

**A History of**  
**The LEDBURY and DISTRICT SOCIETY**

*Ledbury and District Society*



Butcher Row House Museum  
also Buryage Hall



**'Fox Lane' wall plaque**

One of many wall plaques provided by the  
Ledbury and District Society

### Objectives of the Society

To stimulate public interest, to promote high standards of planning and architecture and to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic, natural or public interest in the area of benefit.

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## Founding of the Society

The Ledbury and District Society came into being as a result of the meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1973 at the Market Theatre called by the Ledbury Residents' Association. This Association had been formed on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1970 to fight County Council proposals for an Inner Relief Road to bypass Upper Cross. It was to go from Mabels Fur-long through New Street to Bye Street and on towards the Hereford Road, via The Knapp in The Homend. There followed an impressive amount of work and meetings on the subject with correspondence to the MP, councillors and to firms using Ledbury's roads. Following the Ledbury Traffic Study in 1973 there was a public meeting of the Association at which it was agreed: "Outer Bypass, or Nothing". Prime movers throughout this time were Messrs. Plenderleith, Sharpe-Neal, and Paice.

The Society was formed to broaden the aims of the Residents' Association to include all planning decisions, building as well as traffic, and indeed anything affecting the well-being of the town and neighbourhood. The inaugural meeting was held on December 11<sup>th</sup> 1973 in St. Katharine's Hall, when officers were elected and a social programme of winter lectures was initiated. Major Alan Cadbury agreed to be President.

The constitution was drawn up on a model supplied by the national Civic Trust, a non-governmental body to which we are affiliated. When the Society contemplated property-owning, a separate branch, 'The Ledbury Trust', was formed to gain the charitable status that the Society could not claim because of the ratepayers' association proclivities which it had inherited from its predecessor. However this interest was later dropped and so the two bodies, Society and Trust, amalgamated in 1986 purely to ease the administrative work.

# Major Projects

## Butcher Row House

When the Society was well-established, it was decided, under the chairmanship of Philip Sharpe-Neal to take on a major project. Sylvia Robinson, a knowledgeable historian, proposed that we should finance the removal of the Butcher Row relic from the back garden of Number 14 High Street to a place where all could enjoy it. This idea had come originally from Ike Madders, who had inherited his father's deep appreciation of old Ledbury. Ike had been a distinguished figure in the town, invariably wearing his grey Homburg hat, carrying a cane and able to quote a few lines of poetry on any subject.

The owners, Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Hatton, had inherited the house from their father Mr. Fortnam, the pharmacist, and generously gave the building to the town in the care of our Society. Fortunately there was a suitable space in Church Lane, where the former Congregational Church had erected a corrugated iron hut for their Sunday School.

The house had been one of a row of fifteen shops standing in the middle of the High Street, many of them butcher's shops, conveniently placed so that perishable meat might be distributed quickly. The owners were bought out over the period 1820-1835 by philanthropic donors, the reasons for this clearance being graphically set out in the original 1820 appeal letter, a copy of which hangs in the museum. Besides the example gifted to the Society, which now houses our Butcher Row House Museum, two other buildings were purchased and re-erected privately. One now stands in Skipp Alley and houses a wicker-work business. The other is believed to have stood behind Barclays Bank, in the Homend.

The Civic Trust, under whose aegis we were formed, sent their architect (free of charge, though we did give him lunch at The Feathers) to evaluate and approve our idea. Following that, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (founded by William Morris) despatched two students to carry out the survey. These were 'Lethaby Scholars', named in honour of the architect, whose work includes the thatched church at Brockhampton.

Fund-raising began in earnest in 1978 with the aid of the invaluable 'Directory of Grant-Making Trusts'. Tony Hobson built a ten-foot high model of the house to grace a carnival float, complete with leatherclad butcher and sonsy maidens. The President and his wife hosted a musical evening at Haffield with Richard Brookes and his quintet playing. Later there was a musical evening at Eastnor Castle with the now-renowned William Boughton conducting the Malvern Choir.

### Ledbury Carnival 1978

Raising funds to relocate and restore the Butcher Row House



### Site for Butcher Row House

Between Church Lane and the former Congregational Chapel.

