

# STANLEY BALDWIN

A STATESMAN IN BRONZE

EDITED BY LORD LEXDEN OBE

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# A GLORIOUS DAY IN BEWDLEY

An illustrated account of the unveiling of Stanley Baldwin's statue in Bewdley, Worcestershire on 27th September 2018.



## The Editor

Lord Lexden is the Conservative Party's Official Historian.

His assessment of Baldwin the statesman can be found on pages 13 to 18.

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At 11 a.m. on Thursday, 27th September 2018, a magnificent statue of Bewdley's greatest son, Stanley Baldwin, was unveiled in brilliant autumn sunshine by His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester KG, GCVO.

The bronze statue is 2.1 metres high and stands on .9 metre plinth. It bears a simple inscription: Stanley Baldwin 1867-1947 Three Times Prime Minister.

An event of national importance witnessed by members of both Houses of Parliament (and reported on the BBC's flagship news programme, 'The Westminster Hour', the following Sunday), the Royal unveiling was also an occasion for intense local pride. Most of the cost of the £130,000 project was met by a local fund-raising campaign under the auspices of the Bewdley Civic Society, of which Baldwin himself had been the founding President in 1944.

In his speech of welcome, Richard Perrin, the Civic Society's Chairman, thanked the people of Bewdley and Worcestershire for giving the project 'such wonderful support' as the Society went about the demanding task of raising nearly all the money that was needed from the general public.

The Civic Society, Richard Perrin continued, 'had many achievements to its credit, but this statue is its greatest'.

The statue, which stands outside Bewdley's town hall, is on the very spot where Baldwin received the Freedom of Bewdley in 1925, as the Civic Society's President, Beatrice Grant, pointed out in her speech of welcome.

A great-granddaughter of Baldwin, she was one of many descendants present, their ages ranging from 89 to 16. They included Edward, the fourth Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, grandson of the prime minister. The Baldwin family, she added, had given 'so much to this town and surrounding areas. It is therefore a fitting tribute to have the only statue of Baldwin here in Bewdley'.

His Royal Highness, who was warmly applauded, was accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Lt. Col. Patrick Holcroft, LVO, OBE.

In an impromptu speech, His Royal Highness stressed the importance of statues in reminding us of our history. Nothing, he added, could be more appropriate than that Stanley Baldwin should have this permanent memorial in a town that cherished his memory.

His Royal Highness also congratulated the well-known, award-winning sculptor, Martin Jennings, on creating so fine a work.

An immense amount of preparatory work was done. As Beatrice Grant said, ‘Martin did so much research, looking through numerous photograph albums, talking to the family, enabling him to get a real feel of Baldwin’.

In its 2018 autumn newsletter, the Civic Society captured the full glory of the day. ‘The autumn sun was at its brightest; the flags fluttered; the band played; the bells rang out; the crowd cheered and the great man was revealed, pipe in hand, gazing possessively down Load Street towards the bridge, and looking every inch the Worcestershire man, as he often described himself’.

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After the unveiling ceremony, Beatrice Grant and Richard Perrin, together with their fellow members of the Bewdley Civic Society Committee, entertained some 200 guests at a reception in St George’s Hall, Bewdley.

The guests included the local Conservative MP, Mark Garnier, and the Labour Deputy Leader, Tom Watson, who grew up in nearby Kidderminster; he provided an important reminder of the goodwill which Baldwin showed to Labour MPs who first arrived in large numbers in the Commons during his time.

Baldwin also loved the life and traditions of the House of Commons. Lord Lisvane, who was among those present with his wife, was a distinguished Clerk of the House before his elevation to the Lords. Lord Cormack, a long-serving former Conservative MP closely associated with the statue appeal, had hoped to come, but in the event was unfortunately unable to be present.

There were four speeches. Richard Perrin and Andrew Grant DL, husband of Beatrice Grant and chief fund-raiser for the statue appeal, enlarged on the

hard and successful work done in the course of securing the large amount of money that had been needed, thanking those who had committed so much time and energy to the campaign.

