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# The Leamington Society Newsletter

**November 2012**

## **Chairman's Notes**

### Old Library Building

The Planning Committee recently had to determine the fate of this notable listed building. In the event the application to convert it to flats was approved almost unanimously, despite strong objections. The Leamington Society supported the proposal, not only because of TAG's excellent previous work in the town. It had become obvious that even though Bath Place Community Venture had been glad of the temporary home, they were simply unable to raise funds to buy the property, let alone take on the hugely expensive task of renovation – to deal for example with extensive dry rot. The resulting flats will not be cheap, but will add usefully to the residential stock within the town. Warwickshire College can proceed with developing its main campus, the better to provide vital training for youth employment. For BPCV it has been a bruising experience since the fire at their original Bath Place home. It is to be hoped that both District and County Councils will now provide encouragement and practical help for the future of this community venture.

### Tourist Information

It was not long ago that Leamington's Visitor Information Centre (VIC) at the Pump Rooms, was shut down completely for several months. At the time Marianne Pitts made strong representations. Now she has had further exchanges with the District at the news that the Leamington VIC is to lose much of its budget, as part of a rebalancing of visitor services. The new set-up will comprise a "hub and spoke" in which Warwick Town Council will run the hub office of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) while Leamington will be along one of the spokes. The logic is that Warwick is prominent as a tourist location; meanwhile Leamington is to have a One Stop Shop for WDC services to work in conjunction with the local VIC.

## Talks

*Mediaeval peasant houses in  
Warwickshire*

*Dr Nat Alcock OBE*

*Thursday, December 6th, 7.30*

ChristChurch,

Priory Terrace, CV31 1BA

*The Smallpeice Trust and British  
Manufacture*

**Chris White MP and Dr Andrew Cave**

**Tuesday, January 8th, 7.30**

**Dormer Place Conference Centre**

**Joint meeting with Literary Society**

*Artists of 1913: the Camden Group and  
their successors*

**Graham White**

**Tuesday, February 12th 2013, 7.30**

**Dormer Place Conference Centre**

**Filming off the beaten track**

**Richard Ashworth**

**Wednesday, March 6th, 7.30**

ChristChurch,

Priory Terrace, CV31 1BA

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*Great Fire of Warwick*

**Gillian White**

**January 15th 2013, 7.30**

**Lord Leicester Hospital, Warwick**









learnt that the station gardens contributed to Leamington winning a gold award in 2012. The judges' report said

- “The judges were very impressed with the glorious herbaceous borders, buzzing with an abundance of insect life
- “Lush and well maintained, the lawn was at its best
- “Though difficult to plant the broad sloping borders are now showing their magnificent maturity.”

Murals in underpass. Sixteen 8' x 4' murals now brighten and adorn the underpass at Leamington Station. These are the result of a collaborative project involving WDC, Network Rail and Warwickshire Youth Justice Service. The painting was done by young persons on community service



Anthony Ashley with one of the murals in underpass

Roger Charters

orders under the guidance of local artist Anthony Ashley experienced in directing this type of project.

The 16 murals portray significant aspects of or events in the history of Leamington – like the birth of lawn tennis, the e-type Jaguar, the Range Rover, Brunel and GWR station, Queen Victoria and the Regent Hotel.

The underpass has been cleaned, repainted and generally improved. All-in-all the outcome has been much praised by regular users of the area as a great improvement as

well as a successful joint effort.

Annual Remembrance Service. The Friends, with Chiltern Railways, organised their eighth annual Remembrance Service on November 9th, with wreaths laid by the Mayor of Leamington, the Chairman of Warwick District Council, the British Legion and by representatives of the rail industry. The service was officiated by Rev Christopher Wilson of All Saints and Railway Chaplain Rafiq Thapar and guided by our new (joint) president Ian Baxter.

Passenger numbers at the Station. In the year 2010-11 passenger numbers at Leamington Station passed the two million mark, up 5% from the previous year. These are audited figures from the Office of Rail Regulator. Most of these passengers are starting or finishing their journeys at Leamington, with a small proportion changing trains here.

Since the introduction last autumn of the new Chiltern service, known as Evergreen 3, which reduced journey time from Moor Street to Marylebone by 20 minutes, passenger numbers have increased by 25%.

