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The Leamington Society

Newsletter

August 2016

Chairman's notes

Planning for Uncertain Times

At the end of September, examination of the draft Warwick District Local Plan will be resumed in detail, over a scheduled nine weeks. This exhaustive (exhausting?) procedure and the resulting Inspector's report will perhaps be the final chapters in setting a blueprint for some 17,000 new dwellings over the plan period (2011-2029).

The backdrop includes clear signs emerging of an economic slowdown. In recent years, home ownership is down, construction is slowing and each year more and more planning consents are being left unbuilt. This is hardly surprising, since OECD figures indicate that between 2007-2015 UK wages have fallen some 10% in real terms. Economic analysis is provided by the rear view mirror and the road ahead is always hard to anticipate, even without the Brexit vote and a new government.

Back in 2011 WDC issued a consultation paper asking us whether we wanted low, medium or high levels of growth in the District and my instinctive reaction was that such a choice was hardly in the gift of Warwick District. Later, Cllr. Mobbs concluded a public meeting with a bullish statement that he was going for growth. More recently the WDC housing numbers have been ratcheted up by projections of greatly increased housing need in Coventry. All of which brings to mind the proverb that you can lead a horse to water but cannot make him drink. An elaborately prepared Plan can propose housing numbers and demand 5 year land supplies leading developers (the horse) to be offered planning permissions (water) but will they build (drink the water)? Or will market logic suggest they bank permissions and eke them out slowly so as to maintain as far as they can an inflated market price?

House building by developers and buying by individuals is a long term project. Unlike more immediate consumption, the signs are that property markets respond poorly to supply and demand,

Talks and events

**Capability Brown and
Compton Verney
Gary Webb**

Thursday, September 15th, 7.30
Conference Centre, Dormer Place

**The Englishman's Castle is his Home
Keith Cattell**

Thursday, October 13th, 7.30
Conference Centre, Dormer Place

**Reputations rebalanced:
Beeching bettered Brunel
James MacKay**

Tuesday, October 25th, 6.30

Joint meeting with Literary Society

**Bombing of Royal Leamington Spa
Allan Jennings**

Tuesday, November 8th, 7.30

**British Motor Museum, Gaydon
Speaker TBA**

Thursday, December 8th, 7.30
Conference Centre, Dormer Place

The full calendar of events for
2016-17 is included with this
Newsletter

With around thirty years devoted to horticulture and landscape maintenance, he has a keen interest in design and of heritage gardens in particular. His work at all these venues has seen him unravel the historical developments of each site, with restoration, development and improvement in mind. Gary is a strong advocate of wildlife in gardens and improving diversity.

The Englishman’s Castle is his Home, Keith Cattell

The castle was a private family fortification brought over to this country by William the Conqueror as his ‘secret weapon’ to defeat and subdue the English. It has been with us ever since, with some of the most remarkable examples being built in the 19th century. Keith will look at our castles and how they have changed over the centuries.

Reputations rebalanced: Beeching bettered Brunel, James MacKay

One is lauded, the other decried.
 One was a strategic genius,
 the other an obsessed maverick without long-term vision.
 One bequeathed a system struggling to succeed,
 the other gave us the network we enjoy today.
 But which railwayman was which?

James Mackay, a railway manager by profession, will analyse two giants of the industry, their achievements, and their weaknesses – and challenge our preconceptions

Bombing of Royal Leamington Spa, Allan Jennings (Joint meeting with Literary Society)

Allan has studied the six bomb attacks on our town between 1940-1942 to write the first and only history of the consequent death and destruction. Both at the time and at the end of the war, the news was suppressed and undocumented, so he had to find a variety of sources. Come and hear about his research on these important events in local history.

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Pump Room Gardens restoration project: another major milestone

In January (2016) the HLF and Big lottery fund announced that the Pump Room Gardens restoration project would receive a grant of almost £1 million and on August 3rd the partnership (of WDC and the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens) were given Permission to Start work.

Up to that stage the partnership was on hold while a myriad of procedural steps had to be followed. This process has now been completed to the satisfaction of HLF. We can now start to appoint contractors to carry out the work. Since public money is being spent we must demonstrate that best value is obtained. This process will take perhaps three or four more months. This may seem a long period, but £1 million is a large amount of money to spend. Then, all being well, contractors will be seen on the ground. The work on the bandstand will go to a separate contractor, experienced in that form of specialist work.

Archie Pitts

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‘University and Community Matters’, National Conference at Durham University 20th July 2016

The purpose of the conference was to share experiences, ideas and plans on the impact of universities on accommodation, community relations and the local economy.

It was generously hosted by the University and jointly organised with the National Association of Resident's Associations (NORA).