The Butcher Row House now stands in the area in front of the arched window.

(The arched window is in a side wall of the former Congregation Chapel, which was later restored to become 'The Burgage Hall'.)



In 1979 our chairman, Elisabeth Hervey-Bathurst, was opening Eastnor Castle for the first time on Wednesdays and Thursdays during July and August and invited the Society to profit from serving afternoon teas there, since the village ladies had their hands full with the long-running Sunday teas. A team of about thirty ladies carried this on over ten years and netted £4,000 therefrom. A large quantity of china-ware was purchased for the operation, and the team provided all the sandwiches, cakes and biscuits.

Mrs. Spurgin donated a magnificent hand-made quilt for a raffle, and there were many small money-earners, including a sales table at our monthly meetings.

It took six months, as estimated, to dismantle and re-erect the house (with one third of the timbers needing replacement – green oak cuts like butter –) under the guidance of our architect Michael Peach from Malvern. To avoid future rotting of the timbers the house was positioned on stone blocks. Victorian brick was replaced by a modern version of wattle and daub.

Council Grants	£3,797
Charitable Trusts	£3,050
Newspaper Sale	£4,327
Local Firms	£861
Local Societies	£190
Private individuals	£694
Society fund-raising	£1,703

It was opened in 1979 while still only an embryo museum, partly in response to the curiosity of passers-by. It was officially opened on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1981 by Sir John Cotterell, Chairman of Hereford and Worcester County Council. A representative from the Civic Trust attended the celebration.

Most of the Museum's exhibits have local associations, for example: Clisset chairs (made by a Bosbury chair-maker), a large copper kettle shop-sign from the High Street, an old-fashioned clothes mangle with 'Success' and 'Stevens, Ledbury' embossed on the metal; the six toll-houses record book; and a range of old musical instruments collected by a local family. Most of the Victorian silk dresses – there is only room for one to be on show at a time – came from Eleanor Philpott's tin trunks in her attic; mercifully the dresses were stored without tissue paper, the acid content of which has a deleterious effect on fabric. We were also given the debutante's dress belonging to Miss Charlotte Ballard of Abbey House. 'The Yews', in the Southend, provided the double pump, one spout for well water, the other for rain water. Two further pumps came from the former site of the museum.

There has always been a modest Sales Table, offering plaster models of the Butcher Row House, the photocopied sheets of written information or curiosities, notelets, lavender bags, and more. Tourists like to shop! Our own booklets and Lester Steynor's profile of the Malvern Hills satisfy the more serious as does 'Ledbury, a Medieval Borough', a substantial volume written by historian Joe Hillaby, the Society's President. The drawing of Butcher Row House by Gwenyth Kalmar has been adopted by the Society as its logo.

In the few years when the Carnival ran a parallel 'fringe', the Society put on various shows, a Victorian Wash-day outside, lace-making demonstration, trying-on of armour and hand-set printing for children, and a Guess-What competition.

One Easter holiday the B.B.C.'s 'Blue Peter' programme enlisted participation of Museums in showing a mystery object to be guessed by visiting children. Ours was the ribbed blue glass fire extinguisher – which we did not allow to go on tour afterwards since it is full of carbon tetrachloride - too risky for travelling.

For several years Mrs. Jane Cadbury, wife of the current President of the Society, came in from Bromesberrow to tend the little garden. Since then it has been successively cared for by Diana Merry, Megan Bennett, Sara Nixon, and Marguerite Evans, with Steven Large reorganising the layout in 1998 as a donation to the Society.

It would be impossible to name all the individuals who have shown confidence in the enterprise by giving exhibits, their work, their time, and their skills. The museums is open every day for seven months of the year from 11 am. to 5 pm. with sitters from the Society doing two-hour stints. The rota was managed for about fifteen years by Joy Mallen, and over the last two years has been in the competent hands of Lorna Garnett, who drew up a popular children's quiz. On completion, the youngsters receive a small reward, and one hopes they depart with a happy attitude to museums. Sara Nixon has been in overall charge for the last two years; before that Diana Merry was co-ordinator and Joy Mallen the representative to the Committee of Trustees.

