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# The Leamington Society Newsletter

August 2006

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

**Party.** Not only has the Leamington Society reached its 50th year, but CLARA (the Central Leamington Residents' Association) has come of age – it is 21 years old. The perfect reason for a party – to be held on November 3rd in the newly opened Cultural Centre in Spencer Yard, off Spencer Street. The wonderfully restored and equipped buildings at the Cultural Centre were opened at the end of June – see Tim Griffiths' article below, written before the very recent theft of the Elephant Boy sculpture. Wine, soft drinks and nibbles will be on offer.

There will be no charge, but donations will be gratefully accepted.

This party will help cement the growing cooperation between CLARA and the Leamington Society who have worked together on a number of issues of common interest, the latest being our joint opposition to the Miller Homes proposals for Quicks Site at Station Approach.

**New housing numbers.** At the beginning of August fresh government housing targets were proposed for the West Midlands: 576,000 new homes by 2026 instead of the previous figure of 381,000, an increase of 51%. According to the Birmingham Post (August 3rd) "The draft strategy proposes a shift away from previous policies, which concentrated growth on the towns of Worcester, Telford, Warwick, Leamington and Lichfield." Let us hope this is what happens.

**Street trees in Leamington.** Earlier this year many good size trees were replanted in the streets of Leamington, thanks to the efforts of Ruth Bennion and Rachel Chesterfield. Rachel has been campaigning since the early 1990s for the missing trees in Leam Terrace to be replaced. At last the gaps have been filled. Thank you Ruth and Rachel, and of course WDC and the Town Council, for the new trees.

The trees need watering, particularly in the hot dry weather we have been having recently. The contractors who planted the trees were not commissioned to do this – the hope and expectation was that residents living nearby would water them.

**Jephson Garden Gates.** The infill panel designed by Paul Edwards has now been made, installed and decorated by George Worralls with gold leaf on the tips of the decorative scroll work. It looks very good, and complements the gilding on the gates opposite the pump rooms which we commissioned last year – also by Worralls.

**Waller of Woodcote collection at the County Record Office.** This collection of records relating to Warwick and Warwickshire may have to be sold. If the collection is of interest to you or you have used it, let us know. Better still, contact Caroline Sampson (Head of the Archive Service at the Record Office) on 01926 738959 or [recordoffice@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:recordoffice@warwickshire.gov.uk).

Archie Pitts

### *Dates for your Diary*

**George Goodall**  
*The History of Planning  
Permission. Is it bureaucracy  
gone mad?*

September 14th  
Oddfellows Hall

**Jenny Sansom and Becky Davies**  
*Recycling. Is it a load of old  
rubbish?*

October 12th  
Oddfellows Hall

**PARTY**  
**Joint party with CLARA**  
7.30, Friday November 3rd  
Cultural Quarter, Spencers Yard

**Steven Falk**  
*Arden to Feldon: Warwickshire  
landscapes and ecology*

November 9th  
Oddfellows Hall

**Hector Sutherland**  
*Life at Charlecote House and the  
visit of Elizabeth I in 1572*

December 14th  
Oddfellows Hall

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





has sent me trade advertisements of the firm from 1876 to 1884. By 1883 the firm display the Royal Warrant as Cook and Confectioner to Her Most Gracious Majesty The Queen. "Railway Reminiscences" by G.P. Neele, 1904, describes the Royal train journey from Windsor to Balmoral – "At Leamington the train will generally remain twenty minutes, so that the attendants and travellers can get their supper and prepare for the long night journey before them; the tea-table for the service of Her Majesty and the ladies of the Court is arranged on the platform; while for the Gentlemen of the Suite and for the railway officers the waiting-rooms are temporarily utilised."

Was this catering carried out by E. Wheal of The Parade and, if so, was this the reason for the Royal Warrant? If any reader has any information or ideas, please contact me on 01926 423725, or [paulewards1@btinternet.com](mailto:paulewards1@btinternet.com), and I will pass it on to Peter Denning.

*Paul Edwards*

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### **Leamington Society Awards 2006**

