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The Leamington Society Newsletter

November 2005

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Managing the Housing Supply. We are delighted that a new SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) has been agreed by WDC to put a moratorium on new housing. This has become necessary as the district has agreed applications for 9000 new dwellings only half way through the period 1996-2011 when the target for the whole period is 7200. Below John Archer writes about the implications of the SPD.

The Parade renewal scheme (LUMP). Work on this has now stopped until next May, when it will be resumed from outside Jephson gardens to the railway bridge at the south end of Bath Street. The implementation of this stage is likely to be difficult because of the narrowness of Bath Street. The scheme has cost £2.2 million so far; the cost of next year's work will be on top.

Chiltern 150-place car park. The application for a car park on the undeveloped and largely overgrown land on north side of the station is still under discussion. The society, along with Regenesis and CLARA, is arguing for a north side entrance as part of the scheme, and for a footpath entrance/exit onto Lower Avenue. Both of these suggestions are part of the planning brief for the area adopted by WDC in 1999.

Physiotherapy. WCC Health and Scrutiny Committee were opposed to the closure of Physiotherapy Station Approach, and asked for the decision to be referred to the Secretary of State. This was not done. Instead WCC has decided to monitor the new regime. In view of the (now revealed) dire financial position of the hospital trust we can probably hope for little more.

Quicks site. The Leamington Society, working with CLARA, local residents and the Avenue Bowling Club argued that the new application for 170 flats (reduced to 166 at the last moment) was still entirely inappropriate for this site. We prepared a full analysis of the faults of the scheme. This analysis was welcomed by the WDC Planning Committee when they considered the proposal. They rejected the application unanimously. We have won this battle, but not the war. Miller Homes has appealed against this rejection and that of their earlier application for 183 flats. The appeal is to be heard next April.

John Picking. We were saddened to hear of John's death on November 19th. We were absolutely delighted earlier this year when he agreed to become our Vice-Chairman; he was such a kind and helpful person whose support could always be relied on. We shall greatly miss him.

Committee changes. We regret the resignation of Jeannette Oubridge – our sincere thanks to Jeannette are recorded later in this newsletter. We are pleased that Gordon Fyfe has agreed to become a co-opted member. He will augment our knowledge, particularly in the area of planning.

Programme revisions. It has become necessary to make some changes to the programme for 2006. A revised version, printed in green, is included with this newsletter.

Dates for your Diary

A revised version of the programme for the year is included with this Newsletter

Meetings to February 2006:

Inn Signs and Drinking Customs

Graham Sutherland
Thurs 8th Dec, 7.45pm
Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

George Hall Memorial Lecture,
joint meeting with the Literary
Society

**Thomas Oken,
Paul Bolitho**

Tuesday 10th Jan, 7.30
Pump Rooms Annexe,

**From Humble Village to
Splendid Spa, 1800-1850:
a Tribute to Bill Gibbons,
Jo Clark**

Thurs 9th February,
Oddfellows Hall

**See back page for more
information on these events**

FRIENDS OF LEAMINGTON STATION

The activities of the Friends continue unabated.

Roll of Honour. Nearly 100 people came to the Leamington Spa station on November 11th to watch as the President of the Friends, Pete Waterman, with local railway historian and member Patrick Kingston, unveiled a Roll of Honour on Platform 2. This commemorates almost 2500 GWR men killed in the Great War. A massive one third of all GWR staff enlisted to fight.

After the unveiling there was a service in which the roll of honour was dedicated by Father David Lawson of St John the Baptist Church together with Revd Christopher Wilson of All Saints Church – the station spans both parishes. Four wreaths were laid, the first by the deputy mayor Cllr Andy Leahy.

Waiting rooms. With the aid of a very generous funding by our Town Council we shall be putting railway posters back in the waiting rooms; our May Newsletter showed a possible poster. We hope this work will be completed in the next six months.

