

An unusual event took place in Worcester Cathedral on 27 January 1851, reported at length in Berrows Worcester Journal of 30 January 1851 by their correspondent who was present and other newspapers around the country:

### **Baptism of an African Infant – Shameful Behaviour of a Mob**

*“A female infant, born in the New Hall, Leicester on the 21<sup>st</sup> December was solemnised in Worcester Cathedral by the Bishop of Worcester. Just before afternoon service a carriage, followed by hundreds, drove up to the northern entrance of the Cathedral, containing the African woman, the two godmothers and godfather, viz Mr and Mrs Tyler of the Paul Pry\*, Worcester and Mrs Tyler, wife of the exhibitor; one of the women carrying the little ebony infant who was the innocent cause of all this ceremony and wonderment. The guardian and exhibitor of the Africans, Mr Tyler was also with them.” (Nottinghamshire Guardian 6 February 1851).*

\*Victorian pub in the Butts, possibly named after a play first presented in London in 1825 or the stagecoach

which ran from Worcester to London at that time.

The baptismal party were seated near the font and there was a number of clergy and “a large congregation a greater part of whom appeared to be highly respectable” seated in the choir. However, an influx of fresh visitors into the nave, caused people from the choir to rush towards the font and the crowd in a few minutes became dense and “exceedingly unruly, jostling, shouting, whistling and quarreling in a manner which would have almost disgraced the gallery of a low theatre”. Some journalists were appalled that some of the women were hatless and some men wore no jackets!

Berrow’s correspondent thought the ceremony would be called off, but after some time the Bishop appeared (Henry Pepys) “accompanied by some of the clergy and officials of the Cathedral, the mother of the child, dressed in the costume of her country, the sponsors and the child itself.” Bishop Pepys “exerted himself to the utmost of his power but could not be heard more than half a dozen paces and had to stop until order was restored by some of the Canons and Lord Sandys” and the child was named Leicester England Macomba. The Nottingham Guardian reporter says the “mother behaved in the most exemplary manner and the baby, dressed in a long white robe, proved itself of a royal race by not even allowing a whimper pass its lips”. After some difficulty in getting through to the Chapter House the registration took place and the mother, her child and her companions were conducted through the Cloisters to College Green to be greeted by throng of people and the College bells. Here their carriage “covered with the skins of beasts proceeded through the High Street preceded by the brass band of Gagliardi’s Museum, and the same night returned to Nottingham, where they are being exhibited, having come from thence in the morning expressly for the purpose of having the rite performed by the Bishop of Worcester”.

According to Berrow’s reporter the “mother of the child was Macomba Faku from the Amaponda tribe of South Africa, the father being a Zoolu chief from the same region, and a Kafir man”. They had been brought to England from “the Cape of Good Hope in the barque Jane, by Capt. Gales on 25 May 1850 and landed in London on the 8<sup>th</sup> August”. Intended to be part of British fairground and theatrical presentations, promoters such as the Tylers presented an image of black people that certainly attracted attention. They had been exhibited at the Ethnological Society in London on 15 January and were to appear in Worcester in early February. At the Great Exhibition in London which ran from May to October 1851 people of African origin were shown in a replica of an African village. One wonders whether they took part in this.

It is not known why Bishop Pepys became involved in the ceremony, but he was certainly a conscientious cleric and could often be found consecrating quite small village churches and Mrs Pepys and their daughters attended charity fund raising events and tried to look after their parishioners in Hartlebury village, with food and baby clothing.

**Diana Clutterbuck**

## Protected Status for St. Mary's Church, Bishop's Wood

Many of us will be familiar with the pretty little church of St Mary, Bishop's Wood, also known as St Mary's Crossway Green. Although it no longer has a regular congregation, it is still the location for burials in Hartlebury parish, as St. James' churchyard is no longer available for that purpose.

I have been visiting St Mary's since I was a small boy, arriving there from Kidderminster with my mother on the bus, to look after the graves of my Grandparents. The church is a beautiful building that has always fascinated me, especially later in life, when I discovered how it came to be there and learned something of how it is constructed.

