



[www.leamingtonsociety.org](http://www.leamingtonsociety.org)

## The Leamington Society

# Newsletter

**November 2018**

### Chairman's notes

As I write the Leamington car parking saga rumbles on, with the Archery Road car park application being "refused against the recommendation to grant in the report as it did not comply with Local Plan Policies HE1 and HE2." These policies are HE1 "Protection of Statutory Heritage Assets" and HE2 "Protection of Conservation Areas." It is encouraging to see that these policies may yet have teeth, and that on this occasion the local opposition to these plans was heeded by Councillors.

Last month I attended a gathering of Civic Trusts in Birmingham, organised by Civic Voice, the association of civic trusts. We were reminded that, whether we like it or not, development is here for the foreseeable future and that we should not blindly oppose development, but oppose blind development.

We were challenged to be a guide and support to local authorities, the conscience of developers and the galvanisers of communities. Strong words.

We were also encouraged to be supportive of new housing, but supportive not of short term developments, but long term ones which

### Talks and Events

The following talks will all be held in the Conference Centre, Dormer Place

#### Book binding and book dealing

John Richards

Thursday, December 6th, 19.30

### 2019

#### Fashion in the time of Jane Austin

Sarah Jane Downing

Thursday, January 10th, 19.30

### Note: Change of dates for following two talks

#### Design Centre and Awards 1950-1980

Lily Crowther

Thursday, February 7th, 19.30

#### Perspectives on Afghanistan

Heidi Meyer

Master Lord Leycester Hospital

Thursday, March 7th, 19.30

were those that put communities and people at the heart of design.

That resonates with the Revised National Planning Policy Framework, the NPPF for short, published in July. This was described as “Refocusing on the quality and design of proposals which are in line with what local communities want, the framework ensures councils have the confidence and tools to refuse permission for development that does not prioritise design quality and does not complement its surroundings.” I quote from the press release.

These are encouraging words, and though they are too late for many developments, may they indeed be taken to heart, not only in Leamington but across the country.

Finally here’s a question for you. In 2018, of each £1,000 Council tax that you pay to Warwick District Council, how much does the District Council actually keep? You may be surprised by the answer (on final page of this newsletter), which is why this relatively small amount of money needs to be spent wisely.

In view of this, the committee of the Leamington Society is concerned that the standard of the restoration work in the Pump Room Gardens is carried out to the highest possible standards as befits such a high-profile project that many local people have given generously in time and money to support.

***Sidney Syson***

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**Forthcoming talks and events: [For venues, dates and times see front page of this Newsletter](#)**

### **Bookbinding and Conservation**

This talk by local bookbinder and dealer, John Richards, about his work is being combined with a Christmas party.

### **2019**

Sarah Jane Downing, local author, will talk about her book **Fashion in the time of Jane Austen**. There cannot have been a more attractive period to be a lady!

### **Design Centre and Awards 1950-1980**

Lily Crowther was curator at the V&A for seven years, specialising in 20th century design. Come and bring friends for whom the talk’s period is not pre-history.

## **Perspectives on Afghanistan**

Heidi Meyer was in Afghanistan for 10 years with the US army and has had a ring-side view of the conflict. Was it worth it? Is it too early to tell?

**Note: Correction to date for April talk: Thursday April 11th, 14.00-16.00**

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## **The Redevelopment of Covent Garden Car Park**

**Public benefit: Trees? Affordable housing? Revenue saving offices?**

Members of the Leamington Society hold widely differing views on these issues. This article attempts to summarise impartially a series of complex and emotional issues relating to the replacement of Covent Garden Car Park and the proposed relocation of the District Council's offices.

Covent Garden multi-storey Car Park has concrete cancer and needs replacing at a cost of £9 million. This cost would not be covered by the sale of Riverside House.

Currently the District Council expect to start demolition in March 2019, with the loss of 468 car parking spaces for approximately 20 months. BID, the Chamber of Commerce and individual business owners are deeply concerned that there is insufficient alternative parking available for their staff and customers, which will have a severely detrimental effect on the town centre economy, especially over Christmas 2019.

Residents are likewise concerned about the lack of parking spaces, and the likely increase in all day parking on residential streets further from the town centre. The District Council appears confident there will be sufficient parking available.

