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# The Leamington Society Newsletter

May 2011

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

After a year as chairman, a good moment to reflect on the last twelve months. I hope those who came to the recent AGM will bear with me in some repetition. But first, my thanks for the support of the committee, also for the efforts of many individual members, not least the team who distribute this newsletter.

The Clarendon Arcade application, to build on Chandos Street car park plus several surrounding streets, continues to loom ominously over the town. In previous newsletters and in the local press the arguments have been well rehearsed; the Society has lodged strong objections on various grounds and with the benefit of expert advice. It remains uncertain how long it may be before this finally reaches the Planning Committee. But in view of the District Council's long involvement with the scheme, it will not be easy to refuse the application.

So far, so negative. But on other matters the story is much more positive. Last June the Awards Evening was well attended and recognised a very diverse range of high quality building and renovation in the town, with a good report in The Courier. The Friends of Leamington Station continue their thriving relationship with Chiltern Rail and the refurbished waiting rooms are now looking splendid. Meantime the Friends of the Pump Room gardens are within sight of the finishing line, with a contract for the reinstatement of the Linden Arches.

On the planning front also, there are some welcome signs. Proposals for the old Ford Foundry site, by Trilogy Developments, were generally well received although there must be genuine concern about whether the later phases will necessarily materialize as projected. Finally, and most welcome, is the prospect of renewed life for the Regency Arcade. Premier Inns' recent application to adapt the interior for a hotel could soon bring a considerable boost to the Lower Parade.

**Richard Ashworth**

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## David Lewis picture

This vibrant watercolour painting, by Leamington Society member David Lewis, is available as a Signed Limited Edition Print from Gallery 150 (in Regent's Court) at £35 each. This print is a real bargain – the original recently sold for £750.

The proceeds will be donated to the restoration of the Linden Arches in the Pump Room Gardens.

### *Dates for your Diary*

*The new programme starts with a talk  
by*

*John Lowry on Admiral Popham,*

*September 14th, 7.30*

*Pump Room Annexe*

*The full programme will be published  
with the August Newsletter*



## Now Waitrose want to come to town – some questions

How many supermarkets do we need in Leamington?

In Leamington or right next to it, there are: Sainsbury's, Asda, small and large Tescos, Lidl, Cooperative, Costcutters, and an Aldi has just been approved. There are proposals for Morrison's on the Ford Foundry site, a small Waitrose or other food shop on the ground floor of a potential Regency Arcade Hotel and now a bid for a big Waitrose on the Fire Station site. Unless we are all competing in an obesity race, the competition may drive out the excellent small shops that serve us so well: Aubrey Allan, Richard Clark, the Regency Butcher and Fishmonger, Country Bumpkin, as well as various bakeries.

The news that the Fire Service site was available for redevelopment was announced together with the Waitrose's bid. How come John Lewis knew about this possibility before local councillors? Well before, as the plans were ready for exhibition almost immediately.

Do we need so many food shops? Wouldn't housing be better and quieter? Local residents would exchange the racket of fire engines for the persistent traffic from both customers and suppliers of Waitrose.

The Fire Station is on a prime site to tempt housing developers. Judging from the success of Newbold Terrace, there is demand for quality housing in the town and here is an opportunity for a modern equivalent to Lansdowne Terrace or Clarendon Square. The pressing requirement for social housing does not have to lead to an ugly, overcrowded site. There are good architects in town. Why not use them?

From another angle: how come Waitrose thinks the Fire Station site of 1¼ acres worth developing (with all the expense of an underground car-park) whereas Wilson Bowden insists that the Chandos Street car-park (1 acre) is not commercially viable? WB requires more than *three* times that area for their development, with a sweetener of nominal rent for the big "landmark anchor store". Waitrose and Wilson Bowden take very different views of what is potentially profitable: who is right?

Town, District and County planners and councillors should have strategies for the town as a whole, so that applications are not dealt with on an individual basis but in an integrated fashion, considering the welfare of the town as a whole. When unsuccessful businesses fail, this can mean years of dereliction before new trades move in. This is evident in Old Town, Regency Arcade and at the bottom of The Parade. Brand new buildings that never have tenants are even more depressing and this is likely to happen on the Chandos Street development due to the current economic climate combined with the permanent change in shopping habits. What is the point of planners if they do not plan?



View from Dale Street



View from Grove Street

Courtesy Waitrose and Deeley Properties



















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**Newsletter Distribution**

Jo Clark

*The Leamington Society is a registered charity. It is a member of 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.*

**Blue plaques, June 2011**

Two blue plaques will be unveiled on Friday 17th June. The first commemorates Norman Painting (1924 - 2009), who for 50 years played Phil Archer in the daily Radio 4 programme of episodes about the life in rural Ambridge. Painting was a strong believer in the importance of trees (and was Vice President of the Tree Council). He was a loyal supporter of Royal Leamington Spa and rallied to help the Leamington Society and CLARA when they incurred costs of £10,000 in the Regent Hotel case against WDC in 2003.

The second plaque will commemorate Robert Simpson (1921 – 1997). Of the composers of the second half of the last century Simpson was one of the most powerful, employing traditional forms (11 symphonies, 15 quartets), but in his own way, and intellectually and emotionally not unlike the more unsparing works of Beethoven and Sibelius.

Members of the Society are welcome at both unveilings. The first to Norman Painting at 28 Grove Street at 3.30, then at 21 Rosefield Street at 4 pm, followed by tea at the Town Hall. RSVP Town Clerk, Robert Nash, 01926 450906, [RNash@towncouncil.spacomputers.com](mailto:RNash@towncouncil.spacomputers.com)

At 7.30 in the evening, at the Royal Spa Centre, the Coull quartet will play Simpson's 7th string quartet and quartets by Haydn and Beethoven. Tickets from the Spa Centre, £12.50.

**Robin Taylor**

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**New members**

We welcome to the Society

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Graham & Marian White | Geoffrey Nicholls       |
| Matt Western          | Nora Connolly           |
| Paul & Ann Akerman    | Rod and Lorraine Harvey |
| Jack & Barbara Ingram |                         |

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**Subscriptions**

***If you do not pay by Standing Order, and have yet to pay this year (which starts April 1st) please pay now – £7 for a single person and £10 for a household.***