

NEWSLETTER

The Leamington Society

Registered Charity
516078



The Hitchman Fountain in Jephson Gardens. Painting by Kevin Parrish

Chair's Notes

The past few months have brought a fair number of changes, both for the town and the Society.

Much of our time has been taken up with preparations for the AGM, updating the constitution to fit modern practices and marking the retirement of our long-standing committee members Margaret and Sidney. More recently, Ignaty stepped down as Chair because of pressing family circumstances. We are very grateful to him for the considerable time, energy and enthusiasm he devoted to the Society as Chair. His contribution has been greatly appreciated. We wish him and his family the very best for the future.

Alongside this, we have been dealing with several complex planning applications and hundreds of pages of the draft Local Plan.

We hope members will forgive the delay to this newsletter and that its expanded content, together with our imminent separate 70th-anniversary special supplement, will make up for it.

David Blower, who was elected to the committee at the AGM, has since stepped down from the committee and as a trustee. Although his time with us was brief, he made a valuable contribution to several strategy discussions, particularly through his financial assessments. We are grateful for his help and wish him well.

We also thank Brian Wall, our Honorary Treasurer, who will be retiring from the committee by the end of August. We would be very pleased to hear from anyone willing to help support the Society with its financial management.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has so generously contributed articles to this newsletter.

Bruno Eurich, Chair

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Society News and Diary

Programme of Talks and Events 2026

Talks so far held this year include:

- 11 February **Silicon Spa:** Andrew Oliver talked about how the video-games industry became established in Leamington Spa.
- 11 March **All Saints Living Labyrinth:** Lucie Titchmarsh of ARC and Charles Craft of All Saints provided the background to this major landscaped-garden initiative in the church's former graveyard.
- 8 April **The Role of Virtual Reality Today:** Alex and Laura Harvey of Rivr talked about their journey through the multimedia industry and the ways in which virtual reality is already contributing to our lives.
- 13 May **Annual General Meeting: One World**

Draft programme for the latter part of 2026:

- 9 September **Monitoring Water Quality in the Avon and the Leam**
- 14 October **Restoration of the Buildings at Warwick's Leper Hospital**
- 11 November **Topic and speaker to be confirmed**
- 9 December **Dickens' Christmas**

All talks are held at 7.30pm at The Oddfellows, 22 New Street, Leamington Spa CV32 1HP. Everyone is welcome. Admission is free for members and £5 for non-members.

Events:

Friends of Leamington Station

Volunteers meet every Sunday at **10.30am** in the Station Garden, with a break for coffee at noon.

[Volunteer: come and join us - Friends of Leamington Station](#)

Reports of our previous meetings

December 2025

How to succeed in baking pies.

Kevin Newey of [Shire Foods](#) gave members an interesting talk on how to get from humble beginnings with a staff of three in 1995 to £50 million turnover in 2025. He described how the firm initially broke away from Fleur De Lys pies to create a new business and found new markets including supplying football grounds up and down the country.

Exhibiting at a trade fair they had the chance to sell their pies to Morrison's, and the business grew from strength to strength until they were supplying all the major supermarkets. This rapid growth was far from simple. It meant finding new investors, larger premises, more sophisticated machinery and many more employees.

Today the frozen pies are distributed by a firm in Yorkshire, and every customer wants a slightly different recipe to distinguish it from its rivals. Most pies now are sold under the brand name of the supermarket rather than the Shires Foods label.

Members were fascinated by this success story and delighted that the firm has stayed in the area with premises on Tachbrook Road. Kevin explained that the firm were keen to retain staff, and many people had stayed loyal for more than 20 years. Kevin's samples ranged from chicken and vegetable and Balti chicken pies to vegan and vegetarian rolls. There was general agreement that the pies were

all delicious, and Kevin's story was one of well-deserved success.

Margaret Begg

January 2026

Celebrating Burns' Night

In January members were invited to join Trevor Humphreys and the Literary Society for a celebration of Burns' Night. We were offered a dram of whisky and a delicious haggis with neeps and tatties. We heard the story of Burns' life and there were readings of his poems as well as sung performances of his poems set to music. The live band was a treat, and we were all encouraged to dance. This well organised event was a great celebration.

February 2026

Silicon Spa & Embracing Change

In February, members were riveted by an exciting presentation from Andrew Oliver about the growth of Silicon Spa, our flourishing gaming industry. Andrew and his brother Phillip, started to produce computer games in their teens and as schoolboys won an ITV competition to design a game for the market. They went from strength to strength, forming the famous Blitz Games, and making Leafington a hub with world-wide reach. There are now around 2,500 game developers in the Leafington area.

He explained how the attractions of Leafington helped to persuade gamers to set up here rather than London or Oxford. In his talk, he linked the growth of the industry to local events, which gave us a feel for the time period. He did not shy away from the boom-and-bust element of the business and explained how he and his brother had coped with the ups and downs, always moving on to the next big thing.

He stressed the importance of embracing change, because it is coming whether you want it or not, and you will lose out if you don't move with it. He is currently engaged in bringing museum displays to life using video and virtual reality and experimenting with the possibilities of AI. He was confident of a bright future for the large cluster of businesses in Leafington and left us feeling very positive about the way Leafington has welcomed these entrepreneurs.

Those who want to learn more about Silicon Spa can purchase the book *Enterprising Leafington* from the [Leafington History Group](#).

March 2026

Virtual Reality developments

A fascinating talk about how virtual reality has been used commercially by Alex Harvey and his partner Laura, and then morphing into the movie industry and historic location setting including at Warwick Castle and other great locations. Use of specially adapted cameras and printers also add greatly to the range of investigation and presentations including, secret or at least recently unknown underground passages in Warwick and 3D printing with a sample of Oliver Cromwell's face, wart and all!