The District Council say the new car park, when ready, will provide 617 car parking spaces with about 60 of these for staff and 44 for the occupants of the new apartments. Others fear this is an underestimate of staff parking requirements.

The planning application for the car park was approved in January 2018.

A separate, but closely related issue, is the relocation of the Council's offices.

In 2013 a Limited Liability Partnership, the PSP Warwick LLP, was established by the Council as a joint venture vehicle with Public Sector Partnerships (PSP) "in order to assist the Council to manage and develop its asset portfolio and to unlock complex

regeneration and development projects”, such as the relocation of the Council’s offices. Some people question this arrangement.

In May 2014 Warwick District Council unveiled plans to relocate and sell Riverside House. Initially the proposed site for the new HQ was an area adjacent to the Spa Centre. In September 2015 the Executive examined a shortlist of potential relocation sites in Leamington, including an option of refurbishing Riverside House, and decided that its preferred option was the comprehensive redevelopment of the Council’s Covent Garden multi-storey and ground car parks.

The replacement of the Council offices would be financed by the sale of the Riverside House site for development together with building for sale 44 apartments at Covent Garden.

In April 2016 the Council agreed to go ahead with the “Council HQ replacement and Covent Garden Car Park replacement project.”

The planning application for the new offices and 44 private apartments was approved in January 2018. At the same meeting of the Planning Committee granted outline planning permission for up to 170 new homes on the Riverside House site. Neither of these applications proposed any provision for affordable housing.

In April 2018 the Secretary of State confirmed that these plans would not be called in.

‘Save Leamington from Warwick DC’ ([www.saveleam.com](http://www.saveleam.com)) made an application for a Judicial Review of the Council’s HQ relocation plan, questioning the financial implications of the move. In July 2018 this was refused by the High Court of Justice Queen’s Bench Division Planning Court, stating that the claim is “not properly arguable” and that Warwick District Council did have regard to its planning policy.

Some people query whether the move needs to be made at all, and whether it is wise in the light of a possible future unitary authority.

The District Council argues that the move is necessary to save money; approximately £300,000 in revenue costs per year. They state that existing offices “are too large, costly to run, in need of significant investment and relatively inaccessible to people without a car,” and that the new offices will be “smaller, modern, energy efficient, and more economical.” “The new offices will cost in the region of £7 million and will be significantly less costly to run than the current offices. Riverside House costs the

council £670,000 per annum to run and the repairs bill is estimated to be £1 million over the next 5 years.” The new offices would be owned by the District Council.

The outline planning permission for Riverside House is controversial for many reasons, three of which are: the number of dwellings on the site, no affordable housing in contravention of the Council’s own policy, and the loss of trees particularly the large copper beeches on Milverton Hill.

Normally, for planning applications of more than 11 dwellings, the Local Planning Authority would seek 40% of homes to be affordable. However, the policy in the agreed Local Plan, allows applicants to avoid this requirement if they can show that the scheme is not financially viable if affordable housing at the required levels is included in the development. Part of the site is a flood plain and several trees have Tree Preservation Orders and a viability assessment was submitted.

Planning Officers then sought an independent expert assessment of the viability case to allow the Planning Committee to consider the issue as part of their overall consideration of the application.

Although the Planning Committee accepted the viability report, they only gave approval subject to a Section 106 Agreement requiring the viability assessment for the Riverside House site to be re-assessed when the development is underway and, if this new assessment demonstrated that the viability position had improved, then the applicant would be liable to make an affordable housing contribution.



CGI (Computer Generated Image) of Covent Garden redevelopment

The loss of trees as a result of the redevelopment of the site is a major issue for campaigners, especially given Leamington’s poor record in terms of air pollution.

The outline planning application shows a relocated vehicle access, which will then be

on the line of a culverted watercourse and relocated sewer which could not be built upon. The report to the Planning Committee stated

“A consequence of locating the access in this position is that two of the large copper beech trees in the pavement on Milverton Hill will have to be removed. This is a significant cause for concern in the consultation responses that have been received. These trees are situated within the conservation area and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. However, there are health issues with the trees which will limit their longevity.