Talbot family. Our member Martin Talbot, fresh back from a year-long journey around the world with his wife Marianne and their two children, has returned to Chiltern Railways as head of health, safety and quality of delivery of their service – which all of us in Leamington appreciate. While it is





business – as is the KP Oriental Shop opposite, run by Chinese Indonesians and selling frozen food, sauces and spices from the Far East: Thailand, Korea, China and Indonesia. As far as I know, unique in Warwick District.



Indonesian food supermarket, High Street

Further along Clemens Street I turned left to see LOOT – a shop in one of the converted railway arches. This stocks second hand clothes which have urban edge cool appeal to the younger generation. The same feel of bare walls was added to by the ‘soul groove’ music and the heating supplied by a large orange gas cylinder fuelling a hot air blower. Sweetly in contrast the till was decorated with plastic jewels and manned by a delightful, charming assistant.

In Clemens Street is Krowka, a busy Polish grocer. The interior was packed with a fresh delivery of goods from Poland. The shelves were crammed with goods, some familiar but others difficult to identify, with just enough room to move around. In my memory it seemed like an old village shop. The shop assistant and I couldn’t find a joint language but we did a lot of smiling.

Across the street is Tuga, a Portuguese Delicatessen. Gazing into the freezer I was puzzled by the names on the packets but soon conversation flowed with the charming and very dignified proprietors. They were proud of their boxes of huge dried salt cod. This large shop seemed almost empty after the Polish village shop but it had space for tables to serve refreshments. There were familiar cereal packets but the flavours are subtly different. A bargain I spotted was 69p for 1 kg of sea salt: definitely the cheapest in Leamington.

On the same side is the Co-op with its excellent car park and full range of the usual supermarket goods but including several up-market items. Through the car park is PlumbSave, a kitchen and bathroom supply shop where in the past I have received excellent service.

An interesting building is the Grand Union restaurant where they advertise a Melody Lounge every Friday evening.

My last stop was the vitamins shop. I was puzzled. Vitamins are usually measured in milligrams so why these huge containers more than a gallon in size? Posters of men with enormous glistening muscular frames decorated the walls. A very helpful manager explained that these were mainly sports supplements for athletes. Some would help to keep joints supple; others help with brain activity and more oxygen in the blood. Since the Olympics there have been more cyclists and I have been struck recently by the number of running clubs in Leamington.

Apart from the Co-op, Costcutter and Iceland there are no chains – all shops are small, offering great personal service. The range of different interests and nationalities is amazing – this is Leamington Spa’s Soho. There are many excellent shops I haven’t visited: how could I have left out Frettons the motor bike shop? Prices are competitive and it is not far to go.

The Old Town Portas team has something worthwhile to build upon.

**Ruth Bennion**

**Grace, Space, Pace: Sir John Egan speaking about reviving Jaguar in the 80s**

“Grace, Space, Pace” was the unforgettable theme of Jaguar’s advertisements of the 50s, 60s and 70s. It built on the beauty of the XK120, the Mk2 and the E Type, and winning at Le Mans. But by the



John Egan speaking to Leamington Society

early 1980s the company had lost its way until Sir John Egan led its rebirth, including further wins at Le Mans, and leading to its purchase by Ford in 1990. Readers will be aware of the latest flowering as part of Jaguar Land Rover under the ownership of Tata Motors of India.

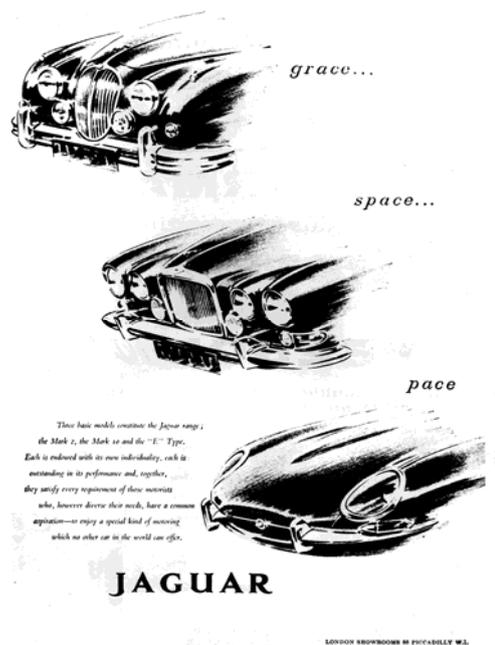
In September the Leamington Society was privileged to host Sir John Egan, and he treated us to a tour de force of the times – *Space* – far beyond the boundaries of the car plants, from dealings with government ministers, through Sir Michael Edwards, Sir William Lyons, Margaret Thatcher, an art gallery owner, Texan car dealers, all the way to line workers at the plant and a supervisor dealing with impossible variation in windscreen fitting. His *Pace* was relentless, minimal notes serving to