Almost 100 delegates attended from some 18 different University towns and cities across the country, representing residents, local authorities, students, law enforcement and of course the Universities themselves both individually and from their national grouping, Universities UK.

Our own District was well represented by two Council officers, a Councillor, a police officer and two members of Warwick University staff. As a forum for learning about best practice, different approaches to similar problems and where to find further information it was an exceptional event.

Graham Towl, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Durham, chaired proceedings and ensured there was very widespread participation from the floor, after each of the 10 or so speakers had delivered their short addresses, covering issues from almost every angle.

Whether delegates left feeling buoyed up by the progress being made and solutions found or daunted by the scale of the challenges – and obstacles – was not clear. For me it was a mix of both.

Personally I was encouraged to find that Warwick seems to be ahead of other towns in some ways (for example the street marshal scheme); in the middle of the pack in most others perhaps (adoption of Article 4 planning controls on HMOs – licensing not yet extended to smaller HMOs) and lagging in others (dealing with HMO waste, enforcement methods).

Only a few Universities seem so far to have clear student accommodation strategies agreed with local communities, businesses and Councils – Northumbria is the most notable. It has been willing to invest directly in halls of residence not just to maintain but to increase the proportion of students 'on campus' and so ease the pressure on local housing. They have regenerated a central area, pleased residents, local businesses and council – and make a decent return. Durham has possible plans to follow this example. We heard of no others with this degree of commitment. Neither wish to encourage private schemes (Purpose Built Student Accommodation, PBSAs) – but they are there and growing.

Other cities are not opposed to PBSAs and all are seeing growth but there were mixed views about what they do to rents and the student experience on the one hand, and their impact on easing pressures on HMOs/local communities on the other.

One area, Sheffield, has a particularly strong 3-way formal partnership between Council, Student Union and University, to check HMO quality on a two year 100% inspection cycle. The partnership called SNUG also includes community and landlord representation. Only SNUG-approved properties can be advertised on the student website and use the brand. Bath is also said to have an effective collaborative model.

There are other good ideas and practices which I am sure those of us who attended will want to follow up over the coming months, especially perhaps through the Task & Finish working group to review many HMO-related issues, recently set up by Warwick District Councillors.

Some of the most challenging may be how to incorporate PBSA beds in our planning policy (fortunately other Councils already do); how to ensure landlords as well as occupants meet their responsibilities on waste, recycling, property appearance and noise (again we heard of some good approaches elsewhere to draw on); and whether we should extend licensing to smaller HMOs (other areas have and claim clear community benefits).

will run further screenings and also begin to arrange other events, such as poetry, comedy and music.

We are pleased to join forces with the Leamington Photographic Society to host their exhibitions. With their help, we have secured sponsorship for display stands and lighting. This will allow us to host a much wider range of art and community events and encourage a much wider range of people to visit the church.

Finally, a number of local artists have kindly donated art works. David Lewis has painted the above view of the church and the Jug and Jester have also given one of his paintings of Victoria Terrace.



Victoria Terrace, David Lewis

High quality, framed prints are available to buy from ArtsTrail studio (4 Windsor Street, Leamington) for just £175. Prints are also on display in the church café.

Please do get in touch if you have ideas for future events or you would like to help by giving time, skills and experience. For the church it really is a case of 'use it or lose it', so we need to think creatively about how we can use this space more for the community and protect it for future generations.

Adrian Gains

All Saints' Clock appeal

The clock stopped nearly two years ago, to our exasperation, because the steel cables holding and guiding the clock weights broke. The Church has decided to replace them by installing an electric auto-winder and also to overhaul the aged mechanism

Roughly £8000 is needed and we are raising this. The Town Council have already generously pledged nearly half the money (£3,500) and with the Leamington Society and other pledges we are well on the way. Please pledge on the enclosed flyer and sign the Gift Aid form. The Church is a charity and can claim.

Marianne Pitts and Christopher Wilson (Vicar)



All Saint's Church clock

Upgrading the Leamington Society website and communications

The Society is improving its website to make it both more informative and more attractive. It will also make changes that will make the website more flexible and easier to maintain. To do all this we will change our 'platform' from Dreamweaver to WordPress which is popular and simple to use; WordPress is designed for small organisations like our charity.

We seek members who are either already familiar with WordPress or those who would like to learn how to use it and help with maintaining the website. The society would organise and pay for tuition.

At the same time we shall also have a Facebook page.

Please let me know if you are prepared to be involved.

Archie Pitts

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Our 60th Birthday Party

William Thomas's impressive Masonic Rooms on Willes Road were an ideal choice for the Society's



Almost 60 members the Society's 60th anniversary

Diamond Jubilee dinner on June 10. We were pleased to welcome our MP and the Chair of the Warwick Society, both members, and many friends.

