









Book illustrations, print making (he made prints for the Royal Academy Graphics collection at Curwen Studio in 1984), and murals feature considerably in his oeuvre, but he is notably a water colourist. He was a Saunders Waterford Prize-winner in 1981, and won an award in the Laing Competition in 1992 and featured in the March 1997 edition of Artist and Illustrators magazine. Michael contributed a chapter to 'Landscapes in Watercolour' by Theodora Philcox published by AVA Switzerland in 2002. He is represented in the permanent collections of the Herbert Gallery and Leamington Art Gallery.

**Carey Moon, *The Gallery Upstairs, Henley-in-Arden***

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***“Renewable Energy from the Leam” or “In the steps of William Louis de Normanville”***

In a successful joint talk with the Warwick Industrial Archaeology Society, Bernard Perkins and Matthew Rhodes (of the Environmental Consultancy, Encraft) explored the past and future of generating energy from the River Leam.



Mill Bridge

David Stowell

Bernard told us about the history of the river as a source of energy since well before the Domesday Book, up to the previous century, with much reference made to Janet Storrie’s research on William de Normanville, the town’s borough engineer. In 1899 de Normanville produced a plan to replace expensive coal by using the Leam’s waterpower to pump drinking water up to the reservoir on Campion Hills and to stock the summer swimming baths. The turbine and pumps (at the suspension bridge next to Jephson Gardens) were delivered to the town in 1902-03 for £335; the river had to be deflected for their installation.

The waterworks opened on February 23, 1903 with a grand ceremony, reported in the current Leamington Courier. Original paperwork for the de Normanville scheme is believed to be still in the archives of Gilkes of Kendal.

Matthew then described plans by Encraft to restore the use of the Leam, this time to generate electricity inside the existing bridge abutments where the chambers and sluices built by de Normanville have survived – but there is none of the original machinery left. He explained the difficult issues that have had to be addressed – not all of which would have been familiar to de Normanville: fish protection, flood defences, leisure use and environmental, as well as variable water flow and financing.

As the river flow is very variable, there will be two turbines, both active for 20% of the year, one for another 20% and neither for the drier seasons of the year (March-September). The estimated output for a year is 110 Megawatt-hours (enough for 30 households) so it is not a big project. As the river is prone to flooding the electric chambers must be made waterproof.

Agencies to be consulted include the Environment Agency, WCC and WDC, the Countryside Commission, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Trent, angling clubs, local residents and so on and so forth. Grants have been applied for from Advantage West Midlands and Natural England to cover the estimated £235,000 cost. If these applications are successful the payback period would be very short; even without the grants, payback is 10-15 years and the system should last 50-100 years.

This could be an excellent scheme and we hope it succeeds.

***Marianne Pitts, with help from Mike Hurn of WIAS***

## **The Courier – Past and Present**

Martin Lawson, editor of the Courier, talked to the Warwick and Leamington Societies about the history of the paper and its prospects. Published since 1828, Martin showed us old copies including one printed in gold on white paper (barely readable) for a celebratory royal event in the times of Queen Victoria. He told us how he had ordered the reprinting of a whole issue in the middle of the night to capture a breaking story, in the race to get the news out before the competitors, at huge expense – almost losing his job.

As to the future, Martin said hard-copy press is under serious threat, especially local papers, with growing competition from instantaneous news websites, email and social networking sites, combined with reduction of revenue from advertising, which is also going on-line. This leads to fewer field reporters. Martin told us how the format of papers is changing with more User Generated Content (UGC), now that we all have digital cameras and email, reducing the need for professional reporters and cameramen. He was clear that local newspapers have to change to survive.

In the vote of thanks, James MacKay complimented Martin on his interesting, lively and thought-provoking talk, while regretting the emphasis of the Courier on Leamington Spa at the expense of its important and historic neighbour.

Martin has been a newspaper man all his life, with long service to the Courier and is to retire soon. His editorship will be a hard act to follow.

