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The Leamington Society Newsletter

February 2019

Chairman's notes

Plans for Leamington have come and gone over the years. Who now remembers the plan to put a dual carriage relief road through The Dell in Milverton, build a 13-storey block of flats in Christchurch Gardens at the top of Parade, or in 1964 to possibly demolish the Town Hall? I suspect only a few Leamington Society members recall all these.

Now we have a Neighbourhood Plan for Leamington, which is out for consultation this month (see* below). Drop-in sessions will be held during February and March 2019 in places such as the Royal Priors shopping centre, Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre, Jephson Gardens and at local shopping areas like Crown Way. This is important; do have a look and have your say.

Over the Christmas period we had the consultation for the Master Plan for the Creative Quarter, prepared for the Council by CDP (Complex Development Projects). Richard Ashworth has written about this below.

The Leamington Society welcomes, and in general positively supports, this Master Plan,

Talks and Events

Perspectives on Afghanistan

Heidi Meyer
Master Lord Leycester Hospital
Thursday, March 7th, 19.30
Conference Centre,
Dormer Place

Vitsø architecture and the Braun Collection

Thursday, April 11th, 14.00-
16.00
Vitsø, Old Warwick Road
CV31 3QA

AGM

Thursday, May 9th, 19.00
Christchurch Hall
Priory Terrace, CV31 1BA
Formal business,
followed by

Canal Conservation Area

Roger Beckett

* <http://leamingtonneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/>

particularly the acknowledgement of the contribution creative industries make to the local economy and the aim to identify, and meet, the development needs of that sector.

The idea of the Pump Room café area being expanded into the colonnade, and especially the extension of the boardwalk along the riverside to provide a new seating area, are both very attractive.

There are, however, concerns. In particular, the proposal to move the Library out of the Pump Rooms complex and incorporate a modern food market into the vacant library space with a new open frontage onto the gardens. Also the potential loss of what is described as the 'function space', the main room of the complex; this currently provides the only medium sized concert room in the town.

The importance of the Adelaide Road clubland area to the whole project is recognised, but it is vital that the interests of the many community groups currently based there are protected, and that they are fully consulted at all stages of any plan produced.

All this requires some serious funding, and at present it is not clear where this is to be found. Will this be another forgotten plan?

Sidney Syson

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

Perspectives on Afghanistan

After 18 years of Americas longest war, US officials are now sitting down at the table with the Taliban to negotiate an agreement whereby the Taliban will agree to take a share in ensuring Afghanistan is not a safe haven for terrorists in exchange for full US troop withdrawal.

What historical events led to this agreement? What is at stake and why could this not have been done 18 years ago at the Bonn Conference in 2001 when nations strategized the future of Afghanistan without the Taliban at the table. Dr Heidi Meyer, current Master of the Lord Leycester and former US diplomat in Kabul will present.

Vitsoe architecture and the Braun Collection

Mark Adams, Managing Director of Vitsoe, will show us around the HQ and the Braun

collection, all in the production building where the Vitsoe assemble high-quality furniture. No high-heels, please. [Pre-booking with Marianne Pitts essential.](#)

AGM and Canal Conservation Area

The Agenda for our AGM is at the final page of this newsletter.

Formal business will be followed by open discussion with wine, soft drinks, and light refreshments. Then Roger Beckett will tell us about the work he recently did for WDC preparing the new Canal Conservation Area for Warwick District. Roger has 40 years' experience of architecture, urban design and conservation issues. For many years he worked with British Waterways.

Our website

Take a moment to look at the Society's website www.leafingtonsociety.org.

There's a lot happening on our website and you can get more out of your membership if you take advantage of it.

We frequently post items of news, so you can keep up to date. Just sign up with your email address. Your information is safe and private: it is not shared with anyone, and we have no way of identifying who is subscribing.

It's a way of getting your point of view across, by posting comments on what you see. Indeed you can comment generally on Society and Leafington affairs via the contact forms.

We keep the events details up-to-date so you can check what's coming.

You can manage your membership details, including subscriptions, address details, preferences for how you receive your newsletter. If you opt to receive it by email (in pdf format), we eliminate the printing and distribution costs and you see the newsletter in colour.

Contact the committee members using the links provided.