“In the present financial climate it is perhaps unlikely that the County Council would have the resources to plant replacements when these trees reach the end of their life.

The report continues

“... the applicant has proposed mitigation measures including the planting of 3 trees within the site, close to the position of the trees that are to be removed, together with a contribution of £30,000 towards the planting of replacement street trees in the locality. Nevertheless there would still be an overall negative impact due to the loss of these trees, but this would have to be weighed against the public benefits of the overall relocation scheme.

...

“Turning to the loss of other trees within the sites, these are less significant than the copper beech trees. All of the more important trees within the site are proposed to be retained, and these are already covered by a Tree Preservation Order.”

So is it a done deal? Outline planning permission was granted in January 2018, including access and landscaping, for the demolition of Riverside House and the redevelopment of the site to provide new buildings ranging from 2½ to 6 storeys for up to 170 residential dwellings for PSP Warwick LLP.

Full planning permission, however, has yet to be given and Warwick District Council still own the site. Planning Committees are quasi-judicial bodies and are not party political. Decisions should not therefore be made on political grounds, but on strictly planning grounds weighing up the public benefit where there are controversial issues.

What is the public benefit? Trees, affordable housing, revenue saving offices? Any views or questions should be addressed to your local Councillors.

***Sidney Syson***

## **Purpose Built Student Accommodation**

Recently the Leamington Society was contacted by a concerned resident from Colchester in Essex campaigning against Alumno who wanted to build student accommodation in their town. I told them my experience as District Councillor for Brunswick ward in the hope that it might help to clarify a few of their concerns.

Several years ago, representatives from Alumno spent many months 'consulting' with the community and sought to reassure us about their development – with promises of a robust management plan which included patrolling the area for students' cars. 'The Union' (as the Alumno development in Leamington is known) opened in September 2017 and was not full to begin with. Whether this was due to cost, late getting on the market, or other reasons – but it was, and still is, managed by Homes for Students. Within the first few weeks the car parking enforcement failed and students were parking in the Althorpe Street industrial estate. Complaints led to this being investigated by WDC's Planning Enforcement team. I have met with the on-site managers who assure us they are enforcing the tenancy agreement – but we will see how they do this year!

I have not had any complaints about 'The Union' in relation to noise – although I have with another purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) in the area. This may be down to the difference in management and not being located near many residential homes – there are a few houses in adjacent streets but they've not complained of noise.

It was interesting to hear that in the Colchester development that Alumno promise to make the lower levels available as community and business space. So far this has not been offered with developments here although is being talked about by Warwick District Council officers in their development of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on PBSAs. They call this 'active frontages' and is one way of claiming that the building stays active during non-term time – i.e. when the area can become a 'ghost town' outside of the 30 weeks a year that students are here.

This assertion that PBSAs reduce the HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupation) demand is as yet unproven here and many of us are sceptical as to whether it would be achieved. Other prospective developers are trying to claim the same thing. WDC have recently published a student housing strategy with one of the aims to 'encourage more PBSAs to take the pressure of HMOs' but we are still seeing applications for HMOs approved

across the town including in South Leamington, an area with many student HMOs already. We want to ensure these PBSAs are located in the right places to avoid further over concentration. You may be aware we have a policy called 'H6' in our local plan which is supposed to limit HMOs to no more than 10% within 100m but in reality it is not always being applied.

As I write this, we are yet to see the publication of a PBSA SPD from the Council. Time will tell if this can be effective in delivering the above aims. But whilst we wait for the policies to be developed (and



CGI of coming PBSA on Mercia Metals site

enforced) more land along the canal is being transformed into purpose-built student accommodation. Most recently Mercia Metals on Wise Street has been allowed on planning appeal for 200 bed student accommodation. And we await the planning application for three more student blocks that are being proposed on Althorpe Street.

***Kristie Naimo, District Councillor***

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## **Housing crisis**

I do wish the press (including The Economist) would stop blaming the 'housing crisis' entirely on the planning process. The Government has also been guilty of this – but more recently they have finally started to look elsewhere for explanations. The District Councils stand accused of using concerns for the loss of the Green Belt and rich farmland green field sites to conceal their 'nimbyism' in restricting the expansion of their towns. Surely, the situation south of Leamington and Warwick is a glaring example of what 'fake news' that is.

