



February 2022
Updated April 2022

The Leafington Society AGM will be held on Thursday 19th May 2022 at 7pm
at Dormer Place Conference Centre, CV32 4AA

Barbara Lynn, Acting Chairman

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 13th May 2021
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 2021-22
6. Election of Officers:
Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
7. Election of four Committee Members
8. Election of Independent Examiner for 2022-23
9. Any other Business

PLEASE NOTE: **Nominations** of candidates for Officers and Committee must be forwarded to the **Acting Chairman not later than Thursday, 22nd April 2022**. Any voting will be by Secret Ballot at the Meeting. **Nominations for the committee are welcomed.**

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 Acting 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 by Christina Boxer, *Counting Down to the Commonwealth Games this Summer.*

Documents appended:

- Nominations for Officers and Members of the Committee
 - Minutes of 2021 AGM
 - Chairman's Report for 2021-22
 - Committee Reports, (Planning, Membership, Programme, Friends, Treasurer) for 2021-22
 - Report of Independent Examiner and Accounts for 2021-22
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Nominations for Leamington Society Committee 2022-2023

OFFICE	NOMINEE	PROPOSED	SECONDED
CHAIRMAN	Barbara Lynn	Archie Pitts	Robin Adams
VICE CHAIRMAN	Bruno Eurich	Marianne Pitts	Robin Adams
VICE CHAIRMAN	Archie Pitts	Christine Fyfe	Gordon Fyfe
HON SECRETARY	Margaret Begg	Esther Peers	Robin Taylor
HON TREASURER	Marianne Pitts	Richard Ward	Gordon Fyfe
COMMITTEE	Ian Bradbury	Archie Pitts	Robin Taylor
COMMITTEE	Chris Davis	Marianne Pitts	Richard Ashworth
COMMITTEE	Paul Dickins	Alison Chantrey	Esther Peers
COMMITTEE	Gary Jones	Richard Ashworth	Richard Ward

Signed Nomination forms are available for inspection

No other nominations were received so the above are duly elected

Barbara Lynn, Acting Chairman, 30 April 2022

**Minutes of the AGM of the Leamington Society, Thursday 13th May 2021 at 7.00
held online by Zoom**

1. **Present:** Richard Ashworth, Ian Baxter, Chris and Margaret Begg, Ruth Bennion, Ian Bradbury, Lyn Buckle, Mike and Sheila Bunney, David Clargo, Joan Clark, Alison Chantrey, Clive and Julia Engwell, Barry Franklin, Jan and Penny Gillett, David Howe, James Ingham, Jennifer Lorch, Gary Jones, Maggie and Rodney King, Barbara Lynn, Michael Heath, Carol Lane, Archie and Marianne Pitts, Carole Sleight, Sidney Syson, Judy Thomas, Richard Ward and 14 others.
2. **In addition, a postal vote form** had been received from Jo Clark.
3. **Apologies for absence:** Richard Chamberlain, Elizabeth and John Lowry, Alan Mayes, Robert Nash, Carolyn Voss, and Keltie Ward.
4. Sidney welcomed everyone to the online meeting and commented that The Leamington Society was celebrating its 65th birthday this May.
5. **The Minutes** of the 2020 Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 14th May 2020 were approved.
6. There were no matters arising.
7. **Reports from the Chairman and Sub Committees** had been circulated to all members, so these were taken as read. Sidney added that despite an unusual year the Society had more members than ever, average audiences of over 70 at the online meetings, a new YouTube channel, and healthy finances.

She wished to especially thank Marianne Pitts and Ian Salvin, who had respectively prepared and examined the accounts in very little time so that members this year had received them well in advance of the AGM.

8. **The independently examined Accounts of the Society for 2020-21 were approved.**
9. **Election of Officers:**

The following officers were elected:

Chairman: Sidney Syson.

Vice Chairmen: Barbara Lynn, Richard Ward

Honorary Secretary: Margaret Begg

Honorary Treasurer: Marianne Pitts

10. **Election of four Committee Members:**

Ian Bradbury, Clive Engwell, Gary Jones and Carole Sleight were elected to the Committee.

11. **Election of the Independent Examiner for 2021-22**

Ian Salvin was elected as the Independent Examiner for 2021-22.

12. **Any other Business**

There were no questions so at this point Sidney handed over to David Clargo who showed the Society's latest video: The Trees of Jephson Gardens: Spring.

This was followed by a presentation celebrating the Society's achievements in its 65 years and in particular the achievements of Archie Pitts, who has stepped down after 19 years on the committee, 6 of which were as Chairman

Following the presentation Ian Baxter, the President of the Friends of Leamington Station, gave a moving tribute to Archie. Marianne, on behalf of the Society, then presented Archie with the "Pevsner Guide to Norfolk: Norwich and the North East" suitably inscribed.