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## **What is to become of the Spa Centre?**

Antony Flint, the new manager of the Spa Centre, spoke to us at the end of our very busy AGM. He has been given two years and some money to try to turn it into a more profitable / less expensive asset for the town. As he pointed out, no arts facility in this country can survive without subsidy, private or public or both. Paradoxically, the *shock-horror* headlines about closure of the building immediately after his appointment have helped – no one involved with the Spa Centre can deny the need for change.

Coming from the revived Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and as a marketing man, Antony has the benefit of an outsider's view. The Spa Centre is used by all and sundry: the Salvation Army, schools' drama, blood transfusions, the mid Warwickshire Association of the National Trust, ... . It is busy every day and employs only around twelve permanent staff. Our limited experience – the Whittle Talk in October 2008 – showed that they are skilled and helpful though the technology for printing tickets created a long queue outside (lucky it was not raining). The Spa Centre's problems are both physical and managerial: the building is shabby and the seats are uncomfortable or even broken; the theatrical repertoire has limited appeal to many of Leamington's richer and better educated citizens, who travel to Birmingham, Coventry, Stratford and the Warwick Arts Centre for their entertainment. It is sometimes difficult to discover what is on at the cinema, which is treated as a separate building, even though it is part of the whole. Drinks and catering, an important part of theatre income, is in need of review.

Antony proposes to clean and refurbish the building and furniture as far as his budget will allow and arrange a new programme with longer runs of more serious drama as part of a more balanced offering. The installation of a satellite dish may enable him to stage relays of Metropolitan Opera and National Theatre productions, which have been so successful in Warwick Arts Centre and Stratford. His new programme starts this autumn, with wide publicity.

We wish him luck and give him our full support.

*Marianne Pitts*

**Proposals for Ford Foundry site**

Trilogy Developments, who have purchased the old Ford Foundry site in Leamington, have announced plans for an architectural competition for the new building for this abandoned ugly corner site. This is a core location for everyone coming to the town along Europa Way. Let us hope they transform a depressing entrance to our town into something uplifting.

The international architectural firm BDP is overseeing the project; their website shows the variety of major projects in which they have had a lead role; see [www.bdp.com](http://www.bdp.com)

Architectural entries (and later the winner) for the competition will appear on the Trilogy website at [www.trilogydevelopments.com](http://www.trilogydevelopments.com)

Trilogy will also be making a presentation to us on their plans in the first week of September.

**Archie Pitts**

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**Summer outing to Boughton House, Thursday July 1st 2010**

Boughton House, near Kettering in Northamptonshire, was built at the end of the seventeenth century by the English ambassador to France; modelled on Versailles, it is sometimes referred to as the “English Versailles”. Boughton House is the private property of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry. It has only been open to the public for a few years, and then only for relatively short periods of the year.



Walled gardens at Boughton

As it was not the principal residence of the family, the house has suffered little alteration in three centuries. It contains a superb collection

of paintings, tapestries, furniture and porcelain, which requires a guided tour. The art collection includes 40 van Dyck sketches, a Goya, a Murillo and two portraits by Peter Lely.

Around the house there are acres of fine parkland including lawns, lakes, waterways and woods, some of which are 300 years old. The park has being restored to its former glory and has been featured in recent gardening magazines and Country Life. There is also a walled kitchen garden with a large herbaceous border which should be in full bloom when we visit.

Lunch in the Stable Restaurant has to be booked in advance though you can picnic in the garden if you wish. The lunch will be a cold buffet with ham, chicken, salmon, a variety of salads, bread and includes tea or coffee. The food is excellent.

The cost of travel, coffee / tea on arrival with home-made biscuits and the guided tour of the house will be £28, with an additional £10 for lunch.

*Book with the enclosed flyer as soon as possible.*

See their website [www.boughtonhouse.org.uk](http://www.boughtonhouse.org.uk)

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