



www.leamingtonsociety.org

The Leamington Society Newsletter

May 2018

Chairman's notes

Firstly let me say I feel it a great honour to be asked to become the new Chairman of the Leamington Society. It's a hard act to follow Richard Ashworth who has led the Society with much wisdom during the last eight years of challenge and change with, amongst many other things, the gestation and delivery of the Local Plan, the problems of too many HMOs in one place, and the perennial parking problem. Our sincere thanks to him for his leadership.

The change of the last eight years is probably slight compared to what we now face visibly with so many new homes springing up, the reconstruction of Europa Way, and very soon the disruption caused by the construction of HS2. More positively there is now visible action restoring the Pump Room Gardens and its magnificent bandstand, to complement the previously beautifully restored Linden Arches, and the promise of the speedy reopening of the station underpass transformed into a 'tunnel of light' with the familiar murals telling the history of the town.

Next May will give us the chance to vote on Leamington's Neighbourhood Plan; the referendum being held on the same day as the District and Town elections. There are also the hopes and plans for the Cultural Quarter, the issue of the new Council Offices, the future of the stately Town Hall and of course that perennial parking problem. Those three Ps again! For the Leamington Society though, I think three more appropriate Ps might be Passion, Patience and Perseverance.

Talks and Events

Leamington Society Awards

**Presented by the Mayor
Thursday July 12th
7.15 for 7.30**

Victoria House
59 Willes Road, CV32 4PT

Note venue and time

Passion for our lovely town of Royal Leamington Spa, patience with the time it takes to get things done as in the case of the Pump Room Gardens, and perseverance to ensure things do happen. In the case of the Pump Room Gardens Archie Pitts' perseverance has finally paid off. Thank you Archie and the others involved.

In welcoming Carole Sleight to the Committee we welcome a woman of passion and action. Though not Leamington born, one of my earliest memories is of the magical Leamington Lights in Jephson Gardens, and I look forward to Carole's magical transformation of them again in August with Art in The Park – see you there.

Sidney Syson

Leamington Society Awards 2018

The final Society event for 2017-18 will be the presentation of the Society Awards by the Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa, Cllr. Heather Calver. All members of the Society are welcome.

Other events over the summer, not organised by this Society, are:

Art in the Park. Members are also reminded of the coming Art in the Park event on the weekend 4th and 5th August (10am to 6pm each day) celebrating Art, Music, Live Performances, local artisan Food & Drink and much more. Free entry; www.artinpark.co.uk.

Town walks. Conducted tours around Leamington led by members of Leamington History Group will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday each week from June 19th to mid-September. For details of times see www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk

AGM 2018

This year's AGM was held at Christchurch, Priory Terrace on Thursday 10th May. Our retiring chairman Richard Ashworth welcomed about 50 members.

Apologies were received; the minutes of the previous AGM were proposed and approved.

The Chairman's Report and Sub-Committee Reports, which had been circulated, were then presented. The Chairman warmly thanked the executive committee and sub-

committees members for their support and hard work during the year, as well as numerous other members, such as our newsletter deliverers.

The Treasurers reported a continuing healthy financial position. The Chairman's Report and Committee Reports were adopted. Copies are available from the Chairman.

The chairman then explained that, after eight years in post, he was stepping down but was delighted that Sidney Syson has offered to take his place.

Nominations for Leamington Society committee. All other committee members offered their services for 2018-19 plus new member Carole Sleight. As there were no other candidates they were unanimously declared elected:

Chairman: Sidney Syson. Vice-Chairmen: Barbara Lynn, Richard Ward

Hon. Secretary: Margaret Begg. Hon. Treasurer: Clive Engwell

Executive Committee members: Archie Pitts, Marianne Pitts, Carole Sleight, Jef Tuyn. Richard Ashworth will remain a committee member, *ex officio*.

Paul Edwards agreed to continue to serve as our Planning Representative on the Conservation Advisory Forum (CAF). A number of other members of the society sit on CAF in other capacities. A unanimous vote of thanks to Ian Salvin was carried for his meticulous work in examining the accounts for 2017-18. It was proposed and carried that Ian be re-appointed as Independent Examiner for 2018-19.