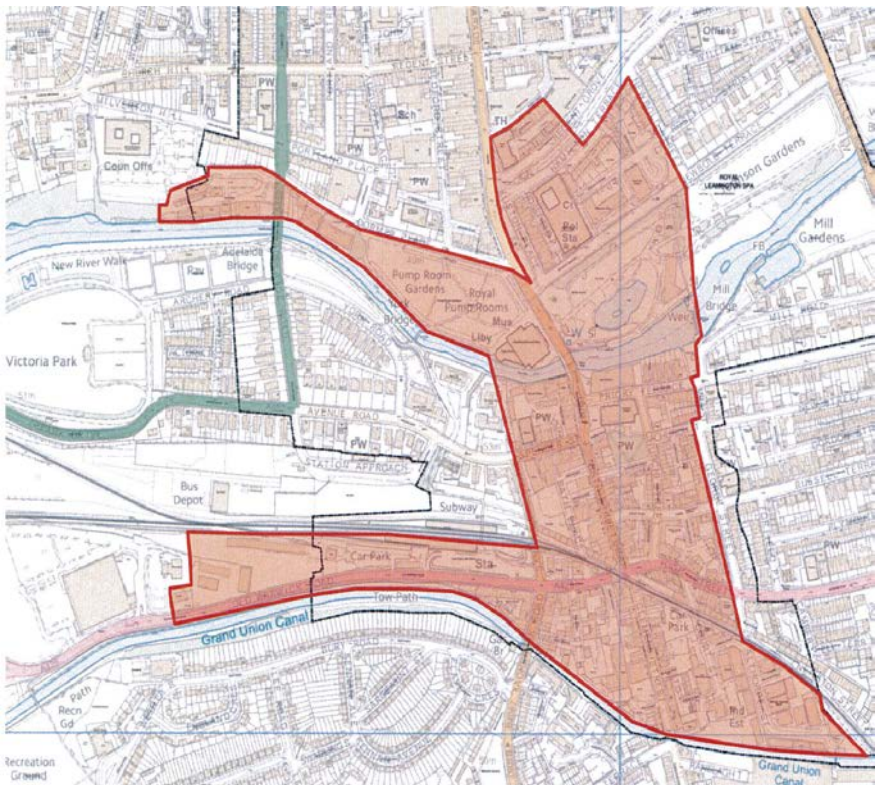
We are also looking for volunteers to help manage the site; if you have any experience at all Jan Gillett would greatly appreciate help in maintaining the site's security and

backup facilities. Even if you don't have the experience, an extra pair of hands would be invaluable.

Jan Gillett

Masterplan for Creativity? The CPD plan

The Creative Quarter has become a label to stick on scattered properties for which the Council is seeking a profitable purpose. This has been dressed up with a fair bit of fluff and fantasy, snappy titles and lots of studios, plus cut and pasting of selected "colour scenes" from around this country and abroad. Eight main sites are listed, within the now much extended boundaries of this exercise, plus Adelaide Bridge Riverside, slipped in as a possible cash raising site. What connects most of them is not so much



The Creative Quarter

geography as the fact that they are unprofitable, run down or empty – or about to be made redundant by WDC (the Town Hall).

The Pump Rooms, unlike many of the other locations, are already a "Civic & Cultural Destination" and the Library is a key cultural element, which functions well, so why interfere? They are definitely NOT in need of a CDP makeover.

A key building which IS in search of a new purpose – the old Post Office – might well be appreciated as a hotel, though there is no parking at present. It could also become offices. However, that ambition will not be magicked by listing it with a number of other unrelated buildings and saying Masterplan. The same applies to the Town Hall and the random list of vague hopes about its future.

Will this wholesale branding of several tired corners of Leamington lead to it suddenly taking off, buzzing with crafty workshops and trendy people with money to spend? Property developers are not the best catalyst to give communities and localities a lift. The kerfuffle over the Adelaide Bridge area, with WDC Executive prioritising potential site value over tenure of existing community activities, illustrates the problem.

This started with the germ of an idea, which might yet reinvigorate small areas, but has been over inflated into an unconvincing Masterplan which is unlikely to fly. The creative people that CDP speak of are more inclined to seek out affordable workplaces and housing in their own way, than to sign up to master planning. Examples include Temperance in Bath Street, the LSA (Leamington Studio Artists) in East Lodge and All Saints Church, none of which even get a mention.