The gardens and tubs

The Platform 2 garden has continued to look good as a result of all the work on it since Easter; the flowering has been impressive well into November. Now work has started in earnest on the terrace gardens. The upper part was cleared in July of an enormous amount of brambles, convolvulus and other invasive and persistent weeds and now three volunteers have undertaken the long-term maintenance and planting. They have even created a blog <http://leamingtonspastation.blog.co.uk> where you can read about and comment on their progress. In the meantime a couple of pictures showing what has been achieved so far:



Dedication of Roll of Honour

l to r: Pete Waterman, Patrick Kinston, Rev Christopher Wilson, Fr David Lawson



Upper terrace in early July ...



... and recently

Other volunteers have started on the lower terrace.

We have raised over £300 in cash for plants. The Friends are very grateful for generous donations from the George Hall bequest, CLARA, and from:

Chris & Margaret Begg	Rachel Chesterfield	Paul Edwards	Tom Holloway	Peter & Janet Storrie
Ruth Bennion	Chris Daniels	Jan Gillett	David Holloway	Robert Taylor
Rachel Berger	Margaret Devitt	Gordon Goddard-Pickett	Kathleen Hanks	Sidney Tyrrell
Dr Andrew Cave	Estelle Dodson	Bill and Ann Hemus	Archie & Marianne Pitts	Jane Willey
Toby Cave	Betty Drummond	Anne Hill	Mr. Reeve	Bridget Winn

Money is continuing to arrive for the garden, as well as many donations of plants. On top of this there are the hours of work that volunteers have put into this since Easter. A conservative estimate is more than 300 hours so far, and rising. The local branch of the Soroptimists maintain and regularly replant the numerous tubs of flowering plants on the platforms. Thanks to all of you.

DECRIMINALISATION

The society's meeting in October was about decriminalisation. Archie, as Chairman, introduced the panel. The unsexy title means the transfer of responsibility for traffic offences from the Police to the local Authority – Warwick County Council in our case. The speakers were

- Roger Bennett, of WCC (responsible for overseeing the introduction of the new scheme);
- Paul Hayes, Leamington Town Centre Manager;
- Bill Gifford, Town and District Councillor, involved in the introduction of the scheme;
- Brian Wall, local trader and chair of the Chamber of Trade
- Robin Richmond, our Secretary and town centre resident.

Each speaker had a turn to address the meeting. Roger opened by explaining that the Home Office wanted the change and demand has been stimulated by deliberately employing very few Traffic Enforcement Police Officers. Only *three* serve Warwick, Leamington Spa and Kenilworth with predictable chaos in town centres. Enforcement of parking rules will be carried out by Parking Attendants (*not* Traffic Wardens). Revenues are to be ring-fenced, first to pay for the considerable costs of setting up the scheme, including the updating of road signs and installation of Pay and Display machines, and second to improve local transport, with bigger off-street car-parks, park and ride and so on.

Decriminalisation has already been introduced in Stratford upon Avon; Nuneaton and Bedworth are next and Warwick District last. Our start was scheduled to be October 2006, but this has slipped to 2007 or later. Roger believed that the Stratford scheme has improved the turnover of parking places, so that more are available to visitors, and has also improved traffic circulation and road safety.

WCC has commissioned a traffic survey of Warwick District by Ove Arup. The results of this are due very soon, and will be used to design our decriminalisation plan. We were assured that we will be able to see the report and there will be public consultation before any plan is implemented.

A difficult balance must be found between the needs of the different users: traders, residents, commuters, visitors. As parking spaces are in short supply there are bound to be conflicts of interest. Restrictions in the inner Town Centre will displace motorists to the edge and the suburbs, annoying local residents. Shop workers also need parking places. Florists and other traders who deliver should be allowed to do so. Brian Wall pointed out that all shoppers require convenient and easy parking and if Leamington Spa is to remain a premier shopping area, the rules should be enforced but not in a hostile manner. More than 100 towns already have such a scheme and Paul Hayes thought the prosperity of Leamington Spa would increase after decriminalisation.