Under AOB it was proposed that Richard and Gitta Ashworth be made Life Members in recognition of the tireless work by Richard over eight years as Chairman of the Society. Robin and Shirley Adams were also proposed for Life Membership in recognition of Robin's work as a member of the Friends of Leamington Station and their joint work as barmen at meetings. Both proposals were enthusiastically carried.

A break for light refreshments organised by Ruth Bennion followed. Afterwards in a lively and fascinating presentation Dominic Liptrot of Lost Art described best practice in restoring ironwork illustrated by major projects that his firm had carried out – see below.

Restoring ironwork

Dominic Liptrot is MD, CEO, designer and Lord High Everything Else for Lost Art, the firm that is currently working on the restoration of our bandstand. His talk took us, slide by slide, through another recent restoration – the Grand “Walrus Fountain” in Paisley. Being Victorian, the original donors were not satisfied only with walruses spouting water through their noses; there are also crocodiles, cherubs, herons and dolphins. It weighs 42 tons in total and is 8½ metres high and across. Our bandstand is a trifle beside it. When rescued by Heritage Scotland, Renfrewshire and HLF the fountain had fallen into complete dereliction, many pieces were “missing” and the base was tarmacked.

The care and attention to detail devoted to the Paisley fountain was amazing and reassuring.



Grand Walrus Fountain, Paisley

© Lost Art

The exact position of each rusted remnant, the fragments of paints, gilding and bronzing clinging to the iron, old black and white photographs and plans were studied before the structure was fully dismantled and sent to the Wigan works for a complete overhaul, reconstructing and refinishing. The six life-size red and gold walruses on their way home on a flatbed truck on the M6 must have been a sight to behold.

The fountain was rebuilt and the water reconnected. It was reopened on a fine day and all the local children jumped in fully dressed. A great celebration! And it has deservedly won prestigious prizes.

We hope our bandstand will surprise and delight us when Lost Art has worked its magic. It is in good hands.

Marianne Pitts

Car Parking in Leamington Spa Town Centre: facts, figures and possibilities

Covent Garden carpark needs to be replaced as it has “concrete cancer” and two floors are already out of action. Even so, the revenue gained by WDC is some £¼ million a year and its 456 spaces are fully used by an average of 800 drivers per day, 65% by shoppers (short term parking) and 35% by workers (long term parking). While being redeveloped these 456 spaces need replacement in the town centre (defined as within 400 yards of Royal Priors).

Various alternatives have been considered, none of which fulfil the need – but the two most obvious have not.

The first obvious solution is to build a new multi-storey on the Covent Garden surface car park parallel to the failing one – *before* demolishing it. This would lose only 81 spaces. The cleared multi-storey car-park site could then accommodate offices and housing along Tavistock Street, including the WDC new HQ.



Covent Garden car park

© David Stowell CC

The second obvious solution would be to build additional levels onto Chandos Street carpark, which is the most popular in town. This would need reinforcement of the foundations and be expensive – but would yield good revenues while it is in use, and would pay for itself in less than a decade. Only one estimate has been submitted for this so far – not enough for an informed decision. WDC have entertained alternative plans for Chandos Street for some years and are reluctant even to consider this alternative properly. There may also be other sites in the town centre for a substitute and / or extra multi-storey carpark, to be built *before* Covent Garden is demolished – Bedford Street / Augusta Place / others?

WDC is determined to connect the Covent Garden car-park problem with another: rehousing its offices at Riverside House. The idea is to sell that valuable site for housing and build and sell 44 flats plus offices on the Covent Garden site, using the money to pay for their new HQ. Claims have frequently been made that the whole plan is cost neutral, but it is not: rebuilding Covent Garden carpark needs an *extra* £8.5 million. It is therefore not dependent on the Riverside site sale and could be started at once.