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|---|--|
| 1. 28 Regent Street                                   | New shop front and façade  |
| 2. 33 Dale Street                                     | New railings, restoration of façade and basement                       |
| 3. 3 Euston Place, Newman Property Services           | New shop front   |
| 4. Swans View, Warwick New Road                       | New development  |
| 5. 60 Leam Terrace                                    | Restoration of parapet   |
| 6. Weldon Lodge, 9 Farley Street                      | Renovation and new extension   |
| 7. 39A Rosefield Street                               | Conversion of commercial site to dwellings                             |
| 8. 6 Regent Place                                     | New development to replace commercial building                         |
| 9. 33 Bath Street, Akito Flower Shop                  | Shop renovation, inside and out  |
| 10. William Thomas House, Willes Road                 | New build to replace petrol station                                    |
| 11. Kelseys Bar, 15 & 17 High Street                  | Exterior restoration   |
| 12. Victoria Coffee House, 95 Warwick Street          | New shop front and interior renovation                                 |
| 13. 5 Regent Street, Wellington House                 | Exterior restoration   |
| 14. Elizabeth Court, Beaconsfield Street West         | Conversion of commercial building to dwellings                         |
| 15. 10, Clarendon Square                              | Exterior restoration   |
| 16. 14 – 16 George Street                             | Infill   |
| 17. St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Augusta Place | New information and computing technology suite                         |
| 18. 5, Regent Place                                   | New shop front   |
| 19. 45 Warwick Street                                 | New façade   |
| 20. Regent Hotel, Portico                             | New portico  |
| 21. Regent Hotel, Ballroom                            | Restoration of regency ballroom  |
| 22. Fu Garden Chinese Restaurant, 6 Spencer Street    | New shop front   |
| 23. 1 Binswood Avenue                                 | Exterior restoration of private house cum dental practice              |
| 24. Piccolino's Restaurant, 7 – 9 Spencer Street      | New shop front   |
| 25. 112 Plymouth Place                                | Restoration of façade and new railings (Winner of Bill Gibbons Trophy) |

**There is a description of the awards ceremony with pictures of some of the award winning buildings on an inset page to this Newsletter.**

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**Warwickshire Gardens Trust** invites members of the Leamington Society to an illustrated talk by Jennifer Meir on 'Sanderson Miller and his landscapes and architectural designs' at the Court House, Warwick, at 8.15 p.m. on Thursday 12 October 2006.

Jennifer Meir is both a historian and designer of gardens and author of the book 'Sanderson Miller and his Landscapes', recently published by Phillimore.



- conflicts with policy set at higher levels;
- focuses on narrow technical considerations, and not on the broader concerns of the local community.

The Society is very concerned about the ability of the Local Plan to protect the qualities that make the District such an attractive place to live and work.

Safety considerations have a high priority in policies for Travel, Rural Areas and Specific Sites. However, they have a low or zero priority in policies for Urban Areas, Parking and Tenure.

It should be noted that 81% of the District's population live in urban areas, which represent 11% of the land area, i.e. we live in crowded and dense towns, not a crowded and urbanised county. The Local Plan fails to state this important fact. High development densities and on-street parking pressures have already reduced the quality of life in some urban areas to unacceptable levels.

National planning guidance is not properly reflected in the Local Plan; it does not recognise

- the need for the efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment;
- the reconciliation of economic growth with social and environmental considerations;
- that the car will remain the *only* viable option for some journeys and for some people.

The Local Plan sets out strategies to protect rural communities and tourism, but not to protect urban communities in relation to economic growth, housing needs and town centre development.

The District's development policy in urban areas tends to be 'if it can be built, it will be built' rather than 'if it can be built, should it be built?' In earlier consultation on the Local Plan the District Council learnt that '60% of respondents supported higher density housing within towns *provided that the quality of the environment can be maintained*'; and that '*at least 85% of respondents consider easy access to car parking important for housing, shopping and employment uses ... for other uses 54% felt that parking remained important.*' These findings should not be ignored.

The Local Plan does not comply with regional guidance. Its development strategy is not the one favoured in the Warwickshire Structure Plan and considered to be 'the closest interpretation of national guidance'. It ignores the County's concerns about

- the extreme difficulties of building the right houses in the right places at the right time; and
- the serious risk of 'town-cramming'.

Development in the District has not always followed the principles of fairness set out in national guidance and net additional dwellings have significantly exceeded the regional strategy requirement.

The District will have had no parking standards for *6 years* by the time that new standards are adopted. By then there could be an increase in on-street parking demand from new dwellings of up to 1,800 places. DPE is not intended to resolve overnight resident parking pressures. There is an urgent need for parking policy principles to be included in the Local Plan:

- Adequate off-street parking must be required in new developments.
- Greater consideration of social, environmental and safety issues on and off the highway is needed.
- Existing powers need to be used to prevent more front gardens being converted to off-street parking, both spoiling the streetscape and reducing on-street parking capacity.

Finally, we need an explicit coordinated plan for the station area – not the current hotchpotch approach, waiting for developers to come along with uncoordinated applications for each part of the site. The suggestion of the Society for a bus-rail interchange for the site is part of the Warwickshire Final Local Transport Plan 2006.

The Planning Inspector asked WDC to make a single response to the Leamington Society's extensive list of objections and set aside a whole day for an informal hearing. The Society felt that the Inspector's approach made for a fair and relaxed session that went well. The Inspector appeared surprised at the long time that the District has been without parking standards.

