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The Leamington Society Newsletter

August 2007

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Willes Family Archive. Warwickshire County Record Office has bought the archive to the great benefit of local researchers. Many of our members have made very generous donations towards saving this archive for Warwickshire. More information is below.

Protection of open spaces in Warwick district. With the ever growing threat to the green spaces in our towns it is very welcome news that Warwick District Council is preparing a Supplementary Planning Document on the open spaces in the district. We look forward to being consulted on it.

New Station Area brief. Warwick District Council is asking Advantage West Midlands for money to help prepare a new outline plan (known as a planning brief) for the site extending from Lower Avenue to the Ford Foundry and from Old Warwick Road to Station Approach. This area amounts to 46 acres in all – a large area that is economically important to the town and particularly to Old Town.

We hope this brief produces an integrated plan for the whole area – something the Society, along with CLARA and others, has been urging for some time.

Decrim. It is too early to draw any real conclusions on the new parking regime in Warwick district. As far as central Leamington is concerned it seems that

- all day street parkers are finding somewhere else to go; WDC reports a marked increase in the usage of their off-street car parks;
- parking on double yellow lines, even for very short periods, is likely to result in a parking ticket;
- residential parking zones near the town centre are seeing a turn over of vehicles during the day, in place of the previous all day parking by commuters.

In the first few weeks of the new scheme the streets in the town centre were deserted during the day; it is possible that as shoppers see that they can now park there conveniently (20p for up to 30 minutes) they will return, to the benefit of the shops where customers want to make a quick purchase.

WDC is still in the process of appointing its full complement of wardens.

Dates for your Diary

Meetings to Christmas 2007

The Lunar Society.

Midlands philosophers and industrialists in the 18th century

Diana Perowne

Thurs 13th Sept, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Protecting our built environment

Oliver Brock, RIBA

Thurs 11th Oct, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

The evolution of the Grand Union Canal in and around Leamington

Ian Fletcher

Thurs 8th Nov, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Chiltern Railways, 19th century to the present

Adrian Shooter, Chief Executive Chiltern Railways

Monday, 19th Nov

St Peter's Church,

Dormer Place, 6.30

£5 to include wine

Charming Siddons

Gillian Andrews

Thurs 13th Dec, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

The full programme for the year is included with this Newsletter

When several committee members resigned at the same time (because of yet another battle – this time the Regent Hotel), Rex rejoined the committee as Programme Chairman. He remained a member of this sub-committee until a short time before his death on 18th July.

Our sympathy goes to Diana, who was a wonderful support to Rex and as a Society we have been very grateful for her hospitality.

Margaret Watkins

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Dorothy Gabbitas

Dorothy died on 18th July in a nursing home in Aylesbury, just three months short of her hundredth birthday. Dorothy joined the Leamington Society in 1981 and was a very keen and lively member and committee member. She was made an honorary Life Member in recognition of her services. Dorothy represented the Society on the Leamington Britain in Bloom Committee, and was Programme Secretary from 1983 to 1986. At that time there was **NO** programme committee; all the arrangements and organisation of speakers etc. being done by the Programme Secretary.

Dorothy never lost her love of Leamington where she had lived all life and her interest continued after moving for the last few years to be near to her family. Her son, John Gabbitas, has thanked the Society for sending copies of the Society Newsletter to Dorothy and has said how much pleasure she gained when she read the reports of the various projects.

Margaret Watkins

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Lewis’ Leamington 2: Leamington College for boys



Leamington College for boys

My old school is an architectural jewel dozing behind the pines of Binswood Avenue. Externally it is much the same as it was in the fifties, an extravagant trelliswork of brick and carved stone.

Inside the William Morris wall paper in the assembly hall has gone, the kitchen has reverted back to its original function as a chapel. The library was where the reception area now is, and where I unearthed ancient copies of the Complete Angler and a treatise of Alchemical potions.

David Lewis

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The Trees of Jephson Gardens

This excellent booklet about the 170 (or so) trees in our splendid gardens has been written by Leamington tree enthusiast David Howells. In the introduction to his booklet he says:

“The Jephson Gardens contain a wonderful collection of trees, one of the best nationally in a public park of this size. This is the work of the many people who chose what to plant and who have then

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The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is affiliated to the Civic Trust and to the West Midlands Amenity Societies Association. 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.

TALKS TO DECEMBER 2007

The Lunar Society. Midlands philosophers and industrialists in the 18th century. September 13, Oddfellows

The Lunar Society was an informal club of men who met in the 1770s and 1780s in and around the Midlands to dine and discuss the latest advances in science and their application to industry. For safer travelling they met at the time of the full moon – hence their name. The group included manufacturers, instrument makers, doctors as well as men of independent means: people like Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton, James Watt and Erasmus Darwin. Diana Perowne, a Heart of England Blue Badge Guide, will describe how this society made a major contribution to the scientific and industrial development of 18th century Britain.

Protecting our built environment. October 11, Oddfellows

Oliver Brock (Chairman of the Coventry and Warwickshire Society of Chartered Architects and a member of Warwick District Council's Conservation Area Advisory Forum) will discuss the value of our historic buildings and the importance of their protection. In this talk he will identify ways in which Historic Buildings can be valued within a commercial context, looking at examples of successful developments based on sound conservation principles, and drawing lessons for the future growth of our towns and cities.

The evolution of the Grand Union Canal in and around Leamington, November 8, Oddfellows

From its inception in the late eighteenth century, our local canal – then called the Warwick & Napton Canal – was dug to create local benefits by being part of a larger entity. Ian Fletcher, of The Inland Waterways Association, discusses how its fortunes fluctuated over the last 200 years as it faced the challenges of both evolving competition and ownership. Yet today it continues to contribute to our local economy – but in ways inconceivable to its founding fathers.

Chiltern Railways, from 19th century to the present, Monday November 19, St Peter's Church, Dormer Place, 6.30

£5 charge to include first glass of wine or soft drink and light refreshments; tickets at the door

Adrian Shooter, Chief Executive of Chiltern, will talk about how the railway now run by Chiltern has developed from the 19th century to now, with illustrations.

Charming Siddons, December 13, Oddfellows

Gillian Andrews, a professional actress since the age of 12 and broadcaster on Children's Hour, will tell us about Sarah Siddons (1785 – 1831) who was regarded as the greatest tragic actress of her generation. Sarah Siddons was born in Wales but had many connections with Warwickshire. As a child she played Ariel in the Tempest in Warwick's Market Hall. She was maid/companion to Lady Mary Greatheed of Guy's Cliffe and married in Holy Trinity Church in Coventry. She continued to visit Leamington throughout her life and stayed many times at the Regent Hotel.

There will be mulled wine and mince pies.