The Society at Work

Action Days

The Leafington Society Spring Tidy and Litter picks

Action Days are an opportunity for members to do something practical to beautify our town.

In January, a group of volunteers tidied up the Mill Bridge area, removing litter, cleaning graffiti and stickers from street cabinets and trimming back some excessive growth.



In February, it was the turn of the Dell, the play area opposite the Star & Garter in Warwick Place. Volunteers cleared litter and took part in some light gardening - all followed by refreshments in St Mark's Church on Rugby Road.



Ignaty and wildflower border



Carole Sleight et al



Lorraine Hodgson



Lorraine H et al



Cllr Jennifer McAllister and David Hodgson

Advocacy and casework

Planning applications

Monitoring, assessing and commenting on planning applications forms a significant part of the Society's work. Where appropriate this includes representing members' concerns at planning committee meetings.

As well as commenting on heritage applications through Warwick District Council's Conservation Area Forum (CAF), the Society submits observations on a range of other proposals. Members regularly bring applications of concern to our attention, and we are always willing to review them and, where appropriate, submit constructive comments.

Because many applications raise several distinct planning, design and heritage issues, it is not usually possible to summarise the Society's comments briefly.

[W/25/0728](#) Europa House, Heathcote Lane, Warwick, CV34 6SP
Erection of discount foodstore (Use Class E) with associated car parking, landscaping and other associated works.

[W/25/1762](#) 119 Leicester Street, Leafington Spa, CV32 4TB
Demolition of existing dormer bungalow and construction of replacement self-build dwelling with full height second storey with dual pitch hipped roof, single storey rear lean-to, external green roof canopy to the front of the dwelling, replacement external gate, addition of solar panels to garage and installation of an air source heat pump.

[W/26/0282](#) Land rear of Southborough Terrace, Clemens Street, Leafington Spa
Erection of apartment building, comprising 8no. 2-bed apartments (Use Class C3), with associated parking.

[W/26/0514/LB](#) Leafington Spa Railway Station, Old Warwick Road, Leafington Spa, CV31 3NS Reinstatement of 4no. oak platform doors to WC's & baby change rooms. Doors to be suitably constructed and finished replicas of the original oak doors and ironmongery. Removal of additional lining timbers and painted finish to original doors frames and finishing of new replica doors to match the original varnish finish. Installation of wall mounted waste bins & divider adjacent to baby changing room.

W/25/1651 Milverton House, Court Street, Leamington Spa, CV31 2BB

Application for approval of Reserved Matters for appearance and landscaping of the two new residential blocks pursuant to outline planning permission W/25/0455 for the erection of 2no. blocks of residential accommodation of up to 90 bed spaces together with undercroft parking.

W/26/0497 1 Lower Avenue, Leamington Spa, CV31 3NP

Erection of 1.8 metre high metal railings (retrospective).

W/26/0364/LB 43 Brunswick Street, Leamington Spa

Listed building consent is sought for the replacement of a number of windows to the front and rear elevations, with specific windows highlighted on proposed plans, comprising of timber units with vacuum double glazing proposed the front elevation and timber units with 12mm slimline double glazing to the rear elevation.

Planning Enforcement

We continue to report potentially harmful unauthorised advertisements and development affecting listed buildings and the Conservation Area to Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council, as required.

So far this year, the Society has made 17 reports concerning listed buildings and 36 concerning the wider Conservation Area.

Residential Amenity

Working with SoLAR (South Leamington Area Residents), we have supported residents in pursuing persistent problems involving waste management, fly-tipping and vermin at a number of local hotspots. Some of these issues have continued for more than a year.

We have raised and escalated these matters with Warwick District Council's Contract Services and Environmental Health and Community Protection teams, including at:

- Tower St car park
- Court St car park/Creative Arches
- Land off Clemens St
- Bath Place

Highways

We continue to investigate and, where necessary, escalate concerns brought to us about street lighting, flooding and highway safety. Current matters include:

- Princes Drive flooding
- Warwick New Road flooding
- Warwick Old Road flooding
- Parade street lighting
- All Saints' Church Walk lighting
- Parade pavement
- Church St street lighting and highway safety issues
- Street lighting fault report handling
- Leam Terrace (west) area 20mph zone consultation