There are also unintended and unconsidered consequences to the policy of redeveloping the Riverside House site for residential use. This will remove the 270 existing parking spaces for WDC staff and visitors which are always full. The new development proposes that 57 spaces be set aside for WDC staff, so where will the rest of the 350 staff park once WDC is in the town centre? They will not all use public transport, walk or cycle to town. What proportion is expected to work from home? Half? A quarter? WDC officers currently enjoy free parking and will not be pleased to pay.

The town is already short of parking, and Covent Garden is 31% of the town's supply. Comparable towns such as Winchester, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury have *two to three times* the number of off-street parking spaces in their town centres. Visitors, shoppers and workers will not consider Leamington Spa if they cannot park easily and reasonably cheaply.

Most of the data in this article relies on information collated by BID Leamington over two years, based on daily and monthly ticket sales data supplied by WDC for every town centre car-park and on-street parking; the "churn" of parking places; the number of disabled parking; of season tickets; and includes consultation with the town's businesses on the issue.

Marianne Pitts

GDPR

In May 2018 the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will become law in the UK. As part of this we are publishing our Privacy Policy in our newsletter and on our website.

Leamington Society Privacy Policy

The Leamington Society takes your privacy seriously and takes every practicable measure to ensure your information is safe and accurate at all times. We never sell your data or share it with anyone except with individual member's written, or emailed, permission.

The GDPR, General Data Protection Regulation, requires us to tell you the lawful basis for processing your information. The Leamington Society has chosen to rely on what the new legislation calls 'legitimate interests'. Put simply, we undertake to keep you, as a member of the Leamington Society, informed of our work via publications such as our newsletter and reminders of forthcoming talks and events (currently via MailChimp). We feel you would expect us to do so.

This policy explains why we collect information from you, what information we need and how we use it.

Why do we collect personal information?

You may give us your personal information in order to sign up for membership, make a donation or make a special payment.

What information we need

The personal information we need to collect may include your name, address, email address, telephone number, payment card or bank details.

What your personal information may be used for?

We will only use your personal information to

- process membership subscriptions, donations and any special payments,
- confirm details of your Gift Aid status if applicable,
- keep you informed of our work via publications such as our newsletter and reminders of forthcoming talks and events.

Removal of your data

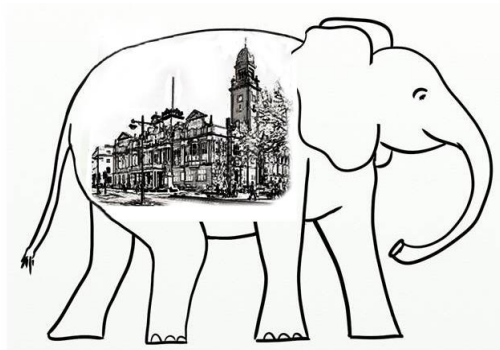
At any time, you can change how you hear from us or have your data removed from our database. Contact our Membership Secretary Margaret Begg mbegg@cbegg.com or 01926 423 822

What if there are changes to this statement?

Occasionally, we may need to update our Privacy Statement. We reserve the right to amend, update or replace this Statement at any time. Your continued membership and use of membership services will constitute your acceptance of any such changes we may make. Any changes will be published, so please make sure you check this page from time to time on the website.

Leamington Society Committee

Leamington's white elephant?



Thanks to Hilary Roberts for help with the design

Licensing of HMOs

From October 1st this year the licensing of HMOs will become stricter as a result of active campaigning by the Leamington Society and many similar bodies across the UK. Many of these groups are members (like us) of the National Organisation of Residents Associations (NORA).

From October licensing is to be *compulsory* for HMOs with five or more residents by a new statutory instrument amending the Housing Act of 2004:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/221/made>

This is something NORA has fought hard and long to achieve. Alan Shrank, NORA's Chairman, said at its 2017 AGM

“Perhaps the most important events in 2016 for NORA have been the Government's proposal to extend licensing to all HMOs and a programme of banning and fining rogue landlords, both measures that NORA has pressed on the Department of Communities and Local Government planners as essential moves to control rogue landlords.”

Three cheers.