The sub-committee had considered joining the National Association of Museums. Their representatives visited and required us to:

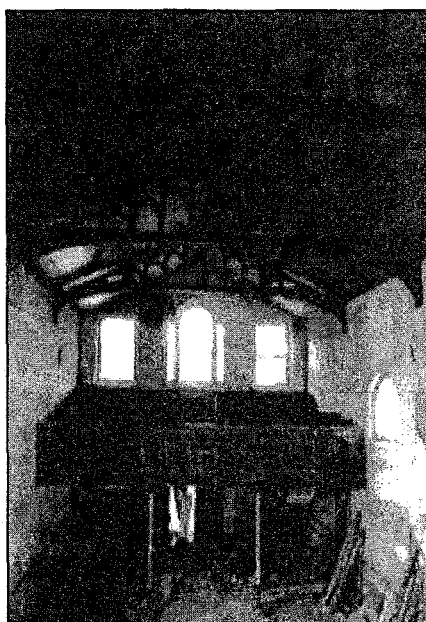
- pay a registration fee, and keep accounts separate from those of the Trust.
- arrange a yearly visit by a paid expert.
- formulate a collecting policy, ie. specialise in one area of our choice, such as costume, photography, or domestic artefacts.

We did not wish to specialise because we find that visitors enjoy the wide variety, so we did not pursue the idea. However, Robin Hill, Hereford and Worcester County Museums Officer, took us under his wing and arranged four-monthly seminars where we received instruction and help. He visited our museum and congratulated the Society on the enterprise. After the separation of the two counties, the Hereford authority also arranged meetings under the direction of Ian Standing.

The new Hereford Council was launched in style at Dinmore Park in April 1998, with brass bands, civic dignitaries, marquees and displays – the full panoply. Butcher Row manned a table holding some of our eye-

catching exhibits with photographs and information about Ledbury. Other museums had taken only printed publicity, so we presented a much more three-dimensional image, even including a few activities for visitors.

Finally, to celebrate the twentieth birthday of the Butcher Row House Museum, Sara Nixon cooked a splendid luncheon, eaten with relish in Burgage Hall by all the museum sitters – a reward for their regular voluntary help.



**Burgage Hall**  
Restoration work in progress

## **Burgage Hall**

In 1985, emboldened by the success of the Butcher Row House project the Society, under the chairmanship of Tony Watts, turned its attention to the very neglected building standing behind the Butcher Row House at its new location in Church Lane.

Attendance at the Congregational Church, dated 1852, had diminished until the building had fallen into disuse some thirty-three years earlier. It had been built at the back of a burgage plot (it has been said that dissenters

chose to keep a low profile) facing down a passage to the High Street.

There were rumours that it might be sold as a carpet warehouse or similar, quite unsuited to Ledbury's famous Church Lane, posters of which are reputed to be best-sellers for promoting English tourism abroad.

In 1984, the Malvern Hills District Council drew up a lease for us, and Ronald Lunt and Richard Hodgkinson cut down the enveloping elder trees as earnest of good intent. A fund-raising committee, comprising these two gentlemen, Bob Walker and secretary Muriel Calder, published a glossy appeal leaflet. They aimed for £40,000, although in fact the total needed came to £50,000.

John Cooper, later to be chairman of the Society, gallantly volunteered to be Clerk of Works and a start was made on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1985, with The Manpower Services Commission providing three untrained young men to gain work experience. They cleared out all the rubble – wall plaster, flooring etc. – then, after ten weeks, trained workers took over at market rates. John Cooper visited twice each day throughout, to assure himself that work was progressing properly.

The 1985 Ledbury Carnival featured a float carrying a large model of Burgage Hall's façade. This was constructed by Steve Glennie-Smith and it carried, appropriately for its date, 1856, two Victorian ladies and a cloaked gentleman. There was a border of newspapers and glass bottles to advertise our fund-raising salvage endeavours.

