

“Geographing” Leamington Spa

In the last newsletter Archie Pitts kindly mentioned a website showing my collection of photographs of Leamington Spa and surrounding area. Although the link does work, to get the best view I recommend visiting www.geograph.org.uk, this being the website to which they were originally submitted. This will show you not only the pictures but also a short description with date and location at which they were taken.

The “Geograph” website is based on the 1 kilometre square grid reference system used by the Ordnance Survey maps. The objective is to collect at least one geographically representative photographs and information for every (grid) square kilometre of Great Britain and Ireland. That amounts to a total of over 330,000 squares, and in the 4 years the site has been running it has now reached some 75% of that total. This is pretty impressive when you consider the vast open areas of fields, moorland and mountains in our Sceptred Isle.

The project caught my imagination shortly after it started and I resolved to make sure that Leamington Spa and the surrounding area were well represented. If you search the website for Leamington (just enter the town name, or even your postcode, in the “Search” box on the home page”) you will see a selection of the pictures. Just click on the relevant thumbnails to see larger version or alternatively use the “display” box at the top of the search results page to view as “slideshow – full-size”. Another useful way of accessing the pictures in the website includes clicking on the map of the UK and progressively zooming in to the area of interest.

I first started contributing to the website in its early days and ended up expanding my coverage for quite an area around Leamington. It proved to be a most enjoyable, interesting and at times addictive exercise, literally exploring every square kilometre! I found myself visiting villages, byways, footpaths and assorted landmarks that I'd been passing for decades without even realising they were there. You'll also find some “recent historical” pictures on the site, including the heavy snow in December 1990 and the floods of Easter 1998. Incidentally, some of the captions are now slightly out of date – I must get around to updating them however useful suggestions will be gratefully accepted (just click on the relevant “contact the contributor” link).

One of the features of the website is that copyright licensing conditions allow others to use the photographs without payment as long as they properly attribute the source. This is how the pictures have come to appear on the website Archie mentioned, as well as a wide range of sites, such as search engine for house buyers (<http://www.nestoria.co.uk>) to one simply dedicated to church cats! (<http://www.purr-n-fur.org.uk/featuring/church02.html>). It's quite rewarding to come across them, sometimes almost by accident, when browsing the web.

I've also received many comments about the pictures, literally from around the world – probably the furthest being from the outback of Australia from a gentleman who recognised an old station in one of my pictures at which his grandfather had been the stationmaster. Not surprisingly however the majority of enquiries are from people tracing their family history or old friends and neighbours. Some of the more unusual include a couple of requests to book village halls shown in my pictures, and probably the most peculiar was from someone wanting to book Tantara Lodge (at Stoneleigh) for a wedding reception the following weekend!

www.geograph.org.uk is a non-commercial website and to date about 8,200 people have provided over 1 million photographs of Great Britain and Ireland. The site is sponsored by the Ordnance Survey who place great emphasis on its educational and research value. Anyone can participate; all you need is a digital camera and to know where you are. It is not a “photography” website and the main objective is to show the geography of the country. So, do join in and help make Leamington Spa one of the best illustrated areas in the project.

David Stowell

Chairman

Archie Pitts
4 LeamTerrace
CV31 1BB 885532

Vice Chairmen

Paul Edwards
55 Leam Terrace
CV31 1DG 423725

Robin Richmond
38 Leam Terrace
CV31 1BQ 335952

Hon. Secretary

Robin Adams
21 St Marks Road
CV32 6DL 426616

Hon. Treasurer & Membership Secretary

Marianne Pitts
4 Leam Terrace
CV31 1BB 885532

Planning Representative

Paul Edwards
423725

Other Committee Members

Richard Ashworth 316703
Margaret Begg 423822
Ruth Bennion 421862
Gordon Fyfe 312150
Margaret Watkins 425733

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

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undertook the work with sketchy information from old photographs, and to the stonemason Mark Rawlins who could work from her careful drawings. They produced a faithful and beautiful replica in bath stone. We are sure that it would have met with John's hearty approval.

Warwick District Council, Leamington Town Council, the Leamington Society, CLARA, friends and family all contributed to the cost. The RLSBCT has produced a leaflet on the history of this sundial, sundials in general and how to read them. The leaflet is available in the lobby of the glass house in Jephson Gardens.

Judy Ross

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Leamington History Group

The Leamington History Group is the new name for a group first formed in 2005 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Initially based at Bath Place Community Venture, the group now functions as a self-governing local history society with a permanent base in the South Lodge, Jephson Gardens. We currently have about thirty members and meet at South Lodge on the fourth Monday of each month to hear a talk on some aspect of local or social history.

Our members are currently researching for a second book on aspects of Leamington history. Our first publication *People & Places* was sponsored by National Grid and is available from the Tourist Information Centre in the Royal Pump Rooms, price £5.

Our database of old photographs and engravings of Leamington is constantly expanding and we are keen to add to this. Some of this material has been featured in exhibitions in the County Museum and many of the pictures can be seen on our website at www.bathplace.org/projects.

We are currently involved in projects with Leamington Museum and the Leicester University Media Archive for Central England and we have access to IT and sound recording equipment. If you think you may be interested to join us please contact me (the Secretary) – on 01926 430996 or at alangriffin@fastnet.co.uk.

Alan Griffin

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New members

We welcome to the Society

- Pablo and Alicia Mason
- Robin Stott
- Professor John & Michele Miller
- Mr. Alan Wilkinson and Ms Johanna Crozier
- Ros and Andrew Parkes
- Peter and Edwina Lightfoot