Archie thanked everyone for their tributes and support over the years.

Sidney then thanked everyone for coming and the meeting closed at approximately 7.45pm.

Sidney Syson

Annual Reports for The Leamington Society, April 2021 - March 2022

Chairman's report

The past year has been one of mixed fortunes, both for the Leamington Society and for the town. For the Society it has generally been positive, although the loss of two of our most active and inspirational committee members at the end of 2021 was an unwelcome challenge. The persistence of Covid and lockdown meant that events had to be organised differently, to ensure that we kept in touch with our members with the use of Zoom for our Talks programme. This, though no substitute for discussion over a glass of wine, was accepted by our members and the technical challenges were overcome. Our membership numbers are at an all-time high. Our Heritage Open Day walks were also cancelled due to Covid; in their place we published a short video about six special trees in Jephson Gardens, presented by Sidney Syson, and produced with the skilled assistance of David Clargo. This was followed by further videos through the four seasons.

Many of our Zoom talks have attracted an interested audience, with more questions than time for answers; the number of our Social Media accounts has also increased. As well as our established Facebook presence, Twitter and Instagram enable us to reach different audiences. Our first In-person events for some time marked the end of 2021 and although we have returned to Zoom meetings for the last few months, we are looking forward to a more sociable year when our Talks programme is resumed, with speakers and an audience present in person.

A very sad event must be noted: one of our long-standing members, Cllr. Jonathan Nicholls, husband of the Mayor, Cllr. Susan Rasmussen, died tragically in March. His death is a loss to Leamington, to Warwick District Council and to the Leamington Society.

Let us hope that Leamington can also look forward to better times. In 2021 the town was again named as being among the happiest in England, according to one estate agent's survey, but nevertheless it has experienced similar problems to other towns. Our only department store closed, as did a large branch of Marks and Spencer's. Neither of these will be replaced by similar retailers but by housing, offices and perhaps smaller shops, showing how the high street is changing. These developments will bring residents back into the town centre but may reduce the attraction of Leamington as a destination. The problem of pollution in the town centre, while reduced, has not gone away and for several weeks was made worse by traffic diversions to allow painting of the Princes Drive railway bridge.

However long-term plans to ensure that the town remains an attractive and vibrant destination are coming to fruition. Leamington Spa was among the fortunate towns to be awarded funding from the Future High Streets Fund, set up in 2018 to help towns whose centres are affected by the increase in online shopping to renew and reshape their High Streets. The success of Leamington's bid was confirmed in May 2021, with a grant of over £10 million. We can already see the effect of this in the implementation of plans for the Creative Quarter, building on the town's reputation as Silicon Spa. Work has started on the United Reform Chapel in Spencer Street to provide offices and studio spaces for companies in the creative industries.

Plans to replace Riverside House with a new District Council headquarters and to develop the original site are still under discussion. The original proposals for the site have been replaced by a Draft Development Brief in which sustainability is emphasised, from net zero carbon in new buildings and reuse of demolition materials, to the connection of the site to wider open spaces in the town through footpaths and cycleways. The number of major plans for the transformation of Leamington through renewal and development has led Warwick District Council to set up a Transformation Advisory Board

to co-ordinate the various projects. The Leamington Society will be represented on one of the groups advising the Board.

During 2021, another major project was almost completed. The restoration of the Pump Room Gardens and its bandstand, begun in 2008, was marked on 1st February this year by a tree planting ceremony near the water garden. The tree, a Sweet Gum, with its beautiful autumn colours will ensure that it becomes a striking feature at the western end of the gardens. Plaques will be put in place soon to recognise the donors who made the whole project possible.

The selection of Leamington as one of the towns to host three Commonwealth Games events means that we can look forward to an interesting summer, with CultureFest starting on 16th July. We can also thank the Games for bringing about, or at least bringing forward, improvements to the town, such as Riverside Walk, Victoria Park and Princes Drive. For several years the Leamington Society has brought the poor state of the railway bridge across Princes Drive to the attention of Network Rail, so we are very pleased that the bridge has been renovated and decorated (to a design by a member Jennie Moncur) after encouragement by WDC. Members may have another change to look forward to – the return of the Lights of Leamington, which will please residents who remember enjoying them in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as those who have only heard about them.

Finally I must thank all the members of the Committee who have worked hard to keep our programme going and our members for supporting us through these difficult times. We look forward to seeing you all when our programme of talks begins again, we hope in person, here in Dormer Place.

Barbara Lynn, Acting Chair

Planning report

This last year has seen, towards its end, a certain return to normality, following two distorted years in the planning world.

Even though planning applications were down in numbers, Warwick District Council is still trying to catch up on a sizeable backlog – not easy with ongoing staff absences due to the Omicron variant of Covid.