By the autumn the hall was repaired, waterproof and tidy so the Society wanted to show members and the public what had been going on. It was not yet in a state suitable for a sophisticated 'Topping-Out' ceremony, so they opted instead for a 'Bottoming-In Sausage and Cider Party'. There was no plaster on the walls, and the heating was vestigial, so the guests were advised to wear warm clothes. Floral decorations were placed about. It was all fun.

Nancy Paice, longtime Ledbury librarian, won the naming competition with the apt 'Burgage Hall' title – and then returned her prize money.

A year later we were able to hold our first regular Society meeting in our own hall, in the comfort of our own special upholstered chairs. Many of these, with brass name-plates on the back, were donated as memorials. Bill Caley, who had been Treasurer for seven years, had two named after him. The next year, in recognition of the Society's work, we received a legacy from Mr. Underwood, a Herefordian who had lived and worked in Ledbury.

The committee accomplished the final cleaning while Tom Deane and his son transformed the patio garden by the original entrance to the former Congregational Chapel, ready for the official opening on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1987 by Captain Thomas Dunne, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Hereford and Worcester.

## THE LEDBURY AND DISTRICT SOCIETY TRUST LTD

On the occasion of the Official  
Opening of the

## BURGAGE HALL

The Trustees wish to take this opportunity of sincerely thanking all who have contributed to the successful completion of the project. Their names have been recorded in a Commemorative Book, and we also acknowledge donations from many who wish to remain anonymous.

We believe the Burgage Hall is a building of which Ledbury can be proud



After that we had no excuse but to proceed with lettings. The task of booking these was undertaken by George Deacon, John Cooper (briefly), Harold Pooley, Barbara Pick, then Greta Smith for nine years. New member Mary Cooper took over the job in 2000. The day-to-day running of the Hall fell to Tom Deane then to Charles and Margaret Somers – Charles acting as voluntary caretaker while his wife made Thermos after Thermos of coffee for the lessees. Since 1991, this job and that of unlocking, locking up and overseeing has been in the care of Veslemøy Lunt, who is entering her tenth year of dedication to these tasks. Ever since its opening the Hall has been kept clean and shining by Judith Mitchell. Since lettings began, Burgage Hall programmes have been produced (free of charge) by Sylvia Pick.

The Hall is a popular venue: our lectures always attract great interest. So far we have not had to turn anyone away, but sometimes the capacity of 140 has nearly been filled. Speakers frequently voice their appreciation of the large audience.

## **St. Katharine's Barn**

For many years the Society has taken an interest in the possible restoration of St. Katharine's Barn, which stands at the south-eastern corner of St. Katharine's car park. Part of the barn accommodates our newspaper salvage operation.

The Barn has been steadily deteriorating since our last repair in 1980. The former Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC), which ignored all pleas for help, later admitted that of all their listed buildings, the Barn was the most neglected. Architect Basil Merrick, who took on the Magistrate's Court restoration, had spent a great deal of time making a detailed survey of the barn, and Joe Hillaby highlighted it's importance at our 2000 AGM.

The reason for its bad condition is that when the Midlands Electricity Board (now nPower) sited a substation next to it the ground level was raised, so that ground water ran off onto the horizontal timbers that form the base of the building and rotted them. There is an on-going attempt through Hereford Council to get the MEB to acknowledge their responsibility and to bear the cost of repairing this structure, all of which is complicated by the loss of relevant papers in the transfer from MHDC.

Meanwhile, it stands supported on Acrow props. The Society's regular consulting architect, Ian Stainburn, is now advising us. Mary Winfield and Prue Yorke have adopted this cause and have had site meetings with him and with Mr. Baxter and Mr. Bloxsome, and more recently with Mr. Husband, all of Hereford Council. There has been strong support from President Joe Hillaby, and Mary Cooper's experience as a local authority solicitor is proving very useful.

# Planning and Conservation

The Trust receives copies of all planning applications for the area within which Ledbury is situated. Since the separation of Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 1998 these have come from Hereford for what is designated the Northern Area. Before that date we were under the control of Malvern Hills District Council. In the mid nineteen-seventies their Conservation Officer, Gordon Wood, did a great service to Ledbury by initiating a Conservation Plan for its centre. This included stripping and restoring the Old Grammar School in Church Lane. This is now the Heritage Centre, owned by the Council but staffed by local volunteers. He showed us what could be effected for the benefit of the town by dedication and hard work.