One further point. There is mention of wayfinding and traffic calming at the Bath Street - High Street junction but the County Council is set on making it part of a South Leamington gyratory traffic network, totally at odds with a proposed Creative Quarter.

Richard Ashworth

Pump Room Gardens refurbishment project, or How following the rules can lead you up the garden path

Back in the early days of this project, it was found that WDC did not have the in-house expertise to design, produce tender/contract documents and manage the works on site.

Decisions were taken to appoint an outside organisation to undertake this work, requiring WDC to follow Procurement directives supposedly produced to ensure 'Best Value'.

Following completion of design, tender procedures then followed the required procurement procedures in order to obtain a 'Best Value' contractor for the works.

Two contractors were awarded contracts under this project – *idverde* for the 'groundworks' and Lost Art for the bandstand refurbishment.

The first several weeks from the groundworks contractor commencing work on site indicated their lack of ability to produce acceptable works and unfortunately, the designer/site manager's inability to control works quality. At this time, it was noted that the specification for the works was weak and there appeared to be no setting out (i.e. detailed) drawings produced. Problems were arising due to the location of underground services which should have been resolved pre-tender.

The Friends began to put pressure on WDC by pointing out the significant and continuing poor workmanship, and this eventually and belatedly led to the appointment of a Clerk of the Works to manage the siteworks quality and adherence to specification.

While the appointments of the designer and the groundworks contractor were demonstrably problematic, fortunately, the Clerk of the Works proved to be the "life saver" of the project.

There have been problems with the bandstand. The original floor was found to need replacement; problems arose with the placement of the electrical cabinets; and the original access to the undercroft was bricked up without benefit of listed building consent, or for that matter, any planning application. These problems would never have arisen if the designer had undertaken appropriate investigations and consultations during the design stages.

The project is now approaching its final stages and the refurbished bandstand is being reconstructed and path surfacing is being completed. The application of gravel final surface to the paths may be deferred until Spring as the constituent materials are weather sensitive.

There remains a great deal of remedial work to be undertaken on the edging of the paths; the path surfaces checked for ponding and the operation of the drainage system

when we get heavy rain; the mortar of the stone retaining wall (near the Parade) is crumbling; and there is debate as to the step design at the bridge with potentially dangerous cycle ramps.

Installation of the fencing around the two new flowerbeds along with the street lighting along the path from Bedford Street to York Bridge is yet to be undertaken. Also construction of the swale and completion of associated landscaping which I have not yet been able to view.

You can make up your own minds whether following the laid down procurement procedures has provided "best value" for this project or has been the underlying cause of the problems. I know where my vote lies.

Ian Bradbury

[Ian Bradbury has been helping the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens monitor the implementation of the restoration works.]

Riverside House, Covent Garden and the launch of Leamington Together

Leamington Together is a grassroots community campaign comprising both residents and businesses, united in their desire to find a better option to the current WDC relocation plan. Our supporters are of all ages and backgrounds, from across the political spectrum. The launch, in November last year, is significant – it followed our first attempt to call a public meeting with councillors at the Town Hall, an invitation which not one leading group representative accepted.

Our catchphrase is, 'No relocation without representation' – a slogan that encapsulates perfectly how many of us feel. And even when hundreds of us attended the meeting, which WDC finally conceded to convene at the Spa Centre on 12 November, hoping to make our voices heard, it was patently clear that we were being 'told' what was going to happen, rather than being consulted about the content of the plan.

The deferral of a decision on the Riverside relocation until July 2019 is a small triumph, but whilst we may have won a battle, the war is far from over. Our objective is to put an end to the linking of the Covent Garden car park replacement (which no one is disputing is needed) and WDC's requirement for alternative accommodation. The concerns around displacement parking remain an issue of course, but the build period

which works for all stakeholders. In the meantime, we will be talking to all prospective candidates about their views on Riverside. This is too big a project to escape the manifestos this time around. The people of Leamington deserve transparency and accountability.

Facebook and Twitter: @leamtogether

Carrie and Richard Terry, Leamington Together

Rough sleepers, Beggars and Homelessness

Most people are genuinely concerned about the number of rough sleepers seen in Leamington, but may not be aware of the support Warwick District Council now offers.

Early in 2018 the District Council committed itself to tackle the issue of rough sleeping head on, applied for and obtained funding enabling them to open a new hostel in September 2018. William Wallsgrove House provides round the clock accommodation, support and care for around 22 homeless with a local connection. When the temperature drops to 0 degrees or less, any rough sleeper is welcome.