A great proportion of applications have been for house alterations and extensions. Not surprisingly, for various reasons, not least uncertainty, people have been ‘hunkering down’ rather than ‘moving on’. Otherwise, a notable trend is for the conversion of the upper floors of retail buildings to residential accommodation in the city centre – and with no car parking provision!

Student residence continues to be a (hotly) debated topic. There are pros and cons to Leamington being a ‘university town without a university’ but there are certainly real problems for parts of the town where students dominate and despite ‘managed’ student accommodation blocks and the pursuing of properties that are illegal HMOs, the number of properties that are being converted back to family accommodation seem to be very few.

One issue which the Society is pursuing, in the interests of preserving the quality of the Leamington environment, is breaches of planning approvals or projects being carried out without seeking planning approval. The Enforcement Procedure with which the District Council addresses this problem is unacceptably delayed at the moment.

The Commonwealth Games have contributed to many projects receiving funding which might otherwise not have been the case, for instance, the forecourt of Leamington Station and the area in and around Victoria Park. Another welcome step forward is the start of ‘the Creative Quarter’ with

the refurbishment of the long neglected United Reformed Church on Spencer Street as a high-tech office building.

Richard Ward, Vice Chairman and Planning Representative

Membership report

The committee is grateful to the members of the Society for their loyalty throughout the difficulties of the past year. We have not been able to meet in person, but attendance at our online meetings has been good and the electronic version of the newsletter has been widely viewed.

This year we have received subs from 431 members – 10 more than last year. Our year runs from April to March, so subscriptions for 2022-23 are now due. I would ask members who do not pay by standing order, online or PayPal, to check that they have paid this year. The membership subscription is £10 for a single member and £15 for a couple or family membership. For membership questions email membership@leamingtonsociety.org.

On behalf of the committee I should like to thank you all for your support.

Margaret Begg, Membership Secretary

Programme Report

A mixture of lockdowns and liberty meant that we met by Zoom, for real, and in a combination of both. The unforeseen and beneficial consequence of this is that many of our talks were recorded and are currently available to view or review, for those who might be interested or have missed them. The other advantage is that geography no longer matters – we can have speakers from all over the world – including one in New Zealand live at 7 o'clock in the morning, local time! By contrast, many of our members have interesting tales to tell from home. Gary Jones is owed our thanks for making all this possible. Each talk was reviewed in the following newsletter and many have been seen by non-members, one possible reason why our membership numbers have remained so good.

The live events included the Christmas Party and the postponed 2020 Awards; both evidence, if this were needed, of the importance of physical meetings. They felt extra special after months of isolation. Richard Ward gave his usual elegant architectural commentary on the winning entries in this, his last Awards ceremony. He will be missed. The Christmas party was Carole Sleight's swansong – she recruited excellent speakers and social events during her time as Programme Secretary.

Live meetings are starting in September, with a bang: Motionhouse, and we hope the attendance remains as high as it has been during the past year: well into the 50s and 60s. Suggestions for speakers are always welcome – please contact any committee member or email contact@leamingtonsociety.org.

Marianne Pitts, Programme representative

Friends of Christchurch Gardens report

It's been a successful year for the Friends of Christchurch Gardens. The Gardens were given Local Green Space designation through the Leamington Neighbourhood Plan, and our campaign for the re-surfacing of the courts has resulted in a fabulous resource for the town. You will find a wide variety of people enjoying the courts throughout the week.

Work continues building good relationships with WDC, the Town Council, Holy Trinity Church and other stakeholders. We've had success in attracting funding from Leamington in Bloom, Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Community Grants and the Grimmitt Trust. This has funded a tree, planting in the North border and a community noticeboard.

The Friends manage the Art Box on behalf of Leamington Town Council. It is a mini art gallery in one of the red telephone boxes bordering the Gardens on Clarendon Avenue, which has hosted a series of exhibitions by pupils at local schools.

Most recently the Friends have been campaigning against WDC's plan to lock the courts and require booking, as we feel this creates a barrier to users, particularly those playing basketball.

The Friends continue to meet monthly and will be focussing, this year, on developing a master plan for the Gardens.