The building has very recently obtained protected status, as due to the splendid efforts of the Victorian Society, it is now Listed Grade 2. The news on this is available on the Victorian Society website:

<https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/national-news/the-victorian-society-secures-listing-for-church-of-st-mary-in-crossway-green/> .



I was very pleased, with the splendid support of Carol Priest, the former Secretary of Hartlebury History Society, to help the Victorian Society in their quest to protect this lovely church.

The brainchild of Henry Philpott, Bishop of Worcester (1860-1890), the building is a mission church, built by Thomas Vale in 1882. Many mission churches of that time were prefabricated and modestly covered in corrugated metal sheeting; there is a typical example in Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, as recently visited by our Group. In the case of St Mary's however, the construction is more

elaborate and attractive, probably as a result of Bishop Philpott's direct involvement.

Although there was some prefabrication in its construction, St Mary's has always seemed to be a perfect and permanent "fit" in its location. The Victorian Society says that the church was constructed to provide local farm labourers a more convenient alternative to worship than travelling to the parish church of St James. I believe however, that the close proximity of the location to the parish of Doverdale was also an influence upon the make-up of the congregation, as St Mary's was the nearest place of worship for residents of Acton and Comhampton, for example. My Grandmother, who lived in Comhampton, attended St Mary's in the 1920's and 1930's.

Henry Philpott, who lived in Hartlebury Castle throughout his term as Bishop of Worcester, devoted himself to his Diocese and to charitable work. He helped local churches in need of repair, offering sums of money from his own pocket and had a particular interest in the needs of poor and less fortunate people. The mission church of St Mary's Crossway Green is indicative of his commitment and efforts. He is buried there and the recently repaired lychgate commemorates him, so it is fitting that the church he built now has the protected status it deserves.

**David Simons**

**AN EMINENT KIDDERMINSTER VICTORIAN (OR, PERHAPS, INFAMOUS)  
BARON ALBERT GRANT (1831-1899)**



The story of a boy born in poverty, who claws his way out of the slums, makes a fortune (by devious means), loses his fortune, then builds another one - before a final disgrace, reads like a Victorian melodrama. It is the story of Augustus Melmotte, the central character in Trollope's novel 'The Way We Live Now' – but the character of Melmotte was fashioned from the real life of Albert Grant who was Kidderminster's MP between 1865-68, then briefly in 1874. His financial career both fascinated and appalled the nation for several decades. Grant was born in Dublin the son of a German pedlar. After a number of false starts he found his metier as a company promotor. Businesses seeking investment funds would engage Grant who, for a fee, would market the opportunity to his client case, vigorously and with scant concern for underlying financial realities - while ensuring his own massive profits from the process.

To enhance investor's confidence, he filled his Board of Directors with glamorous names and titles. In due course he seems to have decided that his credibility would be further improved with 'MP' attached to his own name. His arrival in Kidderminster in 1865

to fight an election generated massive excitement with boisterous crowds. There was an expectation that Grant's voluminous wallet might reinstate the long Kidderminster tradition of lavish parties for electors and others with virtual carnivals at election time. Despite a Liberal campaign advertising allegations of his past financial impropriety, he was duly elected as Conservative MP.

He bought a house on Blakebrook but never lived in it and later sold it at a loss – which says little for his financial acumen. He distributed largesse to various local organisations, some of which including those made to Old Meeting House and the YMCA were not accepted on account of his dubious reputation. New Meeting House, which he probably viewed as at nest of radical Liberals, didn't even get the chance to return a gift. He didn't stand at the next election in 1868 – there too many disappointed investors who were wishing to take issue with him and he thought it best to keep out of England for a while. Over the next few years however he brazenly reappeared on the public scene and in 1874 he stood again as Conservative candidate for Kidderminster.

