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The Leamington Society Newsletter

February 2008

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Chandos Street car park development. Developers Wilson Bowden are revising their plans for this site. In brief, the roof level is lowered a little but the bulk of the building remains massive. Retail space goes up by 15% and car parking is up. Cars and lorries will now enter from Chandos Street. With slowing high-street and growing internet sales, is the development good for Leamington or will the town be left with a white elephant? The Leamington Society continues to be deeply opposed to the current proposal – it is vastly too high, will build over three streets, overwhelm nearby residences, bring yet more traffic, including juggernaut lorries, and pollution. All the present trees will be cut down.

Parking in Warwick District. From 31 March there will be country wide changes to parking and traffic management – see below.

Leamington Parish Church. We all know the financial hardship of churches throughout this country. Our Parish Church, All Saints, is no exception. The Rev Christopher Wilson describes its particular plight below.

Leamington Spa station. Chiltern Railways is spending more than £600,000 refurbishing the station. There will be a ceremonial reopening soon. The Friends of Leamington Station, a group of enthusiasts working under the umbrella of the Leamington Society, has paid for a replica of the clock given to the station by the Borough of Leamington in 1939; two running in boards to match the originals and railway heritage posters to hang over the stairwells. And our work has not yet finished. The Friends are very grateful to the Railway Heritage Trust, Royal Leamington Spa Town Council for grants and to numerous individuals for donations.

Station Area brief. Advantage West Midlands has agreed to fund a study on behalf of WDC for the area stretching from Lower Avenue on the East to the ex-Ford foundry on the West, and from Old Warwick Road in the South to Station Approach/Avenue Road on the North. This is very welcome news. A good plan for an integrated and economically mixed development of this 45 acre site would bring huge benefits to Leamington.

Dates for your Diary

Meetings and events to July 2008

Baron Ash and Packwood House

Mike Miles

Thursday March 13th, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Joint meeting with the Warwick Society:

**Leigh Family and
Stoneleigh Abbey**

Mairi MacDonald

Thursday, April 10th, 7.45

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Joint Party with CLARA

**Friday April 25th, 7.30 – 10
North Hall, Cultural Quarter,
Spencer Yard**

AGM

Thursday May 8th, 7.30

Leamington printed collectibles
Jo Clark

Clarence Suite, Oddfellows Hall

Garden visit to Doreen Whitehead

70, Northumberland Road
Saturday, June 21, 5.30 to 7.30

Awards 2008

Presentation by the Mayor of
Royal Leamington Spa
Thursday, July 10, 7.15 for 7.30
Town Hall

**For more information see
the back page of this Newsletter**

Parking, decrim and changes from end of March 2008

From 31 March there will be country wide changes to parking and traffic management, with parking enforcement implications. The aim is to make the system more consistent across the country, to be fairer and to encourage more openness by local authorities.

There are more changes of terminology; in come Civil Parking Enforcement and Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) (Parking) – traffic wardens to the rest of us.

There will be two levels of fine, £70 (for more serious offences) and £50 for lesser ones. As before, these reduce by 50% if paid within 14 days, and increase by 50% if not paid within 56 days. Previously there had been a single fine level of £60. Based on current infringements, it is expected that 70% of penalties in Warwick district will be at the lower level. The implication is that the local authority will receive lower revenue from fines, all else equal of course. The requirement that local authorities be more open should lead to those who believe that they have been unfairly ticketed to being able to argue their case.

Driving away while being ticketed will become an offence. Double parking will be a serious offence. By the way, in case you thought you knew what “double parking” meant, it is defined as parking more than 50 cms (just under 20") from the kerb. So sloppy parking could cost. Parking on a double yellow line is defined as a serious offence; overstaying a parking limit is regarded as a lesser one.

Parking across dropped kerbs (ie vehicular access to properties) is intended to become an offence, but there are conflicting views as to how it might be enforced. Parking on pavements, including grass verges, will be against the rules of the adjacent road-side. However, residents in narrow streets wishing to have a residents’ parking scheme can only do so if pavement parking is banned, which may not be practical.

In case you are wondering about changes in the town centre that would allow free parking after 6 pm, these are being considered by WCC (the relevant authority for this), but will be some time coming, assuming they are agreed.

At the moment, WDC is employing 23 CEOs, and has a target of 30. Since the normal surveillance period in the areas of the district that are currently being enforced is 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, or a period of 84 hours, and noting the normal working week, *on average* there are only about 10 or 11 on duty at any one time to cover those areas under surveillance which are primarily our three main town centres. It will require more than 30 CEOs to enforce the rules across the whole district and provide an ‘on demand’ out of hours service (similar to Environmental Health), even if the daily hours are reduced to 8am to 6pm.

WCC is planning a website giving more information to the public before March 31. Be prepared for a surfeit of acronyms.

Overall, these changes are not draconian, but reasonable and sensible. The new Traffic Management Act that will operate country wide from March 31st generally fits well with our local system of decrim, but there remain some serious issues for residents and pedestrians across the district.

Archie Pitts

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New members:

We welcome James & Joyce Beasley, and Jonathan Dally as members.

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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.

EVENTS TO JULY 2008

Baron Ash and Packwood House

Mike Miles, 13 March, 7.45, Oddfellows Hall

Graham Baron Ash [1889-1980] was the son and grandson of very successful Birmingham factory owners, whose activities provided the wealth that enabled him to refurbish Packwood House near Lapworth. Acquired by his father in 1904, the house became Baron's property in 1925 and he set out to completely rebuild it in the Tudor style, using material salvaged from properties from all over the Midlands.

Handing Packwood House to the National Trust in 1941, Baron went to live in Suffolk, where he rebuilt a 14th century castle as his new home.

His reason for the work he ordered at Packwood is summed up in his own words "I am rescuing what I can from other places and preserving it here. I do this as an antidote to the decay and demolition of so many old houses all over the country".

Leigh Family and Stoneleigh Abbey (Joint meeting with Warwick Society)

Mairi MacDonald, 10 April, 7.45, Oddfellows Hall

The Leighs of Stoneleigh Abbey are a classic example of the rising middle class who profited from Reformation. Sir Thomas Leigh, a successful London mercer, acquired extensive former monastic estates in Warwickshire and Gloucestershire and his descendants rose through the ranks becoming first baronets and later, during the Civil Wars, peers. They were never major players on the national scene, but at a local level they dominated the life of the county for 350 years and included among their number the worthy, rogues and the insane.

Joint Party with CLARA at North Hall, Cultural Quarter, Spencer Street, 25 April, 7.30 to 10.00pm

Leamington Printed Collectibles, 8 May, Oddfellows Hall

After our AGM (which starts at 7.30), Jo Clark will talk about how we throw away newspaper, magazines and other printed items without a second thought. Jo, a member of the Society, has been collecting for over 25 years and he will show us examples from his extensive Leamington collection of newspapers, guide books, postcards and other printed items. He will also talk about his solution to filing and storing the different shapes and sizes of the items and their use and value as nostalgic collectibles.

Visit to gardens of Doreen Whitehead at 70 Northumberland Road on Saturday, 21 June, 5.30 to 7.30pm

Doreen, a member of our Society, is opening her beautiful gardens to us again. These are in a series – herbaceous garden, fish pond with Koi carp, bamboo garden, Japanese garden and others.

There will be an entry charge of £4 to include wine, soft drinks and light refreshments. All surplus will go to Doreen's choice of charity: Cancer Research UK.

Leamington Society Awards for 2008: Certificates presented by the Mayor of Leamington; the Bill Gibbons trophy presented by Ian Baxter, Chiltern Railways. Town Hall, 10 July, 7.15 for 7.30