Alison Chantrey, Friends of Christchurch Gardens

Friends of Pump Room Garden report

- The refurbishment works have proved to be a great success with the public and provide an excellent centrepiece to the Town. Covid pandemic regulations initially prevented organised activities in the gardens, but their recent relaxation allowed the use of the bandstand which OAF! (Open Air Festival) successfully took advantage of during March.
- The refurbishment works should have been completed two years ago, but outstanding works remain, most obviously, finishing the repair to the path surface. This will be done when temperature and humidity improve.
- Original design problems are gradually being remedied but will take time. The most important will involve removal of the damaged planting strip around the bandstand, to be replaced by a hard surface, interspaced with grills over gravel soakaways to take away the roof water.
- Inspection of the gardens indicated that the railings between the curved paths, to York Bridge and the river, need to be made safer; this will be done in keeping with the heritage of the gardens.
- Further improvement is proposed to the grassed water collection area at the West end of the gardens where the surface levels were reduced to improve persistent drainage problems. This will require careful design and will hopefully take place soon.
- The two main commemorative plaques for the refurbishment works are made, delivered and approved and will be fitted as soon as the cost of these works has been resolved, and be formally unveiled at a future date. The Friends have requested that the stone wall of the large planter be raised to accommodate the plaque.
- The HLF require three further plaques on lectern type stands, to be distributed around the gardens. These plaques will be located with the agreement of the Friends.
- Recent works to the bandstand steps involved the removal of black rubber strips along the step nosings, which had failed, and have been replaced with hard-wearing black resin.
- A tree (*liquidambar styraciflua*) was planted at a small ceremony in February towards the Western end of the gardens in honour of Archie Pitts for his many years of hard work for the Leamington Society and his achievements as the previous Chairman of the FPRG.
- The York Bridge repair / replacement remains in the hands of the County Council, but no further

details are available at present. The Friends will be looking to ensuring that the repaired / replaced bridge will be of suitable appearance.

- Severn Trent Water have recently undertaken ground investigation works in the gardens to enable them to design sewer improvements which will significantly improve the water quality of the River Leam by removing consented overflows. It is likely that the works will involve tunnelling a large diameter sewer under the gardens and the river, which should reduce the impact of the works.
- The Friends may contribute financially towards measures and improvements which were not part of the of the original restoration project.

Ian Bradbury, Chairman of the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens

Friends of Leamington Station (FLS) report

Chiltern contract. The Friends are delighted that Chiltern Railways has agreed a new National Rail Contract with the Department for Transport (DfT), up to December 2027, an extension of another six years.

Gardens. The stalwart FLS gardeners continue to maintain all three parts of gardens – the lawn with flower beds, and both terraces – to a high standard. The gardens were again assessed *Outstanding* in the RHS *Its Your Neighbourhood* scheme with a score of 92%. The gardens have entered the *IYN* scheme again this year.

The Friends benefitted twice last year from a team of enthusiastic Network Rail volunteers on day release coming to help us.

Forecourt. While the works on the forecourt are not part of the remit of the FLS, the Friends were ‘consulted’, as many others were. The FLS vigorously opposed the original suggestion that the footpath connecting the station entrance to Lower Avenue be closed and occupied by a secure cycle store of contemporary design. Eventually it was decided to leave this much used path open and relocate the cycle store within the station building.

The FLS were sorry to see the felling of four long-established conifer trees at the east end of the car park, for no obvious reason. These trees may have been planted at the time of the rebuilding of the station in the later 1930s.

The works are scheduled to be finished in May 2022, in time for the Commonwealth Games.

Café on Platform 2. The lease for this was put out for tender after the previous tenants *Pumpkin* left. The FLS hope the new tenants, *Centenary Lounge*, will treat the original heritage features of this room with respect. *Centenary Lounge* operate cafés at Moor Street and Snow Hill on the Chiltern Line as well as at Worcester Foregate on the West Midlands line. Having met the new business owner the Friends expect this will be the case for the café on Platform 2.

Internal subway. The FLS were invited to provide photographs of the station gardens to be printed A0 size (33” x 47”) on ACM (Aluminium Composite Material) protected with an anti-graffiti coating. These should be stunning when fitted.

Archie Pitts, Chairman, Friends of Leamington Station

Treasurer’s report for year ending 31 March 2022

The main and subsidiary accounts are all in good order. That the Society richer in aggregate is due to

the fund-raising efforts of the Friends of Christchurch Gardens, who have had an energetic and successful year. The Society is still benefitting from the economies of isolation, but we are glad to meet again for real, even if this is more expensive. We have decided to continue electronic distribution of the quarterly newsletter which saves on both printing and postage – not to mention delivery. Exceptions are made, primarily for those who do not have access to a good computer, though this is becoming rare.

Friends of Leamington Station have spent all the donations given last year, and more, for projects such as new compost bins for the gardeners and repairs and repainting of the hut, both running in boards and a few benches. The Friends of the Pump Room Gardens paid for a liquidambar tree in the Pump Room Gardens.

Our donations include £563 towards Foundry Wood expansion.

Please may we thank our Inspector Ian Salvin in the usual manner.

Marianne Pitts, Treasurer

THE LEAMINGTON SOCIETY

Independent Examiner's unqualified report for the members of the Leamington Society for the year ended 31 March 2022.

I report on the accounts of the Leamington Society for the year ended 31 March 2022 which are attached.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- To follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the Charity Commission's Directions. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with any examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act,

have not been met; or

(2) To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to make a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I Salvin

17 Onslow Croft

Leamington Spa

April 22nd, 2022