The Inspector's report is not due until the beginning of 2007 and will be binding on WDC. The Leamington Society awaits the outcome with interest.





## Awards 2006

Two years pass quickly. Once again it was time for Awards and there were plenty of enthusiastic nominations. The panel consisted of the Mayor of Leamington Spa, Cllr Andy Leahy, Alan Mayes (WDC Conservation Officer), Jill Haran (architect and member of the Leamington Society), Archie and Dhiran Vagdia, Chairman of the Coventry and Warwickshire Society of Chartered Architects – Dhiran again acted as our independent external assessor. We are grateful to these for all their work.

Out of 33 entries, 25 were judged worthy of an Award. This was a high success rate, but the quality of the work being judged was high. Just how high was clear from the display of Roger Charters' beautiful sharp photographs mounted in the Town Hall (on the day of the Awards ceremony) and later in the Pump Room Library for all to see. The event was fully reported in the local papers: the *Courier* on July 21st and the *Observer* on July 20th. The effect on local builders and developers is positive – the Leamington Society is now consulted on design and planning.

Chiltern Railways made a very generous donation to the Society to enable us to run the event. In addition Warwick District Council, Aubrey Allan the delicatessen and Insight provided premises, food and electronic equipment respectively. Without all their help we could not possibly stage so big an occasion: the Town Hall Assembly Room accommodated tables and chairs for 150 including Andy Leahy and his wife Jill, Chairman of WDC Bill Evans and his wife Joy; Alan Mayes and John Archer of WDC; most of the winners with their partners, builders and architects, the judges and other members of the Leamington Society.

Pieter Doughty and his colleagues at the Town Hall yet again did a splendid job arranging (and clearing) the room. The piano was especially tuned for Mark Aspinall, who has a talent for such occasions. Alan Lyne was (as usual) an efficient barman with assistance from Ruth Bennion; Tim Griffiths organised the electronic system enabling us to have full illustrations of the award winners. We owe all of these our grateful thanks.

Dhiran announced the winners with comments as they came up to receive their certificate from Andy Leahy. The completed Regent Hotel won two awards: for the Portico and the sensitively restored Ballroom, which are undeniably a great improvement on the recent past. Some awards were for *completely new* buildings which were so well designed that they fitted in completely and looked as if they could have been there forever: 6 Regent Place; William Thomas House opposite Lansdowne Crescent; 14-16 George Street. Others were for improvements to commercial properties such as pubs, cafés and shops: Kelsey's Bar at 15-17 High Street; Victoria Coffee House on Warwick Street; 3 Euston Place (Newman Property Services); 28 Regent Street (Storm Studios); Zest Bar on Warwick Street; Piccolino's restaurant on Spencer Street; the Fu Garden Chinese Restaurant opposite, and (my favourite) the Akito Flower Shop on Bath Street. There was a unique award to St Peter's Catholic school in Augusta Place, "an example of Leamington's thinking about its future. The Building team at St Peter's worked very hard with its tight urban site, to not only clarify and simplify its circulation spaces, but also to create a new classroom space to deliver their Information and Computing Technology curriculum".

Private residences were commended for a number of reasons. One was that they were new builds or modern architecture, which "add a new quality to the Town creating a new area for the people of Leamington to enjoy", such as 39A Rosefield Street; Weldon Lodge in Farley Street; Swans View blocks of flats on Warwick New Road. Another reason was for displaying "simple design choices made to reinstate a clear example of Leamingtonian town architecture": Wellington House on Grove Street; 10 Clarendon Square; 1 Binswood Avenue; 33 Dale Street; 60 Leam Terrace. The Bill Gibbons Cup for the best owner-occupied house was won by Anne McHale of 112 Plymouth Place for an impeccable façade to her property. Mr. Chad Collins, the Manager of Leamington Spa Station, presented the cup to her on behalf of Chiltern Railways.

Pictures speak louder than words and over the page we illustrate a few of the winners. "The judges were reassured by the consistency of ironwork through the day" and attention to detail shown in the restorations. Many winners spontaneously mentioned the help they had received from Alan Mayes in determining the design and style; Leamington (and the rest of the District) must be very grateful to him.

Altogether there is much good building work going on and the owners, builders and architects should all feel proud of themselves.

*Marianne Pitts, with comments from our independent external assessor Dhiran Vagdia*



Fine restoration of façade and basement, Dale Street



New building to replace petrol station, Willes Road



Good infill, Regent Place



Careful restoration and matching new wing, Farley Street



Winner of Bill Gibbons' trophy, Plymouth Place



New shop front, Warwick Street



New shop front, Euston Place