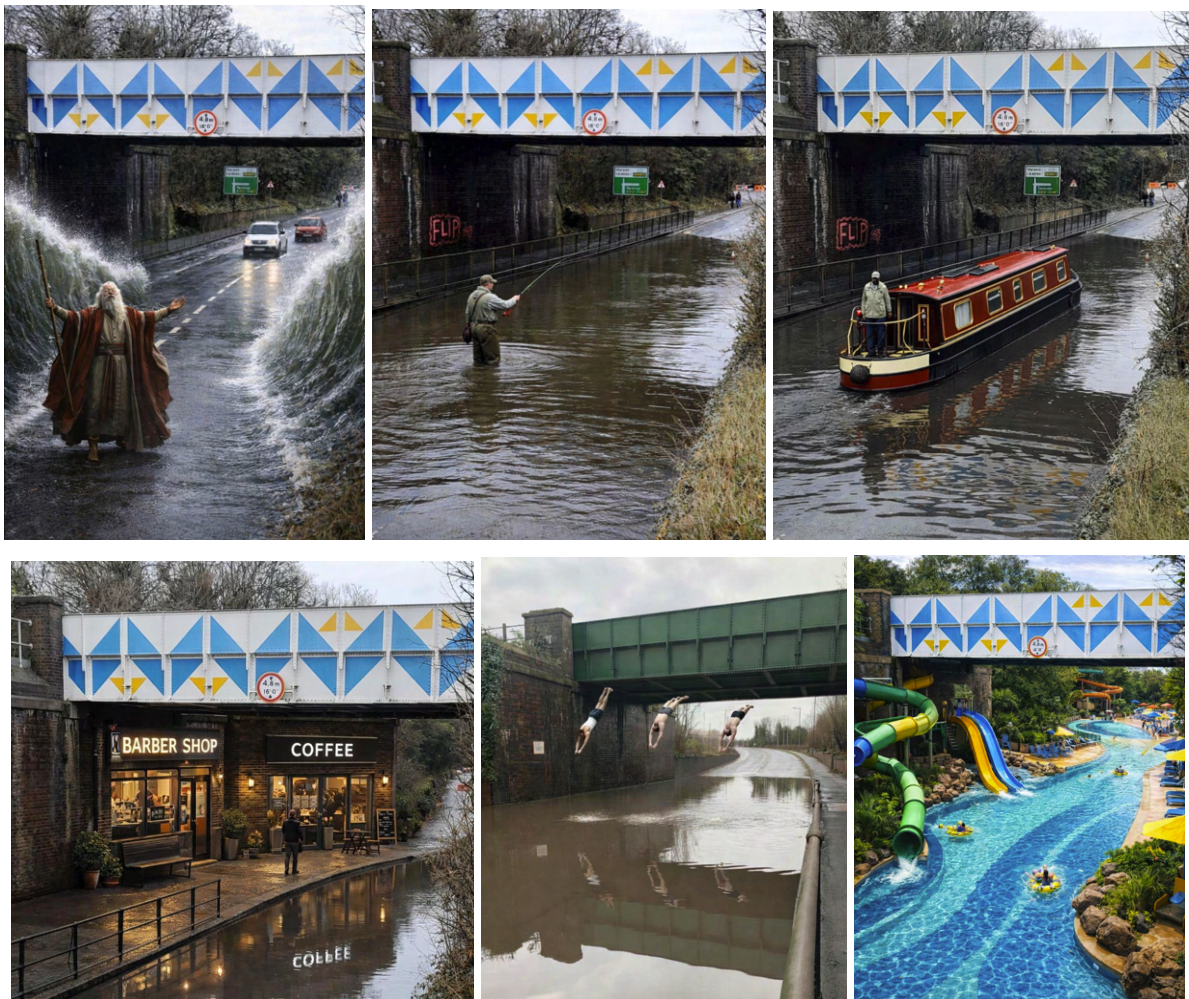
We will publish fuller reports on these matters where appropriate.

Princes Drive flooding

Repeated flooding at Princes Drive late last year continues to cause serious disruption across Leamington and Warwick. We have obtained a substantial amount of information about the problem and are currently reviewing it and pursuing the matter with county councillors and Warwickshire County Council Highways. We will publish a fuller update when our work is further advanced.

For readers who are not on social media, the images below are a small selection of the many AI-generated memes shared by residents in response to the continuing disruption at the end of 2025.

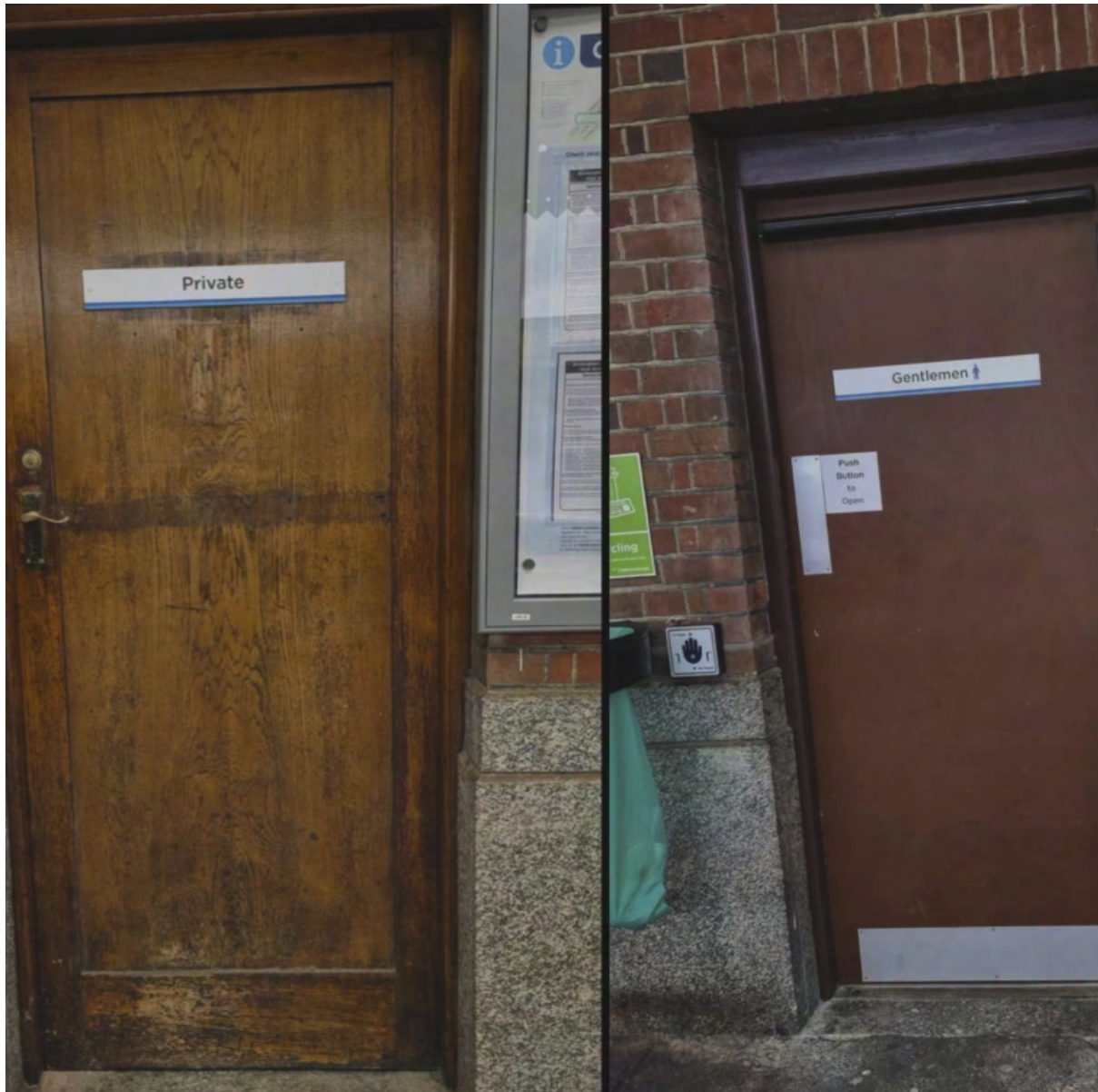
Although the underlying problem is extremely frustrating for those affected, the images show how residents have used humour to express their exasperation. A commemorative calendar was even suggested.