Marianne Pitts

Pump Room Gardens

The day has come. Some may say at last.

Since the beginning of May Lost Art (www.lost-art.co.uk) has been examining, photographing and recording the exact state of our bandstand preparatory to dismantling, scheduled for early June and to take about two weeks. The parts will all be taken to Lost Art's workshops in Wigan where they will be cleaned and restored. Paint samples will be taken to try to establish the original paint colour schemes. In best restoration principles nothing will be replaced by new unless restoration is impossible. Repainting will be done in dry clean workshops in Wigan.

Then all the parts will be brought back for reassembly about four months later. Sonder www.madebysonder.com has agreed to make a video of the restoration process to provide a permanent record. Sonder's offices are on the top floor of Victoria House immediately adjacent to the gardens.

Alongside the work on the bandstand, the 'main' contractor idverde www.idverde.co.uk will be responsible for all the other works. These include

- a rainwater pond to collect rainfall and improve the drainage of the west end of the garden with overflow to the river;
- riverbank to be cleared of woody vegetation, brambles and replanted with low native ground cover to provide a clear view of the river;
- all paths to be relaid on sound foundations;

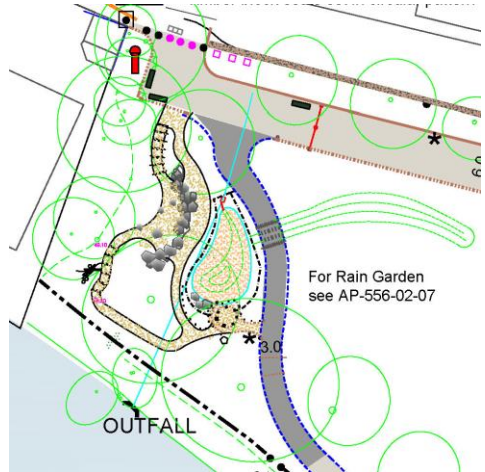
- the retaining wall parallel to the Parade, forever tumbling down, to be rebuilt and realigned;
- the steps to York Bridge to be rebuilt;
- more seating in the style of benches used in the gardens at the start of the 20th century.

idverde is expected to start in the second half of June and finish by about Christmas.

All contractor works will be phased so as to minimise disruption to scheduled events in the gardens.

Alongside these physical works there will be a long-lasting programme of activities led by a Community Engagement Officer at WDC. These activities will include formal and informal learning about the heritage of the gardens, their role in Leamington, the natural wild life in the gardens.

Archie Pitts



Rain pond at west end of gardens



Style of new seat

New life comes to the Old Town

Visitors to Old Town see the signs of revival and interesting new developments.

This phase in the life of the town south of the Leam began when the area made a successful bid to the Mary Portas fund, established in 2012 to support struggling high streets. The £100,000 grant from the fund was the catalyst for the regeneration of the area, providing support for business start-ups, the Christmas lights, and interesting events. The last of the grant has been spent but the work is being carried on by LOTT, the Leamington Old Town Team. Georgina, Sandy and Maureen, who

make up the team, have between them years of business and professional experience, which they are using to promote Old Town.

At their colourful base at 37 Clemens Street, they have established a craft hub, where aspiring artists and artisans can display their skills and products, renting anything from a single shelf to a whole display cabinet. Products and services on offer range from exquisite crochet work to hand-painted Portuguese pots and traditional calligraphy. The team also plan to set up courses and projects at the back of the shop. The knitting of squares to be turned into birds for this year's Art in the Park festival is a current project.



The profits from these activities support Old Town developments, whether through business advice or the promotion of events to attract visitors. The next event will be the revival of the popular Canal Boat Festival, to be held on the weekend of 23rd and 24th June. Canal boats will be moored up along the canal, not only residential craft but the boats of canal traders such as chandlers and practitioners of canal art – the traditional roses and castles. Clemens Street will be closed on the Sunday, making space for stalls and live entertainment. There will even be a hog roast on Saturday night organised by Matt and Alex of Pro-Caffeinate. August will see the return of the successful Bikealot festival, bringing bikers and rock music to Old Town. In all of this the team have been supported by the WDC Small Grants Fund.