WCC looks after **on**-street parking and WDC owns the **off**-street car parks, so Bill Gifford and WDC believe the best solution would be a partnership. If WDC ran the scheme there would be no "incentivisation" of Parking Attendants – so no prize car for the most energetic attendant, as has happened (reportedly) elsewhere in the UK. A private firm would make a profit out of the scheme, raising costs for everyone. Town Centre residents would be happier to pay for parking than those living further out, but the inevitable displacement of cars (particularly commuters') from the centre may change that. Questions remain:

- How exactly will the scheme operate? Where should the boundaries be, and how many different zones are needed?
- What happens to any surplus over the operating costs of the scheme?
- What happens if there is no agreement between WCC and WDC?
- Could the Parking Attendants report other problems, such as vandalism and litter?

The current situation is unacceptable with no enforcement and out-of-date notices hindering Wardens from charging. Robin Richmond's photographs of New Street where the double parking has made access for emergency services difficult to impossible, and the antisocial blocking of garages, especially in the evenings and at weekends, demonstrate the present unsatisfactory situation. The new scheme should have 24/7 enforcement. WDC has not required any provision for off-street parking in new developments so the problem has become much worse over the last ten years. If Wandsworth District in London can enforce 1.2 car-parking spaces per residence, why cannot WDC do the same and soon? Park and Ride should be introduced at the same time to reduce the impact of the new rules. The traffic system needs to be integrated with the local plan.

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Newsletter Distribution

Jo Clark

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.

PLANNING MATTERS

The last meeting of the Conservation Area Advisory Forum (CAAF) saw a marked reduction in the number of planning applications. This is presumably due to the Supplementary Planning Document, approved by WDC in September, for Managing Housing Supply. The purpose of this new Supplementary Planning Document is to prevent an excessive over supply in the District, in relation to the strategic housing requirement set out in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the Warwickshire Structure Plan.

The Bath Street area has great potential for improvement, as it has some very fine architecture. It is good to see such a well- mannered infilling in Regent Place now completed, and the lovely looking Akito florist looking so smart on the corner with Bath Street. This building is a fine example of how to turn a corner in style, something that Regency builders were so good at doing.

An application for listed building consent is about to be submitted for increasing the size of the booking hall at our railway station. With such a huge increase in rail travel, the changes are necessary and we are assured it will be carried out in sympathy with the art deco style.

Paul Edwards

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TALKS TO FEBRUARY 2006

Inn Signs and Drinking Customs, Graham Sutherland, Thurs 8th Dec, Oddfellows Hall

Graham is a former Warwickshire police inspector. His talk will be accompanied by Christmas refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies.

Thomas Oken, Paul Bolitho, Tuesday 10th Jan, 7.30, Pump Rooms Annexe

Paul is a local historian and author of books on Warwickshire personalities and topics like *Ripples from a Local Pond* and *Ripples from Warwickshire Past*. Recently he has published a book on Thomas Oken, the well-known 16th century resident and benefactor from Warwick. Paul will be telling us about this very interesting man.

From Humble Village to Splendid Spa, 1800-1850: a Tribute to Bill Gibbons, Thurs 9th Feb, Jo Clark, Oddfellows Hall

Bill Gibbons was a long-standing member of the Leamington Society and gave talks about his valuable research into the history of Leamington.

This tribute to Bill by his friend, Jo Clark, also a member of the Society, will use Bill's original slides and notes with Guide Books of the period.

Jo, while not a historian, has a great interest in Leamington, and has collected Leamington printed material for over 25 years.

The talk will be an opportunity to see Bill's marvellous slides and experience the very exciting birth of Royal Leamington Spa.

Further ahead we have

Early Spring visit to Wroxham Abbey, Saturday 25th February with Paul Edwards

Leamington 50 years ago, Friday 10th March – A special event to commemorate our golden jubilee year. David Barby TV, antiques expert and TV personality

The Future of the Civic Trust Movement, Thurs 13th April. Nigel Burton, Chairman of the Civic Trust