We met in the garden and immediately, as one would expect of people with so many other interests as the one they were celebrating, the conversation was energetic. It never flagged; the food was good and plentiful; the service fast and discreet. Good spirits are contagious.

Our speaker, who had the sense to be brief, tried to convey the idea that although the Society is perfectly capable of making a nuisance of itself, it is equally capable of being constructive. He mentioned the arches in the Pump Room Garden; the Awards every two years to imaginative architecture of every type; and perhaps especially the imminent restoration of the Pump Room Gardens towards which, as well as the hours spent in meetings and reams of correspondence, no less than £100,000 has been encouraged and received.

With so many people who love the town and who convert love into work, surely the town must prosper. All praise then, just this once, to The Leamington Society, always remembering that the Society is its members.

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Refreshment rooms on the up platform at Leamington Station. The awards were presented by the Mayor of Leamington, Councillor Ann Morrison.

In his recent illustrated talk describing the winners, Alan Mayes, one of the judges and the lately retired Conservation Officer at Warwick District Council, stressed the importance of attention to detail when introducing a new building into the townscape or restoring a neglected old one. This



Railings in Russell Terrace



New foyer at Warwickshire College

point was illustrated by the conversion of the Windsor Club on Warwick Street to housing, which used that opportunity to restore window and door details that had been lost in earlier alterations.

Projects in Clarendon Street and on Tachbrook Road were rewarded for much improving the streetscape and gates and murals at Strathearn Gardens, Rugby Road, for designing with children in mind.



Neo-gothic house, Upper Holly Walk



Winner of Bill Gibbons trophy, Leam Terrace

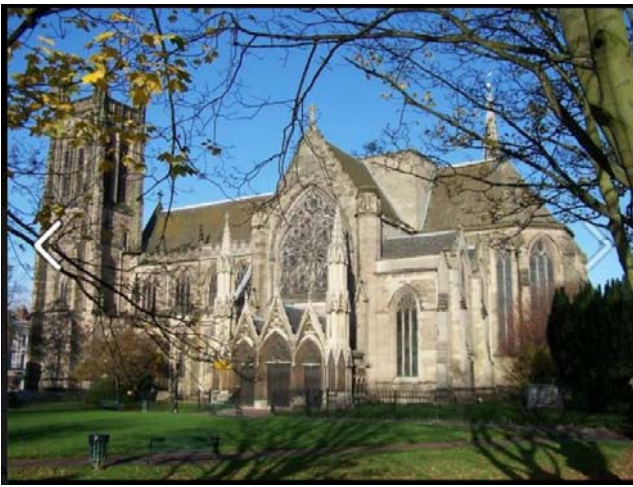
The saving of a near derelict neo-gothic house on Holly Walk and an ingenious contemporary house development bridging the gap between a Victorian terrace and 1960s housing were also honoured.

The winner of the Bill Gibbons Trophy, awarded for the best owner-occupied domestic design, was given to the extension of 91 Leam Terrace where a clearly contemporary extension matches the careful and highly innovative detailing of the original Arts and Craft house.

The cup was presented to Mr and Mrs Roger Sargent by Dave Penney, the Managing Director of

All Saints' Parish Church Royal Leamington Spa

Help save our clock: Appeal



Our church clock is stopped, poetically (Rupert Brooke, *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*, 1912), at 10 to 3.

The turret clock has dominated the town since 1884. To get it working again it needs a complete overhaul and a modern automatic winding mechanism.

The total cost will be about £8,000. We already have some donations and are now approaching local residents and businesses to see if you would kindly help us raise the remainder.

Please pledge whatever you can and complete and return the form **overleaf.**

No pledge will be called until the total cost has been achieved and work is about to start.

Pledge

I/we pledge £ towards the Restoration Appeal for the repair of All Saints' Parish Church clock on the understanding that:

- this pledge will be called only when the work is ready to start;
- when my/our pledge is called, my/our money will be used for no other purpose than the restoration of the clock and associated work, including future maintenance;
- I/we will be given four weeks' notice when asked to redeem my/our pledge

Name(s)

Address

.....

TelephonePostcode

EmailDate

Signed

Gift Aid: If you are a UK taxpayer and sign the declaration below, the value of your subscriptions and donations to the All Saints' Church increases (currently by 25%) at no cost to you. We hope you will sign.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give or have given over the previous four years.

Signed:Date:

Please return this form to:

Marianne Pitts, Treasurer, the Friends of All Saints' Church
4 Leam Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV31 1BB, 01926 885532

Alternatively, please email your details to marianne.pitts@gmail.com