It will be worth a visit this summer to see for yourself what is happening and while there to try a Romanian lunch or drop in Portuguese coffee and cake. You could even get your computer fixed at Green Geek. Don't be surprised that in Clemens Street you will find no familiar coffee shops or chain stores, apart from the Co-op. It is very different to the town north of the Leam.

Barbara Lynn

England's green and pleasant land?

England is no longer a green and pleasant land, according to John Read, the founder of Clean Up Britain, launching the latest campaign on 23rd April at the Leamington Town Assembly. In statistics and pictures he showed the extent of the problem which affects us all, wherever we live. Councils spend around £1 billion annually clearing up litter. Our beautiful countryside is spoilt by discarded rubbish. Pets and wildlife are injured or killed.

The Now or Never campaign will be trialled in Leamington, before being rolled out



All too familiar a sight

across England. According to Rachael Campbell, one of Clean Up Britain's directors, Leamington was chosen for a variety of reasons, including the mixture of urban and green spaces, along with its waterways, the diversity of the population, the high proportion of independent businesses and the significant student presence.

This campaign is adopting a different approach to the earlier ones, said by John Read to have failed. Despite previous initiatives such as Keep Britain Tidy and the imposition of higher fines, every year more litter is dropped, thrown out of car windows, or simply dumped. He believes that the only route to success is to change people's attitudes, claiming that people just do not think when they leave behind picnic litter or use an unlicensed company to dispose of their rubbish. The campaign intends to raise the public's awareness of what they are doing and of the damage that this can cause.

Clean Up Britain are therefore working, not only with partners like the RSPCA, Coca-Cola and KFC, ... but also with the Behavioural Science Group at Warwick Business School, making use of insights into behavioural psychology to bring about a change in the public's attitude and hence behaviour. With community engagement and business support, it is hoped that dropping litter will soon be widely regarded as anti-social, in the same way that attitudes have changed towards smoking in pubs and restaurants. Once widespread, this is now seen as unacceptable.

To learn more, go to the campaign website www.cleanupbritain.org. Here you will also find information about the WBS report on the use of behavioural insights. Another website www.nowornever.co.uk refers particularly to plans for Leamington, so we know what to watch out for.

Barbara Lynn

Clarendon Square

This is the most formal green space in Leamington; it is well-used and much appreciated by local residents and people working in the vicinity, especially in the summer. It is the first sight visitors arriving from the north have of a characteristically 'Leamington' townscape. Significant architecturally and from the socio-historical point of view, this important urban park has for many years presented a rather unloved and certainly sub-optimal aspect to the world.

Following the uproar over the proposed developments in Christchurch Gardens, and the subsequent formation of a 'Friends' group there, about 10 people met in the White Horse, Clarendon Street and talked about the formation of 'The Friends of Clarendon Square'. Since then I have been in contact with WDC about their current plan (which also implies a budget) for improving the square, so it's time for wider public engagement.

About 4-6 meetings a year are contemplated, probably in one of the quieter rooms in The White Horse. We don't intend at present to get involved with fundraising of any kind, but we do want to hear from those who care about the future of the square and the part it plays in our town. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining us.

susanrasmussen@btinternet.com 01926 882 920, 07796 377 240

Susan Rasmussen

Judging Gardens for RHS

The talk by Robin Russell, a seasoned RHS judge, was about judging gardens, allotments and displays of fruit and/or flowers. It soon became clear that there are

five main categories: individual displays, Gardening groups, Schools etc.,

He emphasised the importance of “It’s Your Neighbourhood” (IYN): you should define your area of interest to find a category to join. Collective effort is to be encouraged; Foundry Wood and the Friends of the Midland Oak Park are splendid examples. Scoring the competitive value of each entry is a precise exercise, and meeting the Britain in Bloom targets depends on fulfilling the goals set nationally, using a regulated points system for each category. Complex it may be, but well worth studying in advance.