Despite undisputed evidence that there are between a half a million and a million dwellings that have received Planning Approval but have yet to be built, the Government has continued to rely entirely on market forces to determine housing provision. This, not surprisingly, bears little relation to overall need.



The approvals given to the south of Leamington are for a restricted range of house types, rely heavily on car transport and so reflect a limited social demographic. The vast proportion of these houses are being built by a small group of national house-



The dream

builders and these developers have little interest in other than churning out acres of their usual solutions on open sites which take little thought or trouble to develop.

This limited and unreliable supply of housing is the wrong way to go about things for a



The reality

number of other reasons. The environmental damage is considerable and the knock-on effect on infrastructure has been glossed over. The demise of strategic planning in Local Authorities means there is little joined-up thinking about how these large areas of housing provide places worth living in – beyond easy access to the advantages of the town (if you have enough cars, of course).

What about public transport (Stagecoach have announced an actual reduction in bus services), cycle-ways, pedestrian routes and sports and community facilities?

Warwick District Council will no doubt cite their Design Guide for developers, intended to form their schemes into ‘Garden Suburbs’ (incidentally issued after most of the approvals had been already given). Unfortunately, this nostalgic rhetoric does not, at least yet, seem to be bearing much fruit!

***Richard Ward***

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### **Friends of Christchurch Gardens**

In January 2018, Warwick District Council proposed converting Christchurch Gardens tennis courts into a car park. Strong local opposition meant that WDC abandoned this proposal within days. This proved a wake-up call about the precarious nature of our open space so the Friends of Christchurch Gardens was re-invigorated, with a new committee and affiliation to The Leamington Society.

The park was selected to be part of the Clean Up Britain “Now or Never” project, designed to learn how attitudes towards litter and single-use plastics can be changed for the better. Posters were placed around the park to highlight injuries to wildlife and domestic pets caused by rubbish.

In June the Friends participated in the Leamington In Bloom Open Afternoon with a stall in the Pump Rooms Portico to promote their work and advertise a litter pick a week later. The litter pick was featured by local print and talk media and very well attended including by WDC Wardens and Clean Up Britain. A further litter pick took place in July, just ahead of the Britain in Bloom judges’ tour, which this year included Christchurch Gardens.



Christchurch Gardens, June 2018

We are working towards Local Green Space designation as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. We have assembled a survey for all users to provide evidence that Christchurch Gardens are of “particular local significance”, an important criterion. This will be publicised in

local schools, churches and on posters. It is available electronically:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/M5QLHGW>.

Please would you complete it before 30th November? If you need a paper copy, please email [louisegold@yahoo.com](mailto:louisegold@yahoo.com).

Please "Like" our new Facebook Page

([Facebook.com/Friendsofchristchurchgardens](https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofchristchurchgardens)).

***Alison Chantrey***

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### **Pump Room Gardens: Progress report**

Constructing an operational entrance to the undercroft of the bandstand with a trap-door entrance which would be waterproof in times of floods has proved to be difficult. The undercroft has been closed for the best part of a half century; under modern health and safety regulations access would now only be allowed under restricted circumstances. It was therefore decided to brick up the entrance. Perhaps an undercroft for a bandstand in a flood plain was never a smart idea.

We are fortunate that our bandstand has electric power for lighting and sound for events; it also provides electricity to Linden Arches. The existing and inelegant electric boxes will be replaced by ones recessed within the plinth wall making them much less obvious.

Works on the paths have been dogged by problems – relaying of various kerb stones; surprises like an unexpected fibre optic cable under Linden Avenue in the path of another line of kerb stones; major tree roots; revisions to the planned drainage system;

...

A recent structural survey of York Bridge by Warwickshire County Council, which is responsible for the bridge, revealed that the steel membranes under the walkway are heavily corroded and need to be replaced. This work will not start before the next financial year, so sometime after next April 1st.

So far the weather has treated the contractors kindly with limited rain and unseasonal warmth. It is expected that tree planting will start soon. Currently the estimated finish date for the works, excluding York Bridge, is February 2019.

