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The Leamington Society Newsletter

November 2011

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Chandos Street: Back to the Drawing Board

Keeping track of the Clarendon Arcade applications and engaging in the consultations has been a long and tedious journey. It finally reached the Planning Committee on November 8th and there is a careful summary of that crucial meeting below.

That the eventual vote went against was of course a remarkable moment for those in the public gallery. But it was a tight decision and is by no means the end of the story.

There is no disguising that this is a significant rebuff to the officers, who recommended approval of the long running development proposals. I suggest that there is a much more positive conclusion to be drawn. This was a powerful example of local democracy in action. The outcome was not a fix, nor the foregone conclusion that we had often assumed in more cynical moments. Our Councillors had listened and weighed the arguments: after strenuous debate they took a tough decision.

What now? The *Courier* has reported Wilson Bowden's reaction in terms that suggest the developers have not changed in the slightest. They say they are seeking further discussion with the Council. Which prompts the question: what kind of feed-back will they receive from senior officers and from the leadership group? Wilson Bowden have made little attempt to engage with strongly argued objections to the overwhelming scale of their proposals, which was the main reason for a majority of the Committee to turn them down. Should the developers persist along these lines – trying to bulldoze through an appeal – it will put them hugely at odds with public opinion, not to mention the heavy cost involved.

Now is the time for our Council to pause and reflect: on a drastically changing world of retailing and on the message this decision delivers from the Committee. We urge our District's leaders to take a genuinely fresh look at the Chandos Street area. Instead of the lazy option of wholesale demolition to make way for a huge and inflexible retail shed, the site cries out for a more mature and imaginative plan. It must be a good neighbour, reflecting the scale and character of Leamington, and should not be burdened with monster parking decks.

Dates for your Diary

*13 years as MP for Warwick and
Leamington*

James Plaskitt

Thursday, December 8th, 7.30

Pump Room Annexe

Joint meeting with Literary Society

Fire at York Minster,

Dr Charles Brown

Tuesday, January 10th, 7.30

Pump Room Annexe

Music in Leamington,

Richard Philips

Thursday, February 9th, 7.30

Pump Room Annexe

Joint meeting with Warwick Society

The Great Fire of Warwick, speaker

Gillian White

Tuesday, March 6th, 7.30

Pump Room Annexe

For details see last page

Reviving a classic: The Royal Terrace

Restoring the beautiful regency terrace that sits at the junction of Willes Road and Newbold Terrace has proved to be a challenging but extremely rewarding experience for the owners of TAG Exclusive Properties. Simon Tate and Gareth Wilkinson purchased numbers 23-25 Newbold Terrace and 24 Willes Road in December 2009 and began work on the property, now known as The Royal Terrace, in July 2010.



The Royal Terrace, Newbold Terrace
overlooking Jephson Gardens

TAG Properties

Commissioning a historical report of the property before work began allowed them to delve deep into the property's history while also highlighting areas of particular importance for conservation. Although the property was in a sorry state of neglect, certain features had remained intact or repairable which was exciting for everyone involved.

Among these was a stained glass window in 24 Willes Road. This features the initials of Elizabeth Sparrow (nee Flavel) and her husband Fredrick Henry Sparrow. Elizabeth, who was the daughter of Sidney Flavel, originally lived at 25 Newbold Terrace and later purchased 24 Willes Road. Careful restoration of the window by experts allowed its original vibrancy to be re-discovered and it now sits beautifully amongst the crisp decor of the refurbished property.

The majority of other windows at the property had the original fine lambs tongue glazing bars. These have been painstakingly refurbished, often requiring removal and careful transportation to local workshops to allow detailed inspection and repair.

Other features were more intact. A wonderful Minton tiled floor in the hallway of Newbold House will continue to be enjoyed by residents. This is of interest as it supports evidence that Newbold House was the last of the terrace to be built as the Minton factory wasn't established until the 1830s, after which these floors became very popular.

Another exciting discovery made during the restoration was the sliding ballroom doors on the first floor of Newbold House. These had been hidden for years behind a plastered partition and were discovered by the TAG team during the initial stripping works. Restoration of the huge panelled doors has allowed them to come back into use and they reinstate the sense of grandeur to this beautiful ballroom.

Other features at The Royal Terrace were in such a poor state that they could not be salvaged. In these circumstances TAG Properties have worked with local craftsmen to reproduce the intricate details of their original designs. New cornices and ceilings roses have been moulded directly from the small areas of surviving plasterwork. Different apartments boast the details found in that particular house and watching them be installed has



Reconstruction of ceiling rose to
original design

TAG Properties

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The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is a member of 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.

EVENTS to February 2011

13 years as MP for Warwick and Leamington

Thursday, December 8th, 7.30, Pump Room Annexe

James Plaskitt

James was our MP from 1997 to 2010. He has spoken to us before about the history of Warwick & Leamington's representation in Parliament since 1885, but his talk ended with 1997. Now he will add a further chapter, reflecting on his own experience, which promises to include some insights into the way Parliament really works, together with some candid views about his own time in the role, and some amusing anecdotes about life in Westminster and the corridors of power.

Joint meeting with Literary Society

Fire at York Minster

Tuesday, January 10th, 7.30, Pump Room Annexe

Dr Charles Brown

In the early hours of 9th July, 1984 an extensive fire broke out at York Minster, one of the world's finest cathedrals. Was it arson, electrical fault, electrical atmospheric disturbance or lightning? Perhaps it was an Act of God. Why is the verdict open? Charles Brown, Surveyor of the Fabric at York Minster, will tell us.

Music in Leamington

Thursday, February 9th, 7.30, Pump Room Annexe

Richard Philips

Richard lives in Warwick in the house where he was born. His musical experiences in Leamington go back to the 1950s. Concert series and festivals have dominated his life since the mid-1970s and he has directed or organized about 100 festivals, most in the Midlands, but also in King's Lynn, Norwich and Oundle. His outstanding contribution to British Arts Festivals was acknowledged last year by winning the British Arts Festivals Association Award.

Joint meeting with Warwick Society

The Great Fire of Warwick

Tuesday, March 6th, 7.30, Pump Room Annexe

Gillian White

More information in February Newsletter

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We welcome as new members of the Society:

David Buckingham
Robert Vale
John and Elizabeth Lowry