Among the targets Robin emphasised that “Recycling and Protecting the Environment” featured strongly and he made various suggestions:

- Gather and compost autumn leaves for mulching the following year.
 - Gather Yew tree cuttings to scatter strategically as protection from bugs on verges and in open areas.
 - Conserve rainwater for use on allotments and gardens to avoid using tap water.
 - Conduct bug-hunts to clear your gardens.
- These are popular in schools, and raises the pupils' interest and awareness. Learning to handle worms etc. helps to overcome any instinctive aversion.

Applying to Heart of England in Bloom for a grant is less challenging than one might suppose. Categories such as improving the local environment; encouraging good gardening; growing vegetables and fruit are all eligible. Robin emphasised that “Time is Money” and time spent requesting a grant can be costed and included in the bid. He urged us to keep a log of the time spent by volunteers supporting community gardening and/or improving the environment. This can be a part of your application for a grant and merits support.



© RHS Grass Roots

Simon Wheeler, Leamington in Bloom Committee member

The Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick

Every seat was taken in Dormer Hall when Heidi Meyer addressed this session's joint meeting of the Leamington and Warwick Societies. A career in military and diplomatic service preceded Heidi's appointment a year ago as Master of the Lord Leycester Hospital.

She emphasised that the Hospital is not only a remarkable – and Grade I listed – group of buildings but a living community of old soldiers. The most recent arrival as a resident is a young Guardsman severely wounded in Afghanistan, who describes himself, among the older, retired Brothers, as having eight fathers.

To fulfil its rôle, similar to, but older than, the better-known Chelsea Royal Hospital in London, the buildings, from St James' Chapel over the West Gate (C12) to the Guildhall (C15), the Malt House of the former Anchor Inn (C16), and some C19 pastiche, are all in need of substantial repair, conservation, and improvement.



Lord Leycester Hospital

© David Dixon CC

Heidi's first year as Master had been spent preparing a bid for Heritage Lottery funding to contribute a large part of the funding for a programme estimated to cost £5m, but she came with the recent news that it had not passed scrutiny at the first round. So she has a lot more to do, with architects and surveyors, but also with the local community, to develop the plans for the building, for increasing its income, and for reinforcing the part that it plays in the economy and society.

In discussion, members of both Societies were able to offer Heidi a reassuringly wider range of advice, on the buildings, on fundraising, and on the potential of the Hospital as a place to visit and to use. A decent audience, a very decent speaker, and a fearsome task ahead. We offer all our support to Heidi Meyer, and our wishes for success.

James Mackay

New members

We are pleased to welcome to our society:

Gary and Wendy Middleton

Jonathan Nicholls and Susan Rasmussen

Don and Stella Mason

Debra Hepburn and Julian Whitehead

Stephanie Kerr and Michael Chapman

Louise and Richard Goold

Mrs Pauline Pemberton

Mrs Maggie Coleman

David and Alison Chantrey

Officers and Committee

Chairman: Sidney Syson, 11 Astley Close, CV32 6PT, 01926 423 140

Vice Chairmen: Barbara Lynn, Apt. 53 Manor House, Avenue Road, CV31 3ND
01926 831414

Richard Ward, 3 Bell Court, The Maltings, CV32 5FH, 01926 422750

Hon. Secretary: Margaret Begg, The Garden House, Clarendon Crescent, CV32 5NR,
01926 423822

Hon. Treasurer: Clive Engwell, Clarendon Cottage, Clarendon Square, CV32 5QT, 01926
420454

Other Committee Members:

Richard Ashworth 01926 316703

Marianne Pitts 01926 885532

Archie Pitts 01926 885532

Carole Sleight 07768 617 081

Jef Tuyn 01926 339085

Newsletter Distribution: Dorothy Clark

The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is a member of the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association and the National Organisation of Residents' Associations. It exists to preserve the heritage and improve the character of Royal Leamington Spa and to encourage high standards of planning and architecture.

Charity No. 516078

Unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in these newsletters are the contributors' own and not necessarily the corporate view of the Society.