The Mystery of Leafington Station's Missing GWR Doors

Leafington Spa Station is one of Warwickshire's finest Art Deco railway buildings and is Grade II listed. Yet several original oak doors have disappeared and been replaced with modern plain brown doors.

Original oak door and its modern replacement



The original doors can still be seen in historic photos and videos of the station. But despite the Society's enquiries, Environmental Information Requests, and even an Information Commissioner's Office ruling requiring Chiltern Railways to release information, there is still no explanation of: why the original doors were removed, what happened to them, whether they were repaired, stored or discarded and whether they can still be recovered.

The current application does propose replacement "heritage-style" doors. However, the original doors have already been removed and the application does not provide sufficient evidence to show that the proposed replacements would accurately replicate the original Great Western Railway doors in their materials, craftsmanship, fittings and appearance.

In short, the question is not simply whether new doors should be installed, but whether the loss of original historic fabric has been properly justified and whether the proposed replacements genuinely preserve the character of this Grade II listed station.

The Society has submitted a detailed objection to the current Listed Building Consent application because we believe important questions remain unanswered.

This isn't about stopping improvements to the station. We recognise and appreciate the investment Chiltern Railways has made in Leamington Spa over many years, including award-winning restoration projects and support for station improvements.

It is precisely because Leamington Station is such a well-loved and important heritage asset that we believe the loss of original historic fabric deserves proper explanation.

The application to install "heritage-style" doors (and not to reinstate the original doors) is expected to be decided very shortly.

If you care about Leamington's railway heritage, please take a look via the link below and submit your own comments while there is still time.



[W/26/0514/LB](#) Leamington Spa Railway Station, Old Warwick Road, Leamington Spa, CV31 3NS
Reinstatement of 4no. oak platform doors to WC's & baby change rooms. Doors to be suitably constructed and finished replicas of the original oak doors and ironmongery. Removal of additional lining timbers and painted finish to original doors frames and finishing of new replica doors to match the original varnish finish. Installation of wall mounted waste bins & divider adjacent to baby changing room.

Let There Be Light: A Bright Future for All Saints' Churchyard

All Saints' Church occupies a uniquely beautiful position — a rare pocket of tranquil greenery within our bustling town centre. While the graveyard is now confined to the immediate curtilage, the public continues to enjoy the leafy thoroughfare of Church Walk, with its convenient diagonal paths crossing the green.

For some time, however, the lighting in this sensitive area failed to respect its historic setting. We moved from inoffensive globe lanterns to “standard” arm-mounted LED lamps. While functional in a modern street context, these lacked any architectural merit. Worse still, they were ineffective; they cast narrow pools of light directly downward, plunging the rest of the green and the church's rear exit into darkness. One lamp was even positioned

inside the canopy of a rowan tree — a situation that led to the tree being aggressively cut back rather than the lamp being moved.

Following extensive correspondence with Mark Wightman of Warwickshire County Council (WCC) Street Lighting team, a request was made for heritage-style lighting similar to the elegant lamps found in the Pump Room Gardens. The goal was a design that offered a warmer white light to reduce glare, supported local ecology, and provided a much-needed wider spread of illumination.

Despite concerns that the project might stall during a change in highways maintenance contractors, Mark confirmed that Muirfield post-top lanterns had been ordered. True to their word, WCC's contractor Balfour Beatty installed the new units just as the contract drew to a close.

All Saints' Church Walk - the new lanterns by day:



By night - old lamps:



New lamps:



The result is a transformative improvement. The next time you find yourself on Church Walk — perhaps to linger, navigating the impressive new labyrinth or surveying the surrounding new planting — do take a moment to appreciate the church “in a new light.”

Bruno Eurich

Heritage Certificates of Recognition

We announced this new scheme at the end of last year, which celebrates the individuals, businesses, organisations and volunteers whose efforts help conserve, enhance and champion the unique heritage of Royal Leamington Spa, between our biennial Awards events.

We were very pleased to present our inaugural certificates to the below deserving recipients. Please send us your suggestions for recognition - both large and small projects are eligible.

The Motoring Centre

Our first Heritage Certificate of Recognition was presented to Matt Close of [The Motoring Centre](#), High St.

This long-standing family business (now over 30 years old) recently began expanding into the former car wash site at the corner of High Street and Lower Avenue.



The previous advertising hoardings

One of the biggest improvements was the removal of the huge unsightly advertising hoardings — meaning visitors entering Leafington from the south and west are now greeted by views of the historic railway arches and All Saints' Church tower.