His financial adventures were, at this time, again being scrutinised this time particularly with regard to a very dubious silver mine in Nevada. The investment prospectus was supported by a wildly optimistic (and perhaps wholly fraudulent) geological survey provided by an eminent scientist from Yale University. Grant bribed the financial editor of The Times to publish an article, which Grant himself had written, under the journalists own name extolling this investment.

The enthusiasm for his return saw the crowd at the railway station unhitch the horses from his carriage and drag it to the Lion Hotel when he promised parties after the election - at his expense.

He won again but these promises brought forward a petition against the result. He dismissed this as the work of reds and republicans. The petition, was heard in Kidderminster in July, and despite Grant having surrounded himself with a team of prestigious and costly barristers, the election result was overturned. It became apparent that his official electoral returns gravely under reported the sums he had spent on post-election entertaining.

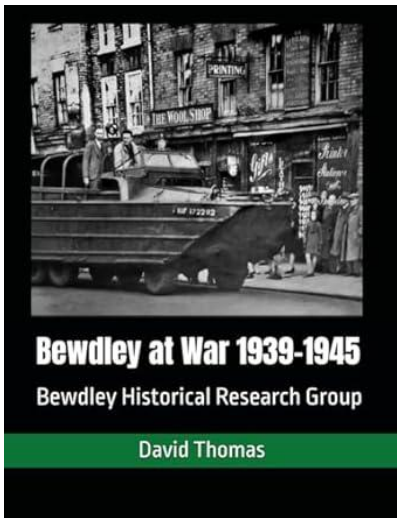
Grant spent much of the next twenty five years in and out of the bankruptcy courts before dying in poverty - though astonishingly the Kidderminster conservatives had turned to him again for the 1880 election when he was defeated by John Brinton. The Liberal Kidderminster Shuttle reported his many travails in the courts over the years with malicious glee.

However, curiously, his legacy had some positive elements. He acquired and reinstated a derelict plot of land in central London which to this day houses Leicester Square; he bought and donated to the National Portrait Gallery an outstanding portrait by Landseer of Sir Walter Scott. The title of 'Baron' was apparently bestowed on him by King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy in thanks for Grant's role for his role creating the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele - - still a glowing adornment to Milan.

*Mike Loftus*

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## **New light on the dark days of WWII in Bewdley**



Former journalist **David Thomas** has recently published a new study of the impact of the Second World War on the Worcestershire riverside town of Bewdley.

Titled *Bewdley at War 1939 - 1945*, David's study tells the story of the impact of a global war on one local community, from early preparations in 1937 to a collective sigh of relief in 1945 that only one bomb had fallen inside the town boundary and most of its young men in uniform were at last coming home.

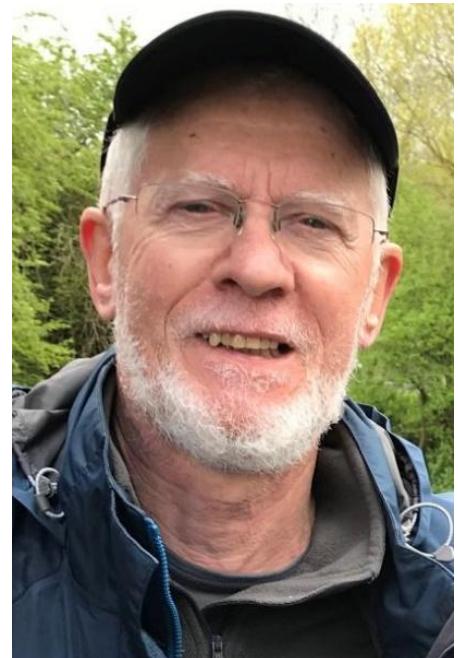
The war brought major changes, transforming Bewdley from a quiet backwater to a place of feverish activity to defend the vital bridge crossing and keep its citizens safe from bombs and enemy invasion.

The book records the Home Front: making strikers for mines, air raid wardens, bomb shelters, the Home Guard, checkpoints, evacuees

and coping with rationing.