Alistair Lexden, Conservative peer and political historian, recalled Stanley Baldwin’s attractive character and his major achievements during his fourteen years as Conservative leader between 1923 and 1937.

Edward Baldwin spoke of his feelings on the day when his hopes of seeing a statue of his grandfather in his native Bewdley had at last been realised.

They had in their audience, Philip Williamson, Professor of Modern British History at Durham University and author of the definitive book on Baldwin’s remarkable role in national life.

The texts of their speeches follow, along with a number of pictures recording a glorious day in Bewdley.

### The Start of the Glorious Day



Words of welcome from Richard Perrin, Chairman of the Bewdley Civic Society.

### The High Point of the Day



His Royal Highness Unveils the Statue.



His Royal Highness praises the statue with Beatrice Grant, Baldwin's great-granddaughter and President of the Bewdley Civic Society, standing on his left.



## After the Unveiling



From left to right, Mark Garnier MP, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, His Royal Highness and the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, Lt. Col. Patrick Holcroft LVO, OBE.



Andrew Grant DL, chief fund-raiser for the statue appeal, interviewed by the BBC.

## BALDWIN OF BEWDLEY

By His Grandson, Edward Baldwin

Well, Bewdley – You’ve done it! When, a while ago, I said to Richard Perrin, esteemed Chairman of the Civic Society, that it was six years ago almost to the day that I spent an evening with my old friend Nigel Goodman, and we talked over the possibility of a statue in Worcestershire to honour Stanley Baldwin, Richard said, ‘Oh Lord! I had no idea we’d been so slow’. This wasn’t the point I was making at all, as I hastened to assure him. It is a truly remarkable achievement for a town of this size, with no easy access to major funding, to have got its collective head down and tackled all the problems inherent in bringing such a major project to fruition, and in the time you did it. The statue committee who worked on behalf of the Society deserve high praise.

I must admit that a statue had been a ghost of a hope in my head for a long time, as I had grown up to watch my father strike out against the prevalent mood that denigrated so much of what Baldwin had done in his public life. I watched him speak about it, when and where he could, and then find a publisher in 1955 who would market a serious rebuttal of no small quality. A gradual but effective process since then will have helped open the coffers that we have been able to access. I can almost feel my father’s presence today. The living presence of distinguished historians and others who have helped through the years is greatly appreciated today.

I want to say a bit about ‘SB’ – as some of us have slipped into calling him – that doesn’t involve much reference to politics. Some of you will know the slim, hardback collections of speeches and addresses of his on all kinds of subjects, that can still be found. One of them, *Service of Our Lives*, includes the speech he gave ‘On Taking Leave of His Constituency’, sub-titled ‘Speech delivered to the Bewdley Unionist Association’ – note the name – ‘at the Guildhall, Worcester, April 10, 1937’. Bewdley was his beloved constituency – so why Worcester, why not here? The answer is that there was no hall in the constituency anywhere, not just Bewdley, remotely large enough to accommodate the numbers that wanted to

attend. And why was that? Listen to three sentences from his speech, harking back to when he took over from his father, who was MP from 1892 until he died in 1908.

‘The time was in 1908 that I really knew most people in the Division, because I had been about the whole countryside for my father. Since 1892 there was not a village or hamlet I did not know, or a Friendly Society with which I had not dined. I knew them all, and by my side were my father’s friends’.

Just think of that. Baldwin was no great exaggerator. Of course, sheer numbers nowadays, with much denser populations, must produce a different situation. And speaking as Prime Minister he does go on to lament that ‘I have hardly been down here since the War’. But still the sense of devotion from their MP: the service, as the booklet is entitled, and not just service to his Unionists, as his party was then called. And this devotion, affection even, was reciprocated. Fourscore and one years later we have brought him here, and unlike in 1937 there is plenty of room for him to be seen, and we trust that he will never again be forced to take his leave.