## Local Structure Plans

Before the amalgamation of the two counties in 1974 we sent representatives to Hereford's special meetings to examine their Structure Plan and each of our members studied a separate portfolio, eg. Health, Traffic, Police etc., with subsequent opinions forwarded to the Council.

Likewise the Trust sent representatives to attend the 4-day hearing of the Hereford and Worcester Structure Plan held in Worcester at the Fownes Hotel in 1989.

At the Housing Requirements examination it was significant that, for the allotted 10-year period, the County posited 50,000 new dwellings. The Bromsgrove Civic Society proposed a figure of 30,000, while the House-builders' Federation asserted that 60,000 would be needed. Ben Prince spoke there, opposing the developers' request to site 900 homes at New Mills.

## Observing the process

Area planning meetings have been held in various venues: Malvern, Leominster, Bromyard, Hereford, and in our own Burgage Hall. For many years these have been attended conscientiously by Veslemøy Lunt and, until recently, by Lloyd Evans, who took over from Tony Watts. Although, as observers, they are not allowed to speak, they have learned a great deal about procedure, precedent and regulations that can be put into practice on home ground.

Ledbury Town Council planning meetings are usually attended by a member of our Planning and Conservation sub-committee. At the beginning of the official meeting, members are invited to speak if they so wish.

## Planning Representations

### The station wall, tree preservation, The Southend

The Society's first interventions in 1976 requested that the station wall be repaired to its original Victorian design, and we opposed tree-felling on Oyster Hill. For the latter we were rewarded by a delicious tea-party from Mr. and Mrs. Hegarty of Hope End Hotel – formerly the stables of Elizabeth Barret Browning's childhood home.

We were also successful in 1978 in opposing the demolition of the Toll House in Southend. The intention had been to sacrifice it to road-widening for the entrance to the newly-extended John Masefield High School. Mr. Doran of Gloucester House, the owner, arranged a display in an empty shop window in the High Street, using diagrams and photographs to demonstrate – with bus drivers' visibility etc. – the drawbacks of the plan.

Ledbury rejoices in a rural approach from Gloucester that leads right into the town centre. On the east side of the road is Ledbury Park, erstwhile home of the Biddulph family, declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1959. Permission to build in the Park was refused by the Inspector at a Public Inquiry after publication of the Deposit Local Plan in 1993. The Society has repeatedly opposed applications for developments therein, which have included a caravan park with golf course, and a leisure centre and hospital with car and coach parks.

Some of the Southend boundary wall was in need of repair and the Society managed to get the iron railings renewed rather than the solid brick wall envisaged, which would have blocked from sight the green vista beyond.

Further along the Southend, as it becomes the High Street, stands a small black and white shop building dated 1675. In 1981 this was found to be structurally dangerous and was closed overnight. The Society spoke for a rebuild with scrupulous retention of the façade, which was eventually effected. It must have posed building difficulties, but the result is pleasing.

### Magistrates Court

The main concern during that busy year of 1981 was the threat to the former Magistrates Court, Church Lane, which had been inoperative since 1952, and was to be replaced by sheltered housing, complete with jolly-coloured plastic-fronted balconies, designed by the Malvern Hills District Council's own architect.

There followed a two-day hearing in the nearby oak-panelled council offices, during which member Bob Walker, an architect, and Joe Hillaby, the Society President, eloquently persuaded H.M. Inspector not to allow the appeal against refusal. The property was subsequently converted into six dwellings by the Hereford and Worcester Building Preservation Trust, a charitable body that recirculates its capital to deserving projects. The prison cells at the rear were accepted by the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, Bromsgrove, since they could not be accommodated in Ledbury.

### Somerfield, bore holes, the Bypass

The owners of the newly-built Gateway supermarket (now Somerfield) in New Street were persuaded to paint over yellow gutters and downpipes, despite these being company colours, and to turn off three illuminated signs at night.