The new scene

It might seem unusual to recognise the heritage contribution of a car sales forecourt sitting in one of the rare gaps in the Conservation Area — but it perfectly demonstrates the importance of the “setting” of historic buildings in planning and heritage terms.

When dismissing an appeal for a large student accommodation block on the site, the Planning Inspector highlighted how important these views are to the setting of Grade II listed All Saints Church, even from over 200m away.

The Inspector noted that the railway arches and surrounding views:
“provide an insight into the development of the town and the reasons for it taking place...”

and warned that losing them would:

“lead to an adverse effect on the area’s character.”

The decision also recognised the wider architectural and historical significance of the Conservation Area and concluded that:

“the loss of these views would result in a significant erosion of the Listed Building’s setting.”

Congratulations again to Matt and the whole family business.



The chair, Ignaty presenting the certificate to owner Matt Close

Trattoria

Our second certificate was presented to Trattoria at 55-59 Regent St.

The premises had remained boarded up for a significant time — many may remember it last trading as the flooring shop 'WovenGround' in 2012. This beautiful Grade II Listed Building has undergone extensive renovations, from the upper-storey sash windows to its restaurant frontage. We were especially pleased to see the original awning brought back into use.



Previously boarded up for several years

Working closely with [Warwick District Council](#) Conservation, the team made some careful choices to preserve the building's historic character:

Quality materials: Hardwood and durable Tricoya detailing for the exterior.

Smart design: An integrated letterbox to keep the exterior clutter-free, plus perfectly balanced paneling.

A premium dark blue finish: Dulux Trade 5088 06 – 163, approved by Conservation.



Renovation complete

Owners Cristiana Hustea and Dara Fars shared their excitement:

"Transforming this place into Trattoria was about creating a warm and welcoming space where people can come together and enjoy delicious food and good company... I love Leafington Spa, and I wanted to contribute to the town's vibrant food scene... It's been a labour of love, and I'm so proud of what we've achieved so far!"

The Society wishes Trattoria the absolute best of luck for the future, and expresses its thanks for investing in our town's heritage.



Chair, Ignaty presenting the certificate

Town Visitor Survey

You — or perhaps your visitors — may have noticed our visitor survey appearing on noticeboards around the town's parks.

The survey began as a way of asking coach visitors how easily they could find their way around the town, what they thought of Leamington's heritage, and whether facilities such as the bench near the Newbold Terrace coach stop could be improved. Inevitably, its scope grew, and it

has now developed into a fuller survey of the visitor experience.

Please encourage visitors to take part.

Residents, however, are kindly asked to resist using it to report potholes or other local concerns — the councils are already well aware of those!

What do you value about visiting Leamington?



Visiting today? Take our survey

Help inform local decisions about the town's character and visitor experience.

The Leamington Society Registered charity 516078

 **Scan to take part**



60 seconds • Anonymous • No marketing

Community and Environment

Congratulations to Louise Richards MBE Motionhouse Founder

Motionhouse founder and Executive Director Louise Richards was awarded an MBE for services to dance on the New Year Honours list 2026. Members may recall Louise's fascinating multimedia presentation to the Society in 2022.



Louise Richards. Image by Jo Lewis

Louise, dancer, choreographer and sector leader, founded Motionhouse with Kevin Finnan in Leamington Spa in 1988. It is now one of the UK's leading dance companies. For 37 years the company has proudly taken the name Leamington Spa and Warwick District on its dance-circus production tours all over the World: throughout Europe and Australia, China, Japan, Morocco, South Korea, the USA, performing to more than 100,000 people a year.



Hidden by Motionhouse. Image by Dan Tucker

Motionhouse has always created and rehearsed its productions here, in Leamington Town Hall and formerly in Spencer Yard. The company is committed to performing locally, with all theatre productions visiting Warwick Arts Centre, and regular performances of outdoor work in our parks and streets, free of charge.



The Wider World Project by Motionhouse. Image Motionhouse

Motionhouse is famous for large-scale spectacles and events. The opening show of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Culture Festival led to 'Wondrous Blue' on the Royal Leamington Spa Colour Palette in our

Station underpass. Motionhouse dancers performed as part of The National Lottery's New Year's Eve Big Bash on ITV in 2022 and 2023, and the Big Night of Musicals by The National Lottery on BBC1 in January 2024.

Louise believes that dance should be for everybody, communicating both through performance and participation - so she also runs classes, training days and holiday courses in Spencers Yard and Leafington Town Hall. Motionhouse is one of the most inspirational companies for young dancers in the UK, giving them work experience, training, and professional development opportunities.

The company looks after its people, offering full-time employment to the team (unusual in the dance world where contracts are usually short term) so that they enjoy stability in their lives and can establish permanent homes and plan their futures. These full-time contracts have enabled Motionhouse to perform all-year-round, building its income and reputation.

As a charity, Motionhouse attracts considerable investment into Warwick District Council, fundraising to expand its local programme. The company delivers a range of creative projects in mainstream and SEND schools and local care homes. Motionhouse is recognised as an exceptional contributor to UK arts and its continued status as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The company is a global force, developing new markets and entering partnerships with local and international businesses, creative industries, educational institutions, arts venues and festivals world-wide. As its leader, Louise is invited to present and speak at seminars and conferences. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Louise was awarded an MBE for services to dance on the New Year Honours list 2026. Thanks and congratulations from all of us.

Marianne Pitts



WILD by Motionhouse at EcoFest
Leafington

Christchurch Gardens

A view from the Gardens

As you might expect, things have been a little quieter during the winter months since our last update. However, we had an excellent turn out for our first collaborative Carols in the Gardens, working with Leamington Spa Baptist Church and Holy Trinity Church, in the run up to Christmas. We were delighted to be supported by Spa Brass, who really created a wonderful traditional atmosphere. We're looking forward to holding the event again in December 2026!

