In fact Wikipedia puts us top with 47,000 – but that is a dubious source). Who else can match that?

Q. What changes would you like to see?

I believe one issue that would help our Civil War City status and the City's bid for 'City of Culture' would be to have blue plaques at relevant places commemorating the fact that all of the big players in the Civil War



*Vice Chairman Richard Shaw
and his favourite tree.*

stayed in Worcester at some stage. King Charles I, Prince Rupert, Charles Stuart and Oliver Cromwell were all here. And, of course, in 1786 John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom later became Presidents of the USA stayed here. Horatio Nelson and friends also stayed in Worcester in 1802: so let's tell everyone about our famous visitors.

Q. Are you looking forward to the Battle of Worcester Society Dinner on 5th September 2014 at the Worcestershire County Cricket Ground?

Yes, especially as this is the date of my 44th wedding anniversary, so I don't have to think where Christine and I can go, it is all sorted for us. We went to the event two years ago, mainly because I had won £100 in the BoWS draw, which paid for our tickets. However, it was a first class event, well worth the ticket price. The BoWS are the principal organisers this year and although the ticket price is the same as two years ago it is going to be a splendid night out. It is open to all, not just BoWS members.

Q. What other organisations do you belong to?

Far too many! I am Treasurer of the Worcestershire Cricket Society; I am a Steward at Worcester Warriors' Sixways stadium in the winter and a Steward at Worcestershire County Cricket Club in the summer. I am a reader for Talking Newspaper for the Blind and a book sorter for St Richard's Hospice; a leader for the Walking for Health groups at the Commandery and St Peter's and a mini bus driver for the Cranham Care Home. I also give talks on the Worcestershire Regiment and the year 1812 to local groups which raises a bit of cash for the Society.

Q. Do you have any long term plans or ambitions?

Robin Walker MP has kindly agreed to sponsor the BoWS for a visit to the Houses of Parliament on 1st September 2014, so I am organising that. I have 12 train tickets (including Underground travel) plus HoP passes - the inclusive price will be £35. So, I will sell to the first 12 to pay up, I have 8 left. I thought I would take the chance to give this a mention! I am going to Waterloo in June next year with my two sons to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the battle, so I am looking forward to that.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday 23rd July at 6pm

PROF. RONALD HUTTON will be speaking about "THE NATURE OF THE GREAT CIVIL WAR" at The Commandery. Talk to be followed by Q & A, book signing and meet the author. Refreshments and the latest Society merchandise available. ~ **NB This talk will be very popular and we are expecting a sell-out. Please come early or purchase advance tickets. Tickets £5 - You can purchase tickets in advance from the Elgar School of Music, 16-21 Deansway, Worcester WR1 2ES, 01905 28613.**

Saturday 10th, 17th & 24th August 11am - 4pm

WORCESTER FESTIVAL

The Society will again be supporting the Festival, so do come and say "hello" on the following Sundays down on the Riverside Quay: 10th, 17th and 24th.

Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st August - All Day

BATTLE OF WORCESTER SPEAKERS AND DISPLAYS at The Commandery

A host of Society speakers have been lined up to talk over the weekend on various aspects of the Battle of Worcester and related subjects of interest. Those speaking include: Richard Shaw, Vaughan Wiltshire, Howard Robinson.....and your Chairman! The society display will be in the capable hands of Roger Fairman and Brian Bullock.

Monday 1st September

VISIT TO H.M. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, HOUSE OF COMMONS

Worcester Member of Parliament and Society member The Hon. Robin Walker MP has most kindly arranged this visit. **Fully booked.**

Wednesday 3rd September

ANNUAL DRUMHEAD SERVICE AT FORT ROYAL AND THE COMMANDERY

All welcome. Guests assemble at the Commandery for refreshments from 6pm and the Service atop Fort Royal begins at 7pm. The Cardinal's Hat are providing a spread for all from 8pm. For those who have not witnessed this poignant and moving ceremony, I thoroughly recommend you attending.

Friday 5th September

THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER DINNER in the GRAEME HICK PAVILION at the WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET GROUND, NEW ROAD

A marvellous night guaranteed. Fine company, excellent food and wine and superb entertainment. £50 a ticket, includes wine and pre-dinner drink. Black Tie.

Sunday 7th September at 12noon

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION SERVICE at OLD ST.MARTIN'S CHURCH

Taking place at the beautiful Old St. Martin's Church for the first time, the service will be conducted by Society chaplain the Rev. Canon Paul Tongue. The Address will be given by Lord Selkirk of Douglas, direct descendant of the Duke of Hamilton, who fought and died at Worcester in 1651. It is also hoped that the current Duke of Hamilton will attend. Our senior patron, Lord Faulkner of Worcester, will be attending as will some of our other patrons, and a number of local and civic dignitaries. Do please come long with family and friends and support the occasion.

Followed from 1.00pm by drinks and food at THE KING CHARLES HOUSE and depending on numbers THE SWAN WITH TWO NICKS in Friar Street. NB Members will pay for their own refreshments.

At 2.30pm sharp from outside THE COMMANDERY, Tony Spicer of the Battlefields Trust, will undertake a conducted walk of the approaches taken to the centre of Worcester. Sure to be fascinating and will walk of the lunch!. Concludes at 4pm approx.

Sunday 13th September from 3.00 - 4.00 pm

CHAIRMAN'S TALK - THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER at OLD ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH

As Chairman of the Battle of Worcester Society I have been asked to speak about the battle. I will discuss various aspects of the battle and its consequences and this will be followed by a Q & A session. Please note – I have NO book to sell!

Date to be advised

BATTLE OF WORCESTER SOCIETY DINNER at THE FLEECE at BRETORTON nr. EVESHAM

An informal dinner for all Society members, friends and family. Details to follow.

(The Cardinal's Hat and The Fleece are the Society sponsors and a programme of joint events for next year is currently being discussed).

Saturday 8th November at 10.00 am

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at THE COMMANDERY

Your Chairman is foregoing the England versus the All Blacks match at Twickenham!

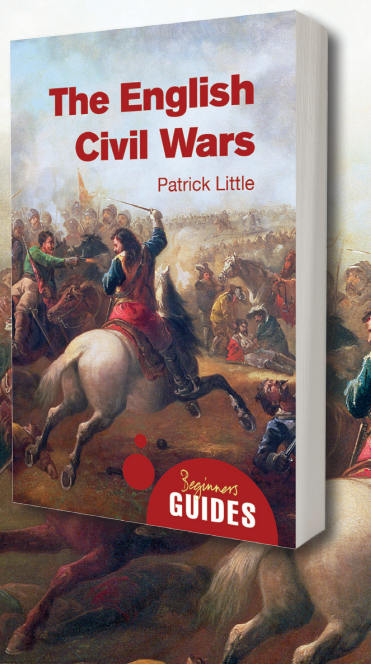
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His Grace The Duke of Hamilton ~ Lord Faulkner of Worcester
Lord Selkirk of Douglas ~ Sir Tam Dalyell Bt. ~ The Hon. Lady Rosalind Morrison
Mr. Henry Berkeley ~ Ms. Diane Rappaport

President: Benjamin Humphrey FRSA
Chairman: Grant Simmonds MBE
Vice-Chairman: Richard Shaw

Executive Committee

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