A fine example of Baldwin’s values was printed in *The Times* in May of this year, with reference to a remarkable letter printed by the paper in June 1919. The then writer had drawn attention to the vast debt caused by the First World War, and the example that could be shown by the ‘wealthy classes’ if they imposed on themselves a voluntary levy to the Exchequer. He was doing just this, he wrote, by donating £150,000 of the new War Loan as a ‘thank-offering’. Few responded on the scale that ‘F.S.T.’ (initials of the anonymous writer) had hoped. Probably fewer hit on the writer, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, a little-known Minister called Stanley Baldwin. Baldwin was very upset when unmasked as the giver ; his ‘FST letter’ has gone down in history.

Then in 1922, at the risk of his own position, he led the attack in the Carlton Club which broke up the post-war coalition with the Liberals, disgusted as much as anything by the moral climate under Lloyd George’s leadership. His devastating speech took just 8 minutes. I say this with some embarrassment (speaker looks at his watch!). Seven months later he was Prime Minister.

I shall not apologise for finishing with a little family story I have told before, which for its charm and truth is worth retelling. In 1923 Baldwin, a new

Prime Minister, felt bound by his predecessor’s pledge against protective tariffs, so he called an early general election to release him. This honourable act cost him his job and majority, and Labour came in for the first time. They didn’t last long, and Baldwin’s Conservatives came back with a commanding majority. A famous cousin was to note the moral.

At Christmas 1924 the Kiplings came to stay at Astley – cousins Rud and Stan had been close since childhood. Baldwin later described to the historian Arthur Bryant what happened on Christmas morning, ‘I found this on my plate at breakfast written on a half sheet of Astley note paper’ – and with this quote, signed ‘R.K’. – I will finish :

‘To him who lost and fell – who rose and won,  
Because his aim was other than men’s praise,  
This for an omen that in all things done  
Strength shall be born of unselfseeking days’.

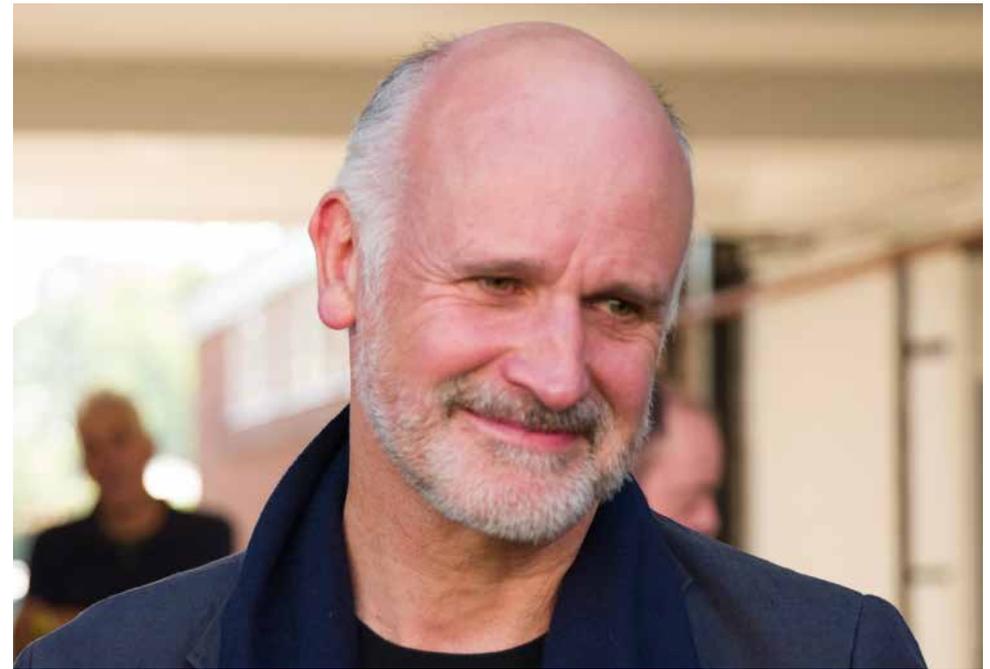
## After the Unveiling



His Royal Highness with (from left) Richard Perrin, Martin Jennings and Beatrice Grant.