The author tells the moving stories of Bewdley soldiers through interviews with their surviving relatives. It ends with a detailed war diary of events between 1939 and 1945 taken from the pages of the Kidderminster Shuttle. As a result of original research, he is able to shed new light on the triumphs and the tragedies of Bewdley's darkest hour.

Bewdley-born David Thomas has a degree in architecture but changed professions for journalism. During a 42-year career, he worked on local newspapers in Redditch, Kidderminster and London, then for a news agency covering the Old Bailey and the Court of Appeal. He became a freelance crime reporter at Worcester Crown Court for the Worcester News, national daily newspapers, BBC Hereford and Worcester radio and Midlands TV stations. He is a member of Bewdley Civic Society and Bewdley Historical Research Group.



**David Thomas**

***Bewdley at War 1939 – 1945*** is available on Amazon in both softback and hardback formats, at £14.99 and £19.99.

## Christmas Day Disaster at Hartlebury Castle



When Henry Pepys was appointed Bishop of Worcester, Hartlebury Castle became a lively family home for his wife Maria, and their four surviving children Henry junior, Louisa, Herbert and Emily. In 1844, Emily was 10 years old. Miraculously, the diary she kept at the time was found locally in 1949 and now resides at the Castle where it was written.

Her elder brother Henry came home from university for the Christmas vacation and Emily finds him much improved *"he is generally very cross with me, but either he or I got better for he is not so bad as the last time he was here."*

On Christmas Eve, Mistletoe, Holly and Laurel were brought into the schoolroom and Emily and Herbert decide to make the Holly into the words *"Jolly Christmas"* which was very difficult and pricked our fingers a good deal". Herbert knocks in nails and hangs it up and they *"made a wreath of Laurels for Papa's bust of Homer."* *"After a very jolly tea Papa read Pickwick"* but they all have to *"sit up till half past ten as the servants were dancing."*

After all this fun, Emily and Louisa retire to the bedroom they share. Emily says *"about 5 o'clock I woke and smelt a very strong smell of smoke and was so hoarse I could hardly speak. I woke Louisa and she knocked at Mama's door where Papa was getting up too. Mama rang the bell for Nana who came down coughing with a light, showing us the room was so thick with smoke we could hardly see"*. Mama told the girls to go back to their bedroom *"but our room was much worse"*. Nana returned from downstairs saying *Oh dear, Oh dear what shall we do, the Schoolroom is on fire."*

The alarm was raised, family guests and servants roused and Mama tells them to put on their Cloaks, Bonnets, Stockings and Shoes to go down to the stone Hall where Papa thinks they will be safe. *"The bell at the top of the house rung. Charles was sent to the village to bring all the men he could find, Joseph to Stourport for a Fire Engine and then to Kidderminster."*

The horses would have had to have been caught before they could set off but they made good time. Emily says *"Both engines came but the Kidderminster\* one was too large to come through the hall, so they were obliged to bring water up from the moat in buckets."* The Stourport engine was able to get into the hall and pumped water manually. Fortunately the fire was confined to the schoolroom and soon put out. *"Papa went into the room and nearly fell into the cellar underneath which he did not see, but somebody got him out as he was hanging by his hands. Luckily Papa is insured and only the schoolroom is badly damaged."* Later on Emily notes the *"Insurance Office would pay £143"*.

Local and national newspapers featured the story and it is remarked that *"the Bishop's presence of mind, having immediately closed the door of the schoolroom and ensuring his household were safe, forbade anyone to enter the burning room saved the whole building. The two local engines too "hastened to the spot with laudable alacrity, the Stourport we believe arriving first, the flames were speedily got under."*

#### **Sources:**

Drawing of Castle c 1861 Illustrated London News

The Journal of Emily Pepys, pub. 1984. Reprint 2018 (Hartlebury Castle shop).

Worcester Herald 28 Dec. 1844 and Worcester Journal 2 January 1845.

\*Monmouthshire Merlin of Newport 2 January 1845 p 3 mentions *"the powerful engine of the Birmingham Fire Office stationed at Kidderminster"* in their report.