The hostel can be accessed directly by rough sleepers without the need to come to or contact the Council in advance. It is run by 15 staff, contains two large dormitory rooms and 7 individual rooms all having single beds. Once settled into the hostel the clients are assessed, and where possible housed in one of the Council's supported housing facilities, or if appropriate referred to other supported housing facilities in the district.

Not only is there a new shelter but there are now weekly meetings between all those concerned with rough sleepers, including voluntary and partner agencies such as P3, the Police and Cyrenians, where information can be shared and concerns about individuals expressed.

Volunteers in Leamington have long been concerned about the homeless. The Radford Road Night Shelter, open on Sundays and Wednesdays, 'celebrates' 10 years of being open this February. The LWS Night Shelter Leamington, founded by medical students at Warwick University, opens on Friday and Saturday nights. Other organisations such as The Way Ahead Project at the Salvation Army and Helping Hands offer practical help, advice and support.

So why are there still rough sleepers in Leamington? Not all have a local connection and not all like night shelters; they are very wary of their potential fellow sleepers. Shop doorways are private property so sleepers cannot be moved on from there by the Police; it is up to the shop owner. In fact, the Police in Leamington do a tremendous amount to help street people move their lives to a better place, actively advising them of all the help available.

As a volunteer at the Radford Road shelter I have seen a significant reduction in our numbers since the WDC shelter opened, which we regard as very good news. In particular that shelter has provided a temporary home and support for some of our more needy clients, which is a huge relief.

Street beggars are not all homeless; they beg to feed their habit and Leamington being full of generous people, especially students, they can do quite well. You should never be asked for money, and if you feel harassed phone the Police on 101. Giving money may merely feed their habit, and the profits of the drug barons; a coffee or a sandwich feeds them, and a smile is free and treats them as human beings. Some are real characters and appreciate a chat.

Finally, the homeless are not only those you see on the street. Many others are homeless but 'sofa surf' in friends' houses, or are being housed in temporary, unsuitable, accommodation. There are simply not enough decent homes at an affordable rent. The Council has a strategy to address this larger problem, but it will take years, if ever, to solve, which is why no affordable housing on the Riverside site is unacceptable.

Sidney Syson

Future for Peacocks and House of Fraser

Planning applications for these sites have been submitted.

Permission is being sought by TAG Urban Developments to replace Peacocks, 73 Warwick Street (W/18/2387). The site is currently retail at street level, with two upper floors disused for many years. Half a century ago the site was occupied by Baileys, fondly remembered by locals with long memories.



Bailey's in 1930s (left) and Peacocks, today

©Warwickshire County Record Office

The current building would be demolished and replaced by retail at the street level and 26 residential units of one, two and three bedrooms on five floors above. There would be secure underground parking for 12 vehicles, accessed by a lift, a first for Leamington. The developers argue that, by setting the upper floors back from the lower ones, the visual dominance of the building will be reduced, at least when viewed from Warwick Street.



Footprint of site to be rebuilt of Warwick Street and Guy's Street (left)

The footprint of this development stretches back along Guy street and half the length of Oxford Row.

TAG was responsible for rescuing the grand Regency houses in Newbold Terrace now known as the Royal Terrace, and before that the Old Library in Avenue Road.

The uncertain future for the House of Fraser store in the

Parade has led the owner of the building to apply for planning permission (W/18/2340) to convert it into a mixed-use building with five retail units on the ground floor; offices above and a cinema and gym in the basement and partly on the ground floor.

Behind the façade of the house of Fraser on the Parade, like Peacocks, the site has a large footprint stretching back to Bedford Street. The basement could provide

significant parking space but that is surely in the realms of fantasy.

This application must be speculative until the future of House of Fraser is decided.



House of Fraser (left) and site footprint

Archie Pitts

The end in sight – at last

Nearly 11 years ago in May 2008, Chris Elliott (Chief Executive of Warwick District Council) wrote to me and Andrew Cave – then the Chairmen of the Leamington Society and CLARA respectively – asking *“Would the Leamington Society and CLARA front a bid for landfill tax money to restore the Pump Room Gardens including the arches over the footpath along Dormer Place? ... WDC can't access that funding but local groups could.”* We agreed and formed the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens (FPRG), who were soon joined by the Royal Leamington Spa Building Conservation Trust and Warwickshire Gardens Trust as partners.