At the time of writing, Art Box was hosting an exhibition by Kingsley School of a fabulous dress created by their textile students using repurposed vintage tea towels. This was followed up with an exhibition by 4th Leamington Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. Continuing the Friends' work of raising awareness of the Gardens, I, Alison, gave a talk at Kenilworth Library Monday 27th April which was well attended.

Our Tidy Up in the Gardens on 7th February was particularly well attended. It was lovely to welcome back lots of our regular volunteers and to make a few new friends.

Do join us, if you're able, for our next scheduled sessions. No need to book.

And finally, don't forget our new website focg.org.uk, if you'd like to find out more about our work.

Alison Chantrey, Chair, Friends of Christchurch Garden



Working together. ARC - its mission and its gardens

Achieving Results in Communities

(ARC) exists to help change any of our neighbours experiencing isolation, poor mental health, and financial strain.



For 16 years, ARC has been quietly transforming lives across Leamington, Warwick and surrounding communities including Lillington and Radford Semele, using the simple but forgotten and powerful tools of nature, community, and kindness.

Each year, we support more than 500 local people — including children, families, those living with health conditions, and individuals navigating recovery. The results are not abstract; they are deeply human:

98% report improved wellbeing;
98% feel a stronger sense of belonging;
94% feel more confident to form new friendships;
67% gain a renewed sense of purpose;
72% feel more motivated to care for the natural world.



Alongside this, ARC works in partnership with schools, the NHS, mental health teams and social support groups. Together we reduce antisocial behaviour, create thriving wildlife habitats, and co-create productive community orchards and gardens that everyone can enjoy.

A potential new community garden, after the success at All Saints, Leamington is at Whitnash Methodist Church is on the horizon — a space that could bring people together for generations to come — but it will only be possible with local support.



In a funding climate that is increasingly competitive, community generosity has never mattered more. Every contribution directly supports hands-on programmes that improve lives, strengthen our communities, and protect the green spaces that make our home so special.

As one volunteer from All Saints Community Garden put it:
“Quite simply one of the best decisions I’ve ever made — volunteering with ARC is life-enhancing in every way.”

If you value a Leamington that is not only beautiful, but compassionate, resilient, and connected, we invite you to be part of this work.

Find out more: www.arcicic.co.uk

[Support ARC](#)

Lucie Cox
Community Gardening Facilitator

Leam Trash Friends Initiative



Leam Trash Friends Calls on Community and Businesses to Join the Fight for a Litter- and Graffiti-Free Leamington Spa

Matt, founder of Leam Trash Friends, is rallying residents and local businesses to help restore pride in Royal Leamington Spa. “The mission is simple,” says Matt, “to reduce litter, graffiti, flyposting and needle discards across the town; to improve the town’s image, restoring pride amongst the community. We welcome all

to join us at events. Since relaunching operations in October 2025, the dedicated volunteer group has made impressive progress in under five months:

- 117 graffiti tags removed from public spaces
- 205 sacks of litter collected
- 33 bin tops deep-cleaned of unsightly vape litter
- 4 emergency help points refreshed and revitalised
- 52 needles safely removed to protect residents and wildlife

These figures demonstrate the ongoing challenge – and the real impact of consistent community action. Building on this momentum, Leam Trash Friends continues its Spring Clean series.



With the February 14 event at St Mark's Church, North Leafington, now complete, the following community clean-up events were held include:

- 21st February – Sydenham area,
- 28th February – Meeting at Morrisons
- 7th March – Leafington Town Hall
- 8th March – Rugby Road Shops
- 14th March – Binswood Shops

Volunteers are provided with gloves, bags, litter pickers, tools and light refreshments – all you need is enthusiasm, sturdy footwear, and a desire to make a visible difference. Everyone is welcome. Leaf Trash Friends is also appealing to local businesses: get involved by sending staff to join a session, donating essential

supplies (litter pickers, graffiti remover, bags, gloves, etc.), or simply committing to regularly tidy and maintain the immediate vicinity around your premises if broader support isn't possible. "Every tag removed, every sack collected, every needle safely cleared, and every flyposting taken down makes Leafington safer, prouder, and more beautiful," said Matt. "With your help – residents, businesses, and volunteers – we can achieve a truly litter-, graffiti-, flyposting-, and needle-free Leafington this spring and beyond."

To join an event, donate supplies, volunteer, or find out more, follow @leaftrashfriends on social media, visit <https://www.facebook.com/leaftrashfriends>, or get in touch directly.

Together, let's make Leafington sparkle – one clean street at a time!

Leam Eco hub News

Leamington Eco Hub Is Up and Running!

[Leam Eco Hub](#) is up and running! In late 2024, David Mond and Warwickshire Climate Alliance called a gathering of people interested in the idea of setting up a physical Eco Hub. Forty people came, bringing a range of interests and experience;

water, transport, energy, pollution, resilience building, protecting wildlife and so much more. A small group of volunteers were tasked with the practicalities and set up.

After lots of behind-the-scenes work, we have now been in our building at 65 Bedford Street since late 2025, sharing with the fantastic Library of Things.

Leam Eco Hub's main aims are:

- to provide a space for local organisations in Leamington and beyond to share good practise and collaborate and to be able to offer workshops and talks to the general public;

- to create a welcoming, friendly space where local people can find ways to live lower carbon lifestyles, learn about helping biodiversity, develop greater resilience to climate change and find a community of people who care.

We've had a great response so far from our stall at the Leamington Ecofest, our hub drop-in events and from people visiting the hub.

Many established groups have held their meetings at the hub and there are plans for events, talks and community engagement sessions.