***Archie Pitts***

## Conservation in Conflict with Community?

A recent Council planning committee demonstrated how enforcement of conservation may, with the best of intentions, also give rise to harsh consequences for individuals and a local community.

Satchwell Place is a group of four listed terrace houses, tucked alongside a pedestrian alley in south Leamington. Unfortunately this secluded route is also a haunt of passing drug addicts, discarded needles, and urinating in the small front gardens.



Elegant listed houses in Satchwell Place now hidden by less elegant fencing  
CC [geograph.org.uk](http://geograph.org.uk) and [www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk](http://www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk)

Sick and tired of the situation, a tenant with several children had erected a modern fence for protection. But she had apparently not been well advised by Orbit or by WDC that she needed permission. So this was now the subject of a retrospective planning application. On the face of it the fence was far from ideal in the setting of a listed property; but for years the Council had not acted in relation to existing dilapidated fencing and grossly overgrown frontage obscuring this terrace. The police evidently do not have manpower to deal with the persistent drug abuse that blights local family life. The tenants cannot possibly afford elegant iron railings, although if they were well off it might well be a gated community.

In the event, the retrospective application was refused, officers will issue a notice but stay enforcement for six months and promised to speak to Orbit. Questions remain: will a reasonable outcome be negotiated, or in due course might the tenant and children be given notice to quit?

What is the purpose of planning if not for the benefit of the community? At what point should procedure be tempered by appreciation of the likely consequences? The planning website recorded many conflicting views from both local supporters and objectors, including Leamington Society members on either side of the fence so to speak. This is a disturbing case which needs to be watched to see how it plays out.

***Richard Ashworth***

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### **Czech memorial fountain**

On October 27th local people celebrated the restoration of the Czech memorial fountain in Jephson Gardens which has been listed as an historic monument Grade II. This was the 50th anniversary of the unveiling of the fountain commemorating the occasion when a brave group of young Czechoslovak men, trained in Leamington, sacrificed their lives for their country after assassinating the Nazi leader, Reinhard Heydrich. It was also 100 years since Czechoslovakia was created. Both the Czech and the Slovak embassies were represented at the event. Red roses were laid by local dignitaries, and a group of small children sang a Czech song – a fitting end to a moving occasion.

***Margaret Begg***

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### **Two views of Leamington**

John Betjeman's poem, "Death in Leamington", will probably be far more familiar to Leamington Society members than the article about Leamington by his daughter, Candida Lycett Green, written more than 70 years later.

In "Death in Leamington", the death of a lonely old woman is discovered by her nurse bringing in the tea. Not only is her crochet unfinished and her fingers dead. The evening star seen through the plate glass window of the bedroom sounds chilly and the fabric of the building is crumbling: "the stucco is peeling" and from "the yellow Italianate arches" the plaster is dropping.

The melancholy seems inescapable.

It is interesting to find out however that John Betjeman wrote this poem when he was an Oxford undergraduate. In a radio talk he spoke about going up to Leamington on

the luncheon car train, taking the waters after lunch and then returning on the tea car train, telling his tutor he had been writing an essay. Not surprisingly he left Oxford without a degree and his tutor called him an “idle prig”. The leisured context he describes does counteract the melancholy of the poem.

In complete contrast is the article written for a series in *The Oldie* magazine by Candida Lycett Green, with the aim of celebrating the beauty of England. After arriving in Leamington by train, she praises first the station, with its “swanky chromium-plated double doors, just like the ones in Claridges” and the Art Deco lettering across the front.

She goes on to the Leam and Jephson Gardens, forming a “lush green belt”. It is spring, so the atmosphere in Leamington is festive. She describes “wrought-iron balconies like fine lace” on the Regency buildings, trees everywhere and showers of almond blossom trees along Newbold Terrace. Her visit ends with the “wildly eccentric Victorian Town Hall” and the art gallery she says is just the right size.

“Trains and Buttered Toast”, John Murray 2006, contains a selection of John Betjeman’s radio talks. “Unwrecked England”, published by *The Oldie*, 2009, is a collection of Candida Lycett Green’s articles with beautiful illustrations.