Our first achievement was the return of the Linden Arches. The eight arches with gas lit globes, first installed in 1875, were not constructed as robustly as they might be. As a result over the years the arches disintegrated and by early 2000s only parts of four original remained.

With the help of the remains and photographs showing the original glass globes, now long lost, replica arches were constructed but in more robust structural form. The project cost £110,000, with £70,000 raised by FPRG and the remainder from WDC.

Our next accomplishment was a Conservation Statement about the PRG. Peter Storrie of the Friends led this, working with Warwickshire County Council. It had three

themes: how the gardens had been used since their first creation in 1814; their use today; and finally recommendations for their conservation. This work was funded by a grant of £42,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which also paid for involvement of children in local junior schools to learn about the importance of the gardens and increase awareness of the role of conservation.

The last stage has been the restoration of the remainder of the gardens: relaying paths; clearing the riverbank of growth to open up views of the water, with low growing planting to provide a wildlife corridor; a rockery and rain garden to improve drainage at the west end of the gardens; increased seating from nine to 31 benches; new trees and planting. And, most important of all, the complete restoration of the bandstand.

A celebratory event, with brass band, to mark the return of the bandstand is scheduled for March 15th.



Work in progress on bandstand

The total cost for the restoration of the PRG is £1.4 million of which approximately £1 million is funded by a grant from HLF. The FPRG raised over £110,000 in matched funds. Together with the money raised for the Linden Arches, the Friends have raised £200,000 from generous donors, primarily Leamington people. We are also very grateful to all those who gave liberally of their time over the last 11 years. Thank you to everyone involved.

Archie Pitts, Chairman, Friends of the Pump Room Gardens

EcoFest 2019

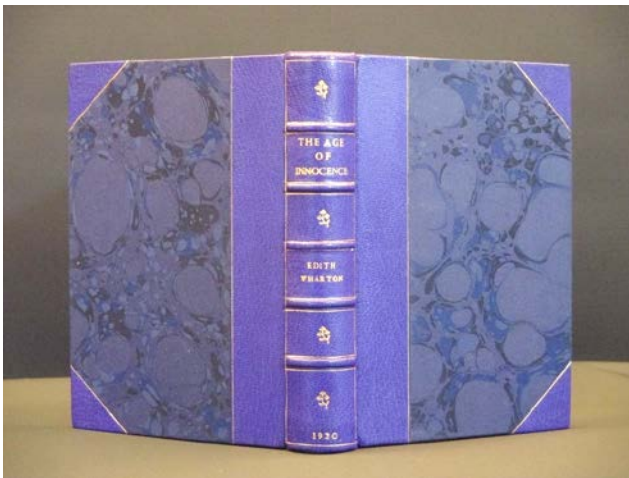
The theme of this event in the Pump Room Gardens on May 5th will be to promote healthy and sustainable living. There will be stalls, music and activities targeting all ages and interest groups. Action 21, the local recycling organisation, has joined forces with Warwick District Council to put on this event.

Fran Donnelly has been appointed to coordinate the EcoFest event; she will oversee its planning and coordination; contact email address ecofest.warks@outlook.com.

Margaret Begg

Bookbinding and Christmas meeting, with John Richards

I daresay we all have bookshelves and often glance at them with a mixture of satisfaction and guilt. I would have thought it impossible to be interested in books



Example of John Richards' craftsmanship

without being interested in how they are made.

John Richards explained that his bookbinding work is mainly local rather than national or international. Most of it is reconstruction and conservation, conservation implying as little work as possible, using as much of the original

materials as possible. It hardly needs saying that "Sellotape" is a dirty word.

I was pleased to learn some of the technicalities: that calf-skin has little or no grain, that goat-skin is called Morocco (for obvious reasons), that pig and sheep-skin are rarely used, that vellum is untanned calf-skin and lasts "for ever" if it is kept dry. Gold-

leaf, always a delight to look at, came into England in about 1550 and consists of twenty-three carat gold and, to prevent it from disintegrating, one carat of copper.

We saw photographs of old tools, including an enormous box of letters that have to be heated (to apply the gold), and that take up a disproportionate amount of time. Most people, after all, prefer letters to be in a straight line and horizontal. John regularly wins national prizes with the beauty of his bindings.