support a full and coherent story that, as he said at the start, had to be right because many of his colleagues of the time had made the trip to hear it. And, as those of us who had seen him before anticipated, his *Grace* was always evident, a commitment to our country, to proper work, proper workers and to those who are willing to put their effort and skills to the task.

This would make a great TV series, surely leading to the conclusion that when properly led, we in Britain really can make things competitively in large volumes. And that the lessons are universal, as applicable to a hospital, a government department or utility as to a car plant. What to pick out of such rich material?

As a young manager he experienced the disastrous agglomeration of British Leyland from many separate car companies. He saw at the time it would not work, and anyone today considering an organisational merger should beware the rhetoric of its advocates and read about BL, or better still find someone who remembers and listen well to them. Mergers don’t always fail, but there’s no excuse for not learning from them when they do.

On being given the seemingly impossible task of running Jaguar in 1980 (then part of BL, and which no other company wanted to buy at any price), he took it on with remarkable success. In 1980 faults per new car were running at an average of 18 per vehicle in the first year (in 2011, according to the



Courtesy of Jaguar Heritage

JD Powers survey they are around 1 per vehicle in the third year of ownership). This was several times more than competitors, as was the number of employees per car produced. Within three years, and with all manner of severe decisions to be made and the consequences seen through, the reputation and trading position had been transformed, leading to a successful privatisation (a kind of pathfinder for BT). By the end of the decade they had launched new models, won Le Mans, and Ford approached to buy them for over a £1bn, an offer that could not be refused. From being worth nothing ten years before.

Throughout the 80s, whilst Sir John inevitably had a very high political and public profile, it's arguable that his influence on managers was at least as important in the long term. Amidst the rhetoric of aggression from so many bosses he stood out as a leader you wanted to be associated with. For instance:

- He personally led the efforts to reform the relations with shop-floor workers. Initially this involved getting them back to work during strikes about pay differentials, later it required considerable redundancies. Achieving this whilst improving the work culture was critical to all that has followed.
- As a boss he demanded that his company worked with its suppliers, and contributed his company's skills to do so – most faults came from components.
- He personally engaged with the dealers, especially in the US.
- He demanded that leaders lead in the relations with their staff, at a time when "Personnel" had been allowed to get in the way.

All this he made clear at the time in conferences, interviews and so on. He also paid tribute, then and now, to his colleagues who made it all happen. For those of us making our way in big companies he was an inspirational leader in comparison with the bosses we so often encountered – either cautious bureaucrats or bullies. You could want to be like John Egan.

One theme was his active, informed, advocacy of what was then becoming to be called Total Quality Management (TQM). Its culture and methodologies lie at the heart of the spectacular quality and financial performance of the Japanese makes. Sir John discovered Dr. W Edwards Deming, then in his eighties, whose approach underlies effective TQM, and who he referred to as the "quality guru of the century". He brought Deming's approach to bear at Jaguar with great effect. (More about Dr Deming at [www.deming.org](http://www.deming.org)). Many readers will have encountered TQM or one of its many derivatives, but it's all too rare for it to be led properly. Sir John demonstrated that it was top management's job to lead this effort, and many (including this writer) who heard that message from him 25 years ago were inspired to do just that.

Sir John also responded to many questions about advertising, politics, industrial relations, education policy, Le Mans racing. Truly a remarkable work and life experience. He has later been Chairman of BAA, Severn Trent and more and is currently Chancellor of Coventry University.

He said that, if he were to be given a new job now he would start with understanding what it takes to satisfy the customer, establish the processes to be able to do that, and to involve all the people in doing so. Three pieces of common sense, but all too rare in fact.

In conclusion, Sir John paid tribute to the commitment shown to Jaguar by Tata Motors, a family firm intending to own the company permanently, and we in the West Midlands have cause to be thankful for their arrival here. But let us not forget that without John Egan's personality, leadership and