**Barbara Lynn**

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### **Warwickshire County Record Office – Skeletons in and Out of the Closet**

The title was misleading – no skeletons were revealed. The speaker, Sam Collenette WCRO curator, was a charming and intelligent young woman. She spoke about a selection of WCRO projects undertaken during her tenure, which is (unhappily for us) ending. Record Offices are always short of money and space, so ingenuity is needed to achieve their aims, which are to preserve records for the community. For example, the Parish records in their collection were released for microfilming in the 1950-60s, and later digitisation by commercial companies selling genealogical information - on condition that WCRO not only has these files but also makes them available to local people *free* in all public libraries. Ancestry and *Find my Past* have two MILLION images online and WCRO receives a (small) royalty on each of theirs when uploaded.

Leek Wootton Local History society researched and published “Doreen’s Diary”, consisting of daily notes written for her husband in the forces during World War II.

WCRO acted as the Heritage Partner in their successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the book is well worth reading.

Stemming the flood of material into the office is a problem: their Strong room will be full by 2020 and needs to be secure, cool and dry. WCRO has to accept local government, NHS and Court material. Many files stay closed for 20 or 30 or even 100 years. Paper and parchment and vellum are well understood, but tickertape, computer cards and electronic storage devices rapidly become unreadable as technology changes.

A thought-provoking talk. We were urged to visit by one of the audience – it is not an intimidating or unwelcoming place, even though there are security procedures as you come and go. In my years of visiting archives as a researcher and as a volunteer, I have always been welcomed and helped. Archivists are responsible and benign, and we should be grateful.

After the meeting Sam asked if we could tell members about their latest project: *Warwickshire Bytes*, a digital heritage festival led by Heritage and Culture Warwickshire (HCW) with funding from Warwickshire County Council. One project strand will digitise up to 150,000 images of quarter sessions witness statements and provide opportunities for volunteers who can't make it into Warwick. There will also be 'Warwickshire in 100 stories' to look out for. HCW are working with libraries and providing free access for this year to the British Newspaper Archive in Leamington, Stratford, Rugby, Nuneaton and at WCRO to encourage people to research their local community, businesses and people. If the pilot goes well it may be possible to extend the free access. Anyone interested in *Warwickshire Bytes* should contact [heritagevolunteering@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:heritagevolunteering@warwickshire.gov.uk).

***Marianne Pitts***

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### **From Spa town to York: The National Railway Museum**

This was the first “national” Museum outside London and there were questions in Parliament about the location. The British Transport collection in Clapham was split into its component parts (rail, bus, aircraft, cars) in 1975 and is still in transition. Rail is mainly in York and Shildon, near Darlington, but some “large lumpy things” in

Anthony's charge are in Swindon, Doncaster, Tyseley, Didcot, Bressingham ... . Engines and wagons and carriages are moved about – with difficulty.

Anthony's philosophy is that the NRM is a museum for everyone, not just train spotters and rail enthusiasts. We are all affected by the railways. The aim is to preserve not only the rare and beautiful: Puffing Billy and the Flying Scotsman, but also the modern



Flying Scotsman

and commonplace: commuter carriages, freight wagons. Some of these have given 40 years of long service and travelled millions of miles, but when the model is superseded, they are consigned to scrap. The museum undertakes to repair and conserve and repaint at least one example of each type for

future generations to enjoy.

There are three stars in railway history: Trevithick, Stephenson and Wickens – and very few have heard of the last one. He was a professor in the aerospace industry, called in by British Rail to design the jet-propelled Advance Passenger Train, father of the Pendolino and other high speed engines. According to Anthony, they do not run or roll but fly!

There was material here for several lectures. Our national heritage is in the best hands. His parents and teachers were there to enjoy it too.

***Marianne Pitts***

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### **Privacy, Pleasure and Peace**

In October the Leamington Society visited Hill Close Gardens in Warwick. Chris Begg proved a most knowledgeable guide.



'The Linen Street Allotments', as they were known locally, by the early 1990s were in fact Victorian 'Detached Gardens' which were saved from becoming another housing development by local conservationists. 'Detached Gardens' were a popular idea in areas where people lived in crowded, noisy town centres, above their shop for instance. To have a small garden plot to visit for pleasure, leisure, privacy and peace was a joy.