John has worked in Leamington for thirty years. I am glad he chose us. He makes the town more civilised.

As a bonus, we enjoyed an excellent Christmas party.

Robin Taylor

John's workshop, where he also sells modern first editions, is in Gloucester Street, overlooking All Saints Churchyard.

Fashion in the time of Jane Austen, with Sarah-Jane Downing

Jane Austen lived through revolutionary times and fashions respond to political change. The grand, stiff, awkward and ostentatious court fashions of the eighteenth century gave way to fluid, natural graceful Regency dress. Silks, velvets and brocades from France and Italy were unobtainable during the Napoleonic Wars and were replaced by textiles from the Empire: Indian muslins and cashmere shawls.

“Old” fashions were mocked in cartoons, such as the lady whose high hair caught fire from candelabra. Sarah-Jane's charming slides were taken from contemporary paintings of the social scene: Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens,



Hair rising up to candelabra

the Theatre and Royal Court, and the illustrated monthly fashion magazines which were circulating the country to ensure that every lady could follow the mode, with the help of her dressmaker. It was entertaining and educational and much enjoyed by all.

Marianne Pitts

Award Winning British Design 1957-1988, with Lily Crowther

In 2012, to coincide with the London Olympics, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), one of the jewels in England's crown, staged an exhibition of British design since the Festival of Britain 1951 and the last London Olympics. Lily was one of the curators and wrote an accompanying book.

The Design Centre/Council Awards were set up in 1957 to publicise and sell the best of UK design nationally and internationally, with annual prizes and exhibitions in Haymarket and regional centres and ran for 30 years. The earliest prize winners were domestic products; ceramics, textiles, lighting and furniture. Later more were industrial. Of course winning a prestigious prize boosted sales but many of the winners are still in production some 50 years later, such as Robin Day's stacking plastic chairs and Robert Welch's Alveston brushed steel cutlery.

Lily showed slides from the old catalogues, and I found I missed the colours for the early carpets and textiles. She was well-informed about industrial processes and the changes in taste of the period: from light, elegant, economical Festival of Britain to the ephemera of pop and fashion. For many of us who were furnishing our homes then it was a trip down Memory Lane, with familiar brand names and items that we had actually bought among the pictures. She is an excellent speaker and I am sure she will be booked again and again.

Marianne Pitts



Guide to exhibition by Lily Crowther

Roger Copping

Roger Copping, former Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa and Liberal Democrat Councillor for Manor Ward from 1995 to 2015, died in January after a long fight against cancer. Hundreds attended his funeral showing how much he was valued.

As a councillor he had a passion for protecting Leamington's tree lined streets. He gave invaluable planning advice to his residents and he was responsible for raising the funds for Leamington's first defibrillator. He was a very active Mayor, wonderfully supported by his wife Gail. Together they championed the twinning of Leamington with Heemstede, Brühl and Sceaux. Roger was a long-standing member of this Society, along with Gail, and they were always generous supporters of its projects.



Roger Copping

Courtesy Alan Boad

His professional experience as a physiotherapist lecturer meant he had a real commitment to the NHS. He was active in support of the elderly. He was a governor of Warwick Hospital and had also been a governor at both Milverton Primary School and Telford Primary School.

He will be missed.

Bill Gifford

New members

We are pleased to welcome to our society:

Derek and Trish Moore

Duncan Elliott

Nick and Jean Charlton

Mary Hawker

Reuben Moore

Michael and Gill Glenister

Peggy King

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 831 414

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
Archie Pitts	01926 885 532	Carole Sleight	07768 617 081
Jef Tuyn	01926 339 085		

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.



February 2019

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual General Meeting** of the Leamington Society for 2019 will be held on **Thursday, 9th May, starting at 7.00, in ChristChurch, Priory Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV31 1BA.**

Sidney Syson, Chairman

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 10th May 2018
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 2018-19
6. Election of Officers:
Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
7. Election of four Committee Members
8. Election of Independent Examiner for 2019-20
9. Any other Business

PLEASE NOTE: **Nominations** of candidates for Officers and Committee must be forwarded to the **Chairman not later than Thursday, 22nd April 2019**. Any voting will be by Secret Ballot at the Meeting. **We would welcome more nominations for the committee.**

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 there will be a presentation on the newly adopted Canal Conservation Area.