His Royal Highness with (from left) Mark Garnier MP, Martin Jennings, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, Beatrice Grant and Richard Perrin.



Baldwin's distinguished sculptor, Martin Jennings.



Tom Watson MP, Deputy leader of the Labour Party (which Baldwin made welcome in the Commons), and Mark Garnier, Conservative MP for the local constituency of which Bewdley, represented by Baldwin for nearly thirty years, forms part.



Edward Baldwin applauds the success of the fund-raisers for the statue.



Andrew Grant, chief fund-raiser, in happy mood, his great task completed.

## THE STATESMAN FROM BEWDLEY

By Alistair Lexden

Stanley Baldwin loved his native county of Worcestershire, a constant source of inspiration to him, and he loved his country. Large numbers of his contemporaries, sensing his profound, yet gentle patriotism, which threatened no other nation, came quite quickly to regard him with affection after he emerged suddenly at the forefront of public life in the early 1920s. Politicians have to expect mocking or derogatory nicknames. Baldwin escaped them: he was known kindly, and accurately, as Honest Stan.

People thought of him almost as a personal friend: for he spoke to them frequently in clear, straightforward language in their homes, through the newly established BBC. He was a brilliant broadcaster, far surpassing all his fellow politicians. It was the start of a new era of mass communications: and he dominated it.

The ranks of his admirers extended far beyond those who belonged to, or voted for, the Conservative Party, which he led to the three greatest election victories in its history during his fourteen years at its head. He had the ability, given to few political leaders, especially in peace-time, to address the nation in language—some of the most moving and beautiful language it had ever heard—that avoided partisan rancour and bitterness.

He had friends in places where most Tory leaders attract only opponents. He enjoyed the company of trade union leaders and gained their trust, which helped bring the General Strike of 1926, one of the most formidable challenges he faced, to a swift conclusion in ten days, and minimised the damage to industrial relations and the economy. The editor of *The Times* wrote that ‘Toryism, as expounded by him, lost many of its repellent features’.

His objective, from which he never wavered, was to diminish the class divisions, which scarred his country so deeply, and draw people together

irrespective of their backgrounds in the service—one of his favourite words—of their country. It was a mission which he told his own Party to pursue with vigour. Addressing a great election victory rally at the Royal Albert Hall in December 1924, he said that Conservatives must dedicate themselves to creating ‘the union of those two nations of which Disraeli spoke two generations ago: union among our own people to make one nation of our own people at home which, if secured, nothing else matters in the world’.

In this way he introduced into political life that famous phrase, ‘one nation’, which is heard again and again today on the lips of some Labour, as well as of Tory, politicians. Few have worked as hard as he did to make it a reality. Yet he is too frequently denied the credit for devising it; it is widely believed to have come from Disraeli, but he never used it. Whenever I come across its misattribution in the media, I write in to correct it.

It was Stanley Baldwin who made Britain a fully democratic state. In 1928 he brought all women over 21 within it by giving them the vote, finishing what had been begun ten years earlier when the franchise had been conferred on women with property over the age of 30. He said in 1927 that ‘a democracy is incomplete and lop-sided until it is representative of the whole people, and the responsibility rests alike on men and women’. This year has brought events commemorating the centenary of the limited enfranchisement of women in 1918. But it was Baldwin who did women as a whole the greatest service ten years later. Fittingly, he was asked to unveil the lovely statue of Mrs Pankhurst erected beside Parliament in 1930.

By 1930 many had come to regard Baldwin as the third most famous person in the realm, after their revered monarch, King George V, and the charming Prince of Wales. The gruff, good-hearted sovereign occasionally found it necessary to chide his longest-serving prime minister, who spent nearly eight years in all at Number 10. In a letter to the King in 1925, Baldwin described an all-night sitting in the Commons as resembling ‘St James’s Park at midday with members lying about the benches in recumbent positions’. Royal displeasure was communicated to him. ‘Members of Parliament now include ladies and such a state of things as you describe seems to His Majesty hardly decorous’.