Worcester Chronicle 24 February 1841 reports a Kidderminster Council meeting regarding *"accommodation for the engine which the Birmingham Fire Office had so liberally placed at the disposal of the Council"* as the town did not have one of its own. It was agreed this was to be kept at the end of the Market House, Oxford Street.

**Diana Clutterbuck 29/9/24**

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**Thanks to Eve Fraser for this one:**



**HALLOW HISTORY ARCHIVES**

[Colonel William Carlos of Green Street, Shoulton, Hallow](#)

Colonel William Careless, later known as Carlos for his loyalty to King Charles II, was from Brewood in Staffordshire, but spent the latter part of his life at Green Street farm in Shoulton. He had fought for the Royalist cause throughout the Civil War, but he is best known for the events following Charles II's escape from Worcester after the Royalist army's defeat by Oliver Cromwell's forces at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651.

Charles II travelling in disguise, after a desperate three days as a fugitive reached Boscobel House in Shropshire, the home of the Penderell family. Colonel William Careless, who had escaped from Worcester after the last ditch fighting in Sidbury and the High Street, arrived at Boscobel as Cromwell's soldiers were hunting for the king. It was agreed that Charles should take some bread and cheese and hide with the colonel in "a great oak" in Boscobel Wood. Cromwell's soldiers searched the wood, but the king's hiding place was not found. The exhausted king fell asleep and Careless kept guard and prevented the sleeping king from falling from the tree. The following day Careless killed and butchered a sheep and legend has it that the king cooked it.



The colonel escaped from England separately from the king and was the first to inform the king's sister Mary, Princess of Orange, that the king was safe. His military career continued abroad as an officer in the king's Royal Regiment of Guards. In 1658 at Brussels, he was granted under King Charles II Great Seal the name of Carlos, and a Coat of Arms incorporating an oak tree.

He returned to England in 1660 with the king. After the Restoration of the monarchy, he was one of three men to be granted the lucrative proceeds of tax on hay and straw brought into London and Westminster. He also was granted the right to sell ballast on the river Thames. It seems that his income in the 1660's was equivalent to about £85,000 today. Carlos was later made a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and used his influence to petition the king to grant favours to those who had helped the king after his escape from Worcester.

By 1674 Colonel Carlos and his wife, who were Roman Catholics (recusants), were living in Hallow parish and church records show that they were excommunicated along with two other couples named Farr and Saunders. In 1678 Parliament ordered "that Colonel William Carlos who was instrumental in the Preservation of His Majesty's Person after the Battle of Worcester", should not be subject to the penalties of any of the laws relating to popish recusants.

William Carlos wrote his will in 1688 whilst living at Green Street farm, Shoulton. Before William died in 1689 that estate had already passed into the hands of one of his adopted sons, Edward Carlos a Worcester apothecary, so that in William's will his bequests relating to property all refer to those in and around Stafford. Despite William and his wife Dorothy being ex-communicated she was buried inside Hallow church outside the chancel rails on 26 June 1676.

*Information from original research at the Worcestershire Archives and on-line. Jacquie Hartwright*

# *The Family History Show, Malvern*

## **Event Description**

With exhibitors from all over the UK and Ireland, this is **one of the largest family history shows in England**. Many family history societies, archives and companies attend each year and there is lots of history from the local area too.

Free talks are held throughout the day, plus you can book a free personal session with an expert and visit exhibitors, societies, archives and companies from all over the world.

Open 10am – 4pm in the Severn Hall.

Free parking available.

Tickets: **£8 online** (£12 on the day; under 16s free) – or buy early to get two tickets for £14 (each ticket also includes a goody bag on entrance worth £15)

**Saturday 15 March 2025**

**10:00am**

**Three Counties Showground**

Website

**Location**

**Three Counties Showground**

WR13 6NW

01684 584924



**Ask the Experts**

Book a **free personal session** with an expert.





## Free Talks

Free talks are held throughout the day in a **large lecture area**.



## Societies & Archives

Visit exhibitors, societies, archives and companies from all over the world.