

BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT TOURIST ASSOCIATION AGM
THE ENGINE HOUSE - 11am on 27th NOVEMBER 2012

I would like to thank David Mee and Severn Valley Railway for inviting us to the Engine House in Highley for the AGM.

As volunteers the board members and directors continue to strive to promote not just Bridgnorth but the market towns and villages in what was the old Bridgnorth District Council area. The present directors of the board including myself are Anthony Webb, vice chairman, who has a bed and breakfast business, David Robinson from the Croft Hotel is treasurer, and Keith Lincoln (who has been around forever) past treasurer, hotelier etc. Thank you to all directors and the rest of the board members for their regular attendance and support to the tourist association.

Jodie Stephen at Shropshire Tourism is responsible for the administration, she is constantly reminding me of things I need to do, thank you Jodie. **Your** membership pays for this service. We have also commissioned Shropshire Tourism to produce our Where to Stay Guide, they have revamped our website and this year they are putting together the Bridgnorth Town Map which is now out of print, this had been produced by Shropshire Council. To help with funding we are changing the style of the map by charging for advertising on the back. I am pleased to add that Bridgnorth Town Council is helping to fund the town map subject to us obtaining advertising from local businesses, which Shropshire Tourism has succeeded in doing. We are building a good relationship with the council; we hold our meetings in the offices and they store brochures for us. Thanks must go to Bridgnorth Town Clerk, Anne Wilson for her cooperation.

It is hard to convince retail, pubs and catering services that they are part of the tourism industry. Remember the landslide on the SVR and trains stopped travelling into Bridgnorth bringing visitors, and how there was uproar from business's in the town. "What was the tourist information centre going to do about it?" was the cry. I have figures from an Economic Impact Assessment that was done in 2005; 1.8million people visited the town, mainly day trippers which we know is our main market. £30m was spent on catering, £24m on retail, and the tourism industry created around 1,400 jobs. How do we convince businesses, shops, pubs and cafes, that they need us as a tourism body and we need them to be members?

The old Shropshire County Council used to give this association £10,000 a year but that funding has been reduced over the years and for 2012-13 we received £1,500. I suspect it will be zero next year, although Shropshire Council does have a small tourism budget which we could possibly tap into. So you see we do rely on your membership to keep us afloat. The board does try to spend your money wisely and is constantly looking for the most cost effective way to promote the area. Tim King, Tourism Officer from Shropshire Council regular attends our meetings to keep us up to date with what is going on at the council.

Now for the highlights of the year 2012. Of course we have had the Olympics and the Much Wenlock connection which has been widely promoted. I know the museum at Much Wenlock has doubled its visitor numbers and that has transferred into more visitor spend. I understand that there is now a slight increase in staying visitors in the area, although during the Olympics things were quiet. On May 30th The Olympic Torch came through to Much Wenlock and of course Broseley. We in Broseley had a lovely day, a real carnival atmosphere which brought so many groups together. 2012 is the Queen's Golden Jubilee and a large successful event was held at Cosford at which the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh attended. I have to keep reminding Telford and Wrekin Council that Cosford is actually in our patch. **And** of course the Cliff Railway held its 120th anniversary event, which I was delighted to attend. Another big event and new venture for one of our main attractions is the selling of Severn Valley Railway shares, this association bought some on your behalf.

Finally, thank you to all members and I hope the next 12 months is a good and successful year for you. After 11 years as Chairman this is my final AGM as chairman. I think it's time for me to go.