It was fortunate that other less than decorous remarks made by Baldwin did not reach the royal ears. ‘Never stand between a dog and a lamp-post’, he once advised his Downing Street staff – sensibly enough. He invented proverbs. One which he said was of Afghan origin would certainly have

bemused the sovereign, and many others besides: ‘He who lies in the bosom of the goat, spends his remaining days plucking out the fleas’. He was deluged with letters from retired colonial officials authenticating this bogus proverb, but insisting that it originated in Burma, or Malaya, or Singapore, or some other place where they had served. (Baldwin was in fact having a little fun at the expense of Lloyd George, nicknamed ‘the goat’.)

Baldwin saw the monarchy as the utterly indispensable constitutional linchpin of the nation whose unity and cohesion he sought throughout his career to strengthen. Of the straitlaced George V, he said: ‘we are fortunate indeed to have as our King a man with such a sense of duty’. He looked in vain for similar virtue in his successor, Edward VIII. He believed that the interests of the country compelled him to ask the King to choose between the throne and a hard, greedy woman, uninterested in public service, with two former husbands living.

His masterly handling of the abdication crisis in 1936, saving the Crown from any lasting damage, brought his career to a triumphant conclusion. His detailed explanation of the crisis in the House of Commons was described by Harold Nicolson as ‘the best speech we will ever hear in our lives’. He retired a few months later. Hensley Henson, the Bishop of Durham, said: he is ‘really a very great man, and a genuine member of the “goodly fellowship of the prophets”’.

Not all the country’s historic institutions gained his full-hearted praise. He went reluctantly to the House of Lords on his retirement, saying disarmingly ‘there is perhaps a certain retributive justice in it as I have sent so many others there, hoping I should never see their faces again’.

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This, then, was the much-praised, utterly down to earth, deeply humane statesman—no lesser term would be appropriate—now to be commemorated for ever by this magnificent statue in a place which he knew so well and cared for so deeply as boy and man, sentiments that were amply reciprocated by its people during his long years of association with it, nearly thirty of them as its Member of Parliament.

How frequently in the hundreds of speeches he delivered outside Parliament—more than any other modern prime minister—he referred to vivid memories

of Worcestershire which abided with him and to which he gave eloquent expression. Here is an extract from one of them, recalling Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 when he was twenty years old:

'I was walking slowly across a wide common in Worcestershire, waiting for the warning light of the great beacon on Malvern which was to give the signal for the chain of beacons running north to carry the glad news of the jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. How often in our history had these same hills sent out their fiery message, to Briton and Roman, to Saxon and Dane. But this night it was a message of rejoicing and thanksgiving and pride...at the appointed hour the first flame shot up on Malvern, and one by one each hill took up the tale, until I stood in the middle of a vast illuminated circle, the nearer fires showing the people attending them, and the remoter dwindling in size until they merely blazed as stars on the horizon'.

Apart from the power of the language, note the historical resonance which is a recurrent feature of his speeches. A country is impoverished when it lacks leaders with a sense of the past, as we do today.

Baldwin's total lack of self-importance, that besetting sin of politicians, is well illustrated by a famous anecdote. On a train journey during the second of his three premierships, he noticed that another occupant of the compartment was looking at him with some puzzlement. After a time this man leant forward and tapped Baldwin on the knee. 'You are Baldwin, aren't you?', he said. 'You were at Harrow in '84'. Baldwin nodded assent to both propositions. His former school-fellow appeared satisfied. But after a few more minutes he again became puzzled and tapped once more. 'Tell me', he said, 'what are you doing now?' I had long imagined this story to be apocryphal, but I was heartened to see it in the lovely speech made by his great-granddaughter Bea Grant at Hagley Hall during the fund-raising campaign for the statue.