We are building a wonderful team of volunteers and would love more so that we can operate on more days of the week. We are open on Thursdays with Saturdays coming very soon following volunteer onboarding.

[The Library of Things](#) is open on Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons. Do please come along and find out more!

Sustainable Transport in Leamington

Electric Buses

Electric power returns to Leamington's public transport network

It is almost 96 years since the last electric tram ended service in Leamington Spa. Even after an initial failure of the motor bus to challenge the electric tram on the Leamington-Warwick route, it was becoming clear as early as 1905, the very year electric trams entered service, that motor buses would be the future of public transport.[1] On closure in 1930 the

electric tram service had operated for a mere 25 years. It was a brief interlude in the history of public transport in the town, yet it was more consequential than its brevity suggests.

The electric tramway required the building of the power station in Emscote in 1905. By 1912 the power station and the trams were operated by one amalgamated company; the Midlands Electric Light and Power Company, which went on to be instrumental in the widespread introduction of electricity in the homes and businesses of Leamington over the following two decades. The electric tram

was more than a novel transport system, it was a vital element in the story of the modernising of Leafington by electrification.

Today electricity is making a comeback to public transport in Leafington with the introduction of the battery electric bus. This year will see the introduction of single-decker buses by operators Stagecoach, adding to the electric double-deckers already in service. New charging facilities are being installed at its depot in Leafington. The company believes “our battery-electric vehicles can play a major role in addressing climate change, poor air quality and crippling road congestion”. [2] The company has committed to procuring renewable electricity, so that not only are zero emissions buses improving air quality at street level but also contributing towards the drive to reduce global carbon emissions.

Just as the first electric trams in Leafington were a major boost in bringing the modern benefits of electricity to the town, so the return of electric power to our buses heralds the next phase of its modernisation: reducing the harms to health of our current transport system and making it sustainable now that consideration of its impacts on climate and nature have become vital to our flourishing.

David Hodgson

[1] *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser* 25th March 1905, quoted in *The Leafington and Warwick Tramway* – A. Jennings & P. Coulls (2019).

[2] [Driving Net Zero: Our Journey So Far](#) – accessed 16/02/2026

Brand new electric Yutong E12 Stagecoach local livery bus

Spotted at All Saints Parish church during driver training. A rare sight.



Bicycle Bus

The Bicycle Bus: what is it and how does it work?

Hello, my name is Simon Storey. I wear several hats including British Cycling accredited coach and ride leader, Founding Director of Cycle Infinity CIC, Member of WCC LAF (Local Access Forum), chair of Cycleways, a local campaign group, Organiser of Warwickshire's only Kidical Mass rides, Bicycle Mayor of Warwick District and founder of The Bicycle Bus which is what I am going to discuss here.

If you don't know what a Bicycle Bus is, it is a very simple concept, a group of families riding to school together along a pre-planned route, picking up families from arranged stops in a safe and fun environment.

I set up The Bicycle Bus in 2020 during lockdown. It was while on our 1 hour's daily exercise that my daughter asked if we could ride to school. When we got there, we were both surprised at how quick and easy it had been and my daughter asked why we didn't ride to school more often. I couldn't give her an honest answer! I could only think of excuses like time, work, weather, and safety!

This coincided with a webinar hosted by British Cycling about how to start a Bicycle Bus and I was pleased to see at how easy it was to set up, no red tape etc, just some enthusiasm which, those who know me, know I have lots of.

The first thing I did was to ask local families why they didn't ride to school and the overwhelming answer that was given

was safety. So, I asked if I made it safe would you be inclined to ride to school more often? Yes, was the response.

I planned a route to the school (Briar Hill and St Margaret's schools in Whitnash) avoiding the main roads and junctions where possible and taking in the areas of the addresses of those that had shown interest. I risk assessed the route and made changes where necessary.

Then on October 4th 2020 the first Bicycle Bus ran; we had 12 'on the bus' including a local councillor.

Since then, it has been a whirlwind of an adventure. Within 6 months some parents from St Joseph's school, just round the corner, wanted to join and I started to get enquiries over the first 2 or 3 years from across the country for help and advice in setting up similar initiatives; from a village in the far north of Scotland to a town in the English Riviera.

And then in 2023 I won a BBC Make a Difference award, won 2 volunteering awards with CAVA Warwickshire and was shortlisted for a national award in the Active Travel industry. I also made contact with a double BAFTA award winning director who wanted to make a short active travel film about a Bicycle Bus, you can see it here:

[The Bicycle Bus and how it works](#)

This film followed me setting up a new Bicycle Bus in nearby Wellesbourne and gave me the idea that I can be more hands on setting up Bicycle Buses locally. With help from various organisations I have now set up 16 initiatives across the country, but mostly in Warwickshire (9). Shared between Stratford, Leamington and Warwick each of the schools at which I have set up a Bicycle Bus have continued to thrive with volunteer parents carrying on the day to day running of the initiatives with my satellite support. I

actually now have a few schools waiting for me to set one up for them. Stratford Primary holds the record with 40 riders one day, each 'Bus' averages about 10 – 15 riders each week.

The teachers note the enthusiasm of the kids going into school who have arrived by Bicycle Bus. For example, the last school I set up an initiative at (Holy Trinity School in Stratford), the week before I set it up, many of the kids who went on to join, entered the school in tears, not wanting to leave Mum or Dad. It was very stressful for everyone; then the following week, after riding to school with The Bicycle Bus, they all went running into school full of laughter and giggles!

I am now on a mission to make Warwickshire the Bicycle Bus capital of the UK.

In the last few months The Leafington Society have kindly paid for some banners to go up outside the schools we go to in Leafington and Warwick, helping to advertise the initiative and attract more participants.