An entirely different field engaged our attention when, in 1982, there was a proposal to store nuclear waste in bore-holes near Evesham, and possibly in the Malvern Hills. The Society joined many others in objecting to such a risky neighbour.

The Inner Relief Road came back onto the agenda and the Society spoke against it at a public meeting. The long-awaited Outer Bypass was at last achieved, and has relieved the town of through traffic including most of the heavy lorries. However it brings with it the concomitant disadvantage of applications for development within the perceived new boundary, since the road severed the traditional agricultural boundaries of the Grade II farming land.

### The New Mills development

The original application was for 900 dwellings, but ultimately the number specified was 630. There had been much objection to such large numbers, especially since the town would be exceeding the quota of new dwellings which Hereford and Worcester County Council required it to provide.

After a three-day hearing in the Market House, the Department of the Environment Inspector allowed the appeal against refusal and even suggested that a greater density would be acceptable. In advance of Ledbury Structure Plan's final draft in 1998 the County held a two-day hearing during which the New Mills developers asked for an assurance that their plans would be included. This was agreed, subject to adequate Play Area provision.

### Ledbury Cattle Market and the new Hospital

In 1986 the Ledbury Markets and Fairs Company was purchased by Trencherwood, a development company, who sought planning permission for a development of 38 flats and 10 shops on the cattle market site. Permission was eventually granted – on appeal. However, in 1992, the people of Ledbury, under the leadership of David Gallimore banded together at a special meeting to buy individual shares up to 52% of the total so that the cattle market, an integral part of town life, should not be lost. This market had once been held in the High Street. Cyril Evans commissioned 'SAVE LEDBURY' badges to raise funds.

However, modern selling methods were altering and small town markets were unfortunately no longer deemed viable. In early 2001 work began on development of a two-and three-storey hospital, medical centre and private nursing home, financed by a trust (no shareholders) under the Government's Private Funding Initiative.

There was by no means unanimous approval for this scheme, but most of the shareholders sold because they

feared refusal would ultimately lead to closure of all our valued hospital facilities. The old Cottage Hospital, a gift from the Biddulph family at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was sadly outdated. The Society has applied for listed status for the building as it is worthy of preservation. Ledbury Town Council supports this application.

Despite numerous letters and meetings on the desirability of the new hospital, time was found to carry on with the Society's usual succession of planning applications.

### Glenmoir, and shop signs

Glenmoir, in New Street, was rescued from demolition for commercial purposes, and letters were written about garish shop signs. Some years ago the Planning Department of the former Malvern Hills District Council used to issue a 'Guidelines' leaflet for shop-owners in Conservation Areas, with advice on signs and fascia boards. The Society persuaded an estate agency at the Top Cross to change its customary red fascia board for black and white. Tesco also obliged by refraining from hanging large swags on their Homend railings, confining these to the less obtrusive stretch in Orchard Lane. Other shops have not been so co-operative and one big offender has not even answered our polite letters.

### The Frith, and Conigree

About twelve years ago there was a national drive for privatisation of Forestry properties. Our opposition (along with that of many other bodies both private and public) to the sale of Frith and Conigree woods, was, happily, successful. Citizens of Ledbury will long be able to relish the leafy background to their town, and be assured of public access to the woods.

Incidentally, Forest Enterprise (a division of the Forestry Commission) has now produced a detailed plan for managing the Frith as Ancient Woodland, with a return to the old coppicing system, to ensure a regular income together with regeneration of the woodland. This will commence in 2002. In 2000, the wood was the scene of a guided tour by Dr. Ray (Archaeological Officer, Herefordshire Council) following a talk by him to the Society.

### Chicken farming, tourism

We joined other objectors at planning appeals to hear the public's views on intensive chicken-farming at Hope End and similar turkey-rearing at Eastnor; both were turned down. Apart from the humane and moral aspects of these farming methods, the local disadvantages of odour, pollution and traffic increase must be considered.

In 1995, the former Malvern Hills District Council commissioned the Civic Trust to devise a plan entitled 'A Tourism Initiative', and designed to boost the image of