It is well-known that Baldwin's reputation plunged precipitously from the astonishingly high point at which it stood when he retired in 1937. The cause is equally well-known: the charge that he failed to rearm Britain in the face of the growing menace of the fascist dictators. How proud he would have been that this wholly spurious accusation, which he himself was too old and infirm to rebut, should have been countered so powerfully, first by his son, Windham, and then by Edward, his grandson. They have been vindicated. Detailed research by modern historians has removed the tarnish from Stanley

Baldwin's reputation—spectacularly so in Professor Philip Williamson's brilliant book, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative leadership and national values*, published in 1999, which was followed by a fascinating collection of extracts from Baldwin's personal papers, which he produced jointly with Edward Baldwin.

Air rearmament was launched on a large scale in 1934; forty-one new RAF squadrons were approved. At the general election which took place the following year (when another thirty-nine squadrons were approved), Baldwin sought an explicit mandate for its continuation and expansion. He said: 'I will not be responsible for the conduct of any Government in this country at the present time, if I am not given power to remedy the deficiencies which have accrued in our defence services since the War'. He got the mandate he sought with his third massive Conservative majority.

The myths that Churchill later created about Baldwin's neglect of Britain's defences have now been demolished. Professor Williamson has provided a definitive correction: 'Rearmament was a complicated matter, facing financial and physical constraints, requiring decisions on priorities, and depending upon uncertain information about the German position. Cabinet ministers chose to plan for a possible war in the medium term (1939 and later) and in the short term to build a deterrent air force, while seeking to tie Hitler down to negotiated agreements. It cannot be assumed that if Churchill had been in their position from 1934 to 1937 his actions—rather than his words—would, or could, have been much different'.

What did Baldwin think about Nazi Germany? He detested it. Appalled by the Kristallnacht attack on Jews and their property towards the end of 1938, he launched The Lord Baldwin's Fund for Refugees. In eight months it raised £522,000, slightly over £34 million in today's values. It helped fund the Kindertransport, and is regarded as the most successful British public appeal of the inter-war years, as Baldwin's great-grandson, Simon Russell, Lord Russell of Liverpool, recently told the House of Lords.

Baldwin made his last speech as Prime Minister on 18 May 1937 to a packed Albert Hall, filled with representatives of the youth of the Empire and Commonwealth. Much to Baldwin's pleasure, they were joined unexpectedly by the Duke of Gloucester, father of His Royal Highness, bearing a message from his brother, the recently crowned King George VI. What, asked Baldwin, had made Britain so successful? His answer: 'Freedom, ordered

freedom within the law, with force in the background and not in the foreground; a society in which freedom and authority are blended in due proportion'. He told his young audience: 'It may well be that you will have to save democracy'—as a number of them would indeed do a few years later. And he added: 'live for the brotherhood of man'.

These were the ideals of the great man now commemorated here in Bewdley by the glorious statue that Martin Jennings has created. Ideals like these need to be enunciated once again today, with Baldwin's eloquent persuasiveness, in our deeply troubled times when his great aim, 'One Nation', seems especially elusive.

Finally, on this important day, should we not remind ourselves of perhaps the best-known words spoken by this formidable figure, deeply imbued with Christian faith, who cared so strongly about the unity of his country? Tears stood in the eyes of MPs throughout the House of Commons as he concluded his famous speech on industrial relations on 6th March 1925: 'There are many in all ranks and in all parties who will re-echo my prayer: "Give peace in our time, O Lord"'.<sup>1</sup>

*A fuller account of Stanley Baldwin's career and achievements can be found in a lecture which Alistair Lexden delivered at the Carlton Club (where Baldwin first came to national prominence with a speech in 1922) to mark the 150th anniversary of Baldwin's birth last year. It is available on his website, <http://www.alistairlexden.org.uk>.*



(Baldwin's Christmas card ninety years ago, incorporating the words of an old Worcestershire greeting, of which he was very fond.)

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