As an initiative, The Bicycle Bus is helping to make a difference, taking cars off the road, reducing congestion, improving air quality around schools, improving families' physical and mental health, helping to

boost confidence not only in riding ability but also in general life too. People have got too used to driving everywhere, with the average school run in the UK being just 1.6 miles long, a distance that is easily cyclable. Only 3% of children currently ride to school, yet in Holland that statistic is 86%: what's the difference?

Infrastructure! Holland has invested heavily in cycle infrastructure and driver education with about 95% of their whole road network having safe cycle lanes. This is one reason why I became Bicycle Mayor, to help change things in Warwickshire.

I finished off the year finding out that I had been nominated for an international award. The Fluxx Awards aim to recognize individuals and organizations that demonstrate exceptional leadership and innovation. However, after finding out the ceremony is due to take place in the Philippines and discussing with the organisers the costs involved for attending, I have decided to withdraw - but it is still an absolute honour to have been considered. I am looking forward to helping more schools and communities get their own Bicycle Buses started in the future and am looking to collaborate with more people and organisations.

Simon Storey

People and Heritage

A new blue plaque in Regent Street



Photo courtesy Leafington Town Council

The blue plaque just unveiled in Regent Street high above Seasalt shop, commemorates an amazing man: The Rev Arthur Margoschis, who was born in Leafington in 1852 and died in Tamil Nadu in India in 1908. He was the son of a Polish goldsmith who married an English woman and settled in Leafington. Arthur trained as a missionary in Canterbury and then started on medical training at a London hospital.

In 1875 he left to take up missionary work in South India in one of the most deprived parts of the continent. He learnt Tamil in Madras and then moved to a small town further south where he was a missionary, an organist and a choirmaster. He dedicated the rest of his life to this town, renamed as Nazareth.

He was a medical officer in the hospital, superintendent of the girl's school, founded the Margoschis Higher Secondary School for boys and an orphanage. He ensured the provision of a teacher training college, a further education college, a railway station, a spinning mill, a telegraph post office and properly surfaced roads. He was appointed Canon of Madras Cathedral and Fellow of the University in 1902. He suffered from severe asthma all his life, and died aged only 56 years, but left a lasting legacy.

Margaret Begg

Friends of Leafington Station in 'Country Life' Magazine

The fantastic work of our subgroup Friends of Leafington Station has been featured in Country Life as part of their celebration of Britain's railways and "blooming station gardens".

[Country Life December 24, 2025](#)

The article includes a wonderful photo of our former chair, the late Archie Pitts hand-painting one of the traditional timber running-in boards on the platform – just one of many projects the Friends have lovingly restored. Other achievements include building the planters, replacing the GWR War Memorial, and restoring the GWR benches and period posters.

We'll gently forgive the journalist's slip in describing the Friends' tireless volunteers as "staff" — in truth, over the last 20 years the only time station staff tended the gardens was during the Covid lockdown, when volunteers were sadly not allowed.

The Friends meet at the station every Sunday morning, so if you're catching a train, arrive a little early to say hello, admire the handiwork (including the famous loco-engine topiary), or even better... lend a hand.

NB: the photos shown here are by FOLS' Marianne Pitts, not from Country Life magazine:





In Memoriam

Alfreda McHale

Talented artist, and long-standing Society member.

In 2025 we sadly lost Alfreda McHale, a long-standing member of the Leamington Society and a talented local artist. She exhibited far and wide, including locally as part of the open studio artists display, and at National Trust properties such as Charlecote. In her early life she was a midwife, and then she decided to study at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design where she excelled. She was much loved and admired by the local community as well as by her family and friends.

Her website is [archived](#).



Beech nut sculpture, York Footbridge



Alfreda McHale

Peggy Mullally

12th February 1936 – 7th June 2026

Peggy Mullally, who died in June, will be remembered by many of our older members. She lived in Leafington for over 30 years, originally in Leaf Terrace, after moving from Stratford with her husband. She later moved to an apartment in the Manor House in Avenue Road. Here she was accompanied everywhere by her companion, Nemo, whom she had acquired from the Hearing Dog Society. His job was to alert Peggy to sounds she might not have heard, the telephone or someone ringing the door bell, although his efficiency declined with age. Peggy was a member of the Leafington Society for many years, reading the Newsletter with interest, even after she had opted to receive the print copy.

Her life before she moved to Leafington had been active and interesting. She had pursued a career as a model, under the name of Angela Ray, working in New York and in London during the swinging sixties. This aspect of her life led to her being in demand in Leafington, where she was chief guest at the opening of several new

stores, adding glamour to the occasion. She also took an interest in charitable work, among other activities helping to support women suffering from abuse.



The photograph shows Peggy as she will be remembered, walking with Nemo in the grounds of the Manor House. Nemo is now being cared for by Dougie, Peggy's helper in recent years.

Barbara Lynn

Membership and Contacts

We are pleased to welcome our new members, **Mark Lever Green** and **Callum Jake Bless**.

The Leafington Society welcomes new members, as well as volunteers interested in joining the committee. The position of Honorary Treasurer will shortly become vacant, so we would be particularly pleased to hear from anyone able to assist with the Society's financial management.

Annual membership costs £20 per household or £15 for an individual.

[Join the Society](#)



Current and previous newsletters are available at www.leafingtonsociety.org.

Unless otherwise stated, views expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society.

Officers and Committee

Chair: Bruno Eurich

Honorary Secretary: Charlotte Stanfield

Honorary Treasurer: Brian Wall

The Leafington Society is a registered charity. It is a member of the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association and the National Organisation of Residents' Associations.

Charity No. 516078. Address: 11 Dormer Place, Leafington Spa CV32 5AA

[Contact us - The Leafington Society](#)