Hill Close Gardens is one of only four such sites remaining in the country today. The individual plots are staffed by volunteers. Each has its own distinct character but all hark back faithfully to their Victorian origins. Some possess summer houses, now meticulously restored. In the late 1990s I remember seeing their little roofs poking through the brambles as the area was gradually cleared. What a transformation!

The plots' owners too have been researched. A Mr Chadband of local pork pie fame owned one. Dickens borrowed his name for a clergyman in Bleak House. Another interesting name was Behoo: now where does that hail from?

Work continues all year round – gardening, protecting the numerous varieties of apples and pears so far discovered, researching the history of the individual plots. Today Hill Close is a wonderful monument to the pleasure



Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

Michael Heath

that gardening brought and still brings to everyday lives. As an old Chinese proverb has it:

'If you would be happy for a week take a wife, if you would be happy for a month kill your pig, but if you would be happy all your life plant a garden.'

***Ros Parkes***

## **Philip Larkin, joint meeting with the Literary Society**

We were lucky in obtaining Sheila Woolf for this talk. I say “lucky” because Larkin as a man was not notable for his charisma, and as a poet, some people might take exception to his very occasional use of the word f\*\*\*. It therefore needed an enthusiast like Sheila, speaking wholly to the point, to put what are essentially these trivia in their place and to emphasize the genuine and frequent achievements, all the greater for being concentrated.

Unquestionably Larking has already entered the wide canon of English literature. Very rightly Sheila insisted that the poem “I remember, I remember” (a short story in verse) is not even marginally an attack on Coventry, Larkin’s birthplace, rather a heartbreaking memory of an uneventful and unsatisfactory childhood (not his parents’ “fault”, I would like to add). She made much of the lapidary last line “Nothing, like something, happens anywhere”. Then she finished with “Aubade”, frigid and frightened “Most things may never happen: One will.” The honesty, whether or not one agrees with it, is vastly impressive.

The audience was hooked. That speaks for itself.

## ***Robin Taylor***

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## **Yvonne Moore 1944-2018 – A highly valued member of our community**

Yvonne Moore, former Mayor of Leamington Spa and keen supporter of the Leamington Society, sadly died in September this year at the age of 74.

She came to the UK as a young woman from Jamaica and trained as a nurse. Her strong caring ethos and her feisty nature showed up early on when she became active in the Royal College of Nurses Union. She moved to Leamington in 1962 and after retiring from nursing she found many other ways of contributing to the local community including caring for older people at the Irish club.

Driven by her desire to help others she became a JP serving for many years in courts in Warwickshire and later she was elected as a local Liberal Democrat councillor for the Milverton Ward. Despite having to confront prejudice in the UK she had the strength of personality to pursue her aims and tackle problems head on. Her deep religious

faith and her involvement in church life were undoubtedly a source of energy and comfort for her when times were hard.

She was devoted to her husband Mel and their two children and four grandchildren. Yvonne was proud of her family and ambitious for them all. She was always ready with advice and support and had a fierce work ethic which she expected others to share. She had a calm steel which inspired respect but also a warmth which friends appreciated so much.

She had wide interests enjoying exploring Britain with the National Trust as well as following developments in her home town. She will be much missed by her family, friends and her many contacts in the community.



Yvonne Moore  
© Carolyn Gifford

***Margaret Begg***

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**New members**

We are pleased to welcome to our society:

Judith and Michael Thomas

Pauline Pears and Ian Litton

Alan and Gwen Norrie

Peter and Pippa Leary Howe

Barry Franklin

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Answer: Warwick District Council keeps only £90 of every £1,000 it collects in Council tax.

**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  
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Richard Ward, 3 Bell Court, The Maltings, CV32 5FH, 01926 422 750

**Hon. Secretary:** Margaret Begg, The Garden House, Clarendon Crescent, CV32 5NR,  
01926 423 822

**Hon. Treasurer:** Clive Engwell, Clarendon Cottage, Clarendon Square, CV32 5QT,  
01926 420 454

**Other Committee Members:**

Richard Ashworth	01926 316 703	Marianne Pitts	01926 885 532
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*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.*