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The Leamington Society Newsletter

February 2016

Chairman's Notes

They call It Localism

For some years WDC has been preparing a Local Plan, with the key requirement to meet housing needs, which is tricky because 80% of District land is designated Greenbelt. Developers were granted outline permission to build over 3,000 houses to the south of Warwick and Leamington. But they wanted more. Two big planning appeals were entered: for 900 homes at the "Asps" (south of Warwick beside the Banbury Road) and for 450 to the south west of the Europa Way southern roundabout. These appeals were "called in" by the minister Greg Clark, after the inspector for the Asps appeal recommended refusal.

In January this year, the minister announced that the Asps inspector had got it wrong and both appeals were granted. Essentially government is determined to pump up the numbers and they over rule all other considerations.

Last May another inspector began to examine the draft WDC Plan. He declared it inadequate because Coventry (not Warwick District) needed 15-20,000 extra houses, so WDC and other neighbouring Districts are told they have to provide these for Coventry overspill. What neither the inspector nor the minister have addressed is what kind of houses are most needed and where to locate them.

There is indeed a crisis in housing but it is mainly one of affordability. The numbers are driven by a rule that councils have to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. But will the house builders rush to turn planning permissions into completed houses? Do turkeys vote for Christmas? If the "market" were flooded with houses to meet demand, the ample supply might actually reduce house prices. But that is clearly not in their interest.

There is a lot of politics in this, but not necessarily Party Politics. The Local Government Association (LGA) represents councils up and down the land – led from the left, right, and centre, by independents and by coalitions. LGA research reveals that 475,000 new homes in England and Wales have planning permission but are not yet built. This number has climbed by 25% in the last five years and is at record levels. So much for the repeated mantra that cutting planning red tape is the answer to housing needs. The other policy buzzword has been "Localism".

Talks and events

Ricardo

Howard Marshall and Richard Belton
Thursday, March 17th, 7.30
Conference Centre, Dormer Place

Henry VIII Trust

John Edward
Thursday April 21nd, 7.30 for 7.45
Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick

AGM

Thursday May 12th, 7.00
Christchurch, Priory Terrace, CV31 1BA

Awards

Thursday, July 14th, 7.15 for 7.30
Conference Centre, Dormer Place

achieved by the restoration, and has also committed to attain Green Flag award status. HLF will monitor the progress of the project.

www.pumproomgardens.org.uk email: pumproomgardens@gmail.com

Archie Pitts, Chairman, Friends of Pump Room Gardens

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60 and going strong

In a few months the Leamington Society will be 60 years old – something to celebrate. And we will be doing so. We will be marking the occasion and the £1 million HLF grant.

It is planned to hold the party in June. All details will be announced later.

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Letter to the Editor

I write in response to the report of my attendance at your recent meeting (Newsletter, November 2015). As I understood that Alcoholics Anonymous was precisely that, I was a little surprised on arrival to be asked for my name.

But as soon as I entered, I knew that I was among people with an addiction as strong as mine. I need to be in their presence only briefly to feel entitled to make the decision that long eluded me. From that moment on, no drop of grape nor grain has passed my lips, or ever will again. My dependency, like yours, is now on the Regency, and on Royal Spa. Cheers! And thank you, fellow Leamingtonians.

I remain for now,

Yours anonymously

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Getting greedy?

Currently, there is an unusually high number of controversial planning applications within the town which involve housing developments of one sort or another. Although the size, type and location of these schemes are very different, there are two elements common to many of these schemes.

Firstly although the nature of the proposal may be generally acceptable in principle, the scheme in question is usually spoiled by trying to get too many properties, with tight space standards, on the site and secondly, the quality of the design leaves a lot to be desired.

Two examples.

A proposal to replace a retail property on the corner of George Street and New Street was approved for the provision of three town houses. The plans were not over generous, had little outdoor space but they were well designed and architecturally sympathetic to their neighbours.

However, the developer has now submitted a new application for retaining the retail element and adding six flats on the first and second floors instead. The elevational treatment now bears no relationship to the adjacent Victorian terrace on George Street.

In a different proposal nearby for a three floor, 16 bed HMO next door to the listed Christian Bookshop on Radford Road, which was judged sympathetic to its neighbour and to constitute an improvement to the street scene, was granted in 2015. Now this has been superceded by a proposal

Proposal for Court Street

Peter Brett Associates held a public consultation for a redevelopment of 44 units on the existing little used WDC car park on Court Street – south of the railway line.



Proposed development on Court Street

The current proposals envisage a mixture of two and three bedroom houses on two floors and flats in three-floor blocks. There will be nearby parking – but shared with the public.

The computer drawn images show, on the left an aerial representation with the now derelict Stoneleigh Arms building on the top of the image and, on the right, a rescued the Stoneleigh Arms. There was debate as to whether such a rescue is possible or important to the street scene of Clemens Street.

A planning application may be some way away.

Archie Pitts

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Leamington Society Awards 2016

This year is once again a ‘Leamington Society Awards’ year. Every other year the Society recognises projects which have enhanced the environment of Leamington Spa.

To qualify, the work has to have been completed within the last two years and to be readily visible to the public. An Award can be given for:

- Restoration of a period building
- A new building or structure
- The improvement of a building
- A new or restored interior accessible to the public
- A new or restored shop-front
- A landscape, garden, park or planting
- A sculpture or work of art
- Any other visual improvement.



An award winner 2014

In addition a special Award, the Bill Gibbons Trophy, is given to the private dwelling which most impressed the judges.

Please nominate any project that you feel worthy of an Award. Nominations will be accepted until

Sunday 17 April 2016. We accept nominations from anyone, whether a member or not. The winners will be announced on July 14 2016.

Nomination Forms will be available on the Leamington Society website and from the Town Hall and the Warwick District Council offices at Riverside House.

Nomination Forms to be sent or emailed to: Richard Ward: 3 Bell Court, The Maltings, Leamington Spa, CV32 5FH; RichardWard404@googlemail.com

Richard Ward

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de Normanville interactive memorial in Jephson Gardens

Leamington Town Council recently commissioned artist Tim Ward to produce a memorial to celebrate William Louis de Normanville – to be sited towards the east end of Jephson gardens.



de Normanville next to Adelaide Bridge

Mr Ward is proposing a silhouette of de Normanville leaning on a section of the Adelaide Road Bridge. The silhouette will be laser cut from 10mm thick stainless steel. The ‘statue’ and balustrade artwork will include double sided interpretation panels providing information about de Normanville, with imagery and drawings relating to his life.

The memorial will be interactive, meaning that it will encourage the public to touch it. The statue will have an outstretched hand in a gesture of friendship inviting people to read the information panels and participate in the artwork. People can shake the ‘giants’ hand, or stand/sit on the platform/seat fixed to the bridge silhouette to have their photographs taken.

The de Normanville memorial is like the bronze statues of Roosevelt and Churchill in Bond Street on a bench where the public can sit between them for photographs – a great favourite with tourists.

Archie Pitts

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My life as a bookseller, with Andrew Parkes

An informative and amusing talk, this, for our annual union with the Literary Society.
For upwards of twenty years Andrew taught history. However he had long collected books and occasionally sold them, and in that way and by reading “The Book Dealer” he acquired the basics of his trade. When teaching became too much of a routine he had an alternative.
Encouraged by his wife (who contributed to the talk and exhibited the smallest book I have ever seen), he rented a shop in Kenilworth. Then when a supporting friend lost interest and the shop became a burden (Watch out, There’s a Thief About) he took to working from home. Today his

home contains 15,000 volumes! Customers have included Helen Mirren, William and Harry's nanny and Sir Colin Davis.

His chief interests are history and topography, though he does not claim to be a specialist. We were pleased (or displeased) to learn that books about cats and dogs sell easily, while books about art and theology stick. Having once sold a book of mine in the conviction that I had two of them, and sheepishly returned to the shop the following day, I smiled guiltily at the woman who repurchased her own book.

But all booksellers have blind spots and may sell for a pound something worth hundreds. Andrew confessed to passing over what he thought was a *copy* of the first edition of Mercator's Atlas of 1568.

The audience envied his expertise and sympathised with his excitement in what he called "The Treasure Hunt" or "The Thrill of the Chase".

Robin Taylor

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Leamington's Water Supply, Jeff Burgess

Jeff worked for Severn Trent and its predecessors for some 30 years and has researched the history of the town's water supply. He shares an interest in manhole and stopcock covers with Jeremy Corbyn and the talk was punctuated with photographs of these, include one local rarity which he can no longer find: LBW: Leamington Borough Water. If anyone spots this please tell us and we will pass it on. It is a dangerous hobby: looking down at the road carries a consequent risk of traffic accidents.

The Mill commemorated in Mill Road leading to the de Normanville Bridge provided the first piped water. There were also private wells in many back gardens which provided drinking water – some dangerously polluted by proximity to privies. The Maltings also had a well on site for brewing beer (what has happened to this?) Jeff's hero is Henry Bright who had a mission to provide pure water to the town. A well was dug at Campion Terrace and large steam-driven pumps delivered the water to new reservoirs built on Campion Hills. The steam pumps were named The Wackrill and The Harding after two members of the water committee. When Campion well ran low another was dug in Lillington in 1900. Water was extracted from the Leam by pumps in an annexe to the Pump Rooms. The designer was inevitably William de Normanville, whose notebook in Warwick Record Office gives details on how the town was run during his long tenure.



Where is this local rarity?

Demand for water rises constantly and 5¼ million gallons per day is supplied from the treatment works at Campion Hills which receives its water from Willes Meadow reservoir. This reservoir may be topped up with water from Draycote. We take it for granted – and we should be grateful.

Marianne Pitts

Astley Castle and the Landmark Trust

Our speaker, Ian Cawood, began by telling us the history of the Landmark Trust. Founded in 1965 and reacting to the passion for demolition and rebuilding which swept away the Euston Arch and many less famous buildings and structures, the Landmark Trust began with the rescue of a modest derelict Welsh Farmhouse. The aim is to save abandoned interesting buildings from collapse by converting them to holiday lettings with modern kitchens and bathrooms and heating. This is done with respect, using original materials and techniques and labour. The Charity manages a growing 196 properties all over Britain and also in Europe: look at www.landmarktrust.org.uk, their excellent website.

Many Leamington Society members are “landmarkers”, having stayed in at least one and I suspect this number will rise sharply. There is a wide choice. Lundy Island is the biggest in area, there are more conventional cottages and manors all over the country, and unique holiday homes are in lighthouses, water towers, castles and garden follies. A stone pineapple in Scotland which sleeps four was a major feature of Ian’s family story.



Astley Castle (© Landmark Trust)

Astley Castle is atypical. The original building, gutted by fire and left to collapse, was considered for rebuilding but at £15 million, this project was abandoned. Ten years later a group of young architects produced a design for a modern house in the heart of the ruins for £2.5 million which proved feasible. A filling in a rotten molar is the metaphor that best describes

this triumphant success which won the 2013 RIBA Stirling Prize as “a prototype for a bold new attitude to restoration and reuse”. Astley Castle is booked solid for 2016 and 2017 but it is open to the public on June 24-27 and September 9-13, 2016.

Ian is an excellent speaker who loves his subject. We were also celebrating the announcement of the HLF grant – so this was a very happy meeting.

Marianne Pitts

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David Palmer (1927 – 2015)

Most of you will remember David as a very talented amateur musician, organist at St. Marks and later organist and choirmaster at All Saints, Leamington Spa, where he is commemorated on a plaque in the Lady Chapel with the dates 1972-1983. He also played at Holy Trinity and St Chad’s, Bishop Tachbrook. He joined the Leamington Society in 1998, was a town guide and will also be remembered for his generosity in paying for the gilding of the gates to Jephson Gardens.

David and his wife Joy lived for many years on Kenilworth Road, Cubbington where he shared his beautiful garden with small groups. After Joy died he moved to Manor House which was more convenient for the town centre, railway station and access to Warwick. When graffiti appeared in the 'underpass' before the murals were installed, he would paint over it; did he ask permission?

www.leamingtonsociety.org.uk

Formed in 1956
Reg Charity No 516078



The Leamington Society

February 2016

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual General Meeting** of the Leamington Society for 2016 will be held on **Thursday, 12th May, starting at 7.00, in Christ Church, Priory Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV31 1BA.**

Richard Ashworth, Chairman

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 59th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 14th of May 2015
3. Matters arising from the Minutes not included elsewhere
4. To receive reports from the Chairman and Sub Committees
5. To receive the independently examined Accounts of the Society for 2015 - 2016
6. Election of Officers:
Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
7. Election of four Committee Members
8. Election of Independent Examiner
9. Any other Business

PLEASE NOTE: **Nominations** of candidates for Officers and Committee must be forwarded to the **Chairman not later than Thursday, 21st April 2016**. Any voting will be by Secret Ballot at the Meeting.

Any motions for consideration at the meeting should also be received by this date. Nominations or motions will **not** be accepted at the Meeting. Nomination forms may be obtained from the Chairman.

If there is to be an election or if any motion is received, notice will be sent to members seven days before the Annual General Meeting.

Following the formal business of the AGM we will break for refreshments after which Cynthia Stanton will talk about Spa Water Toffee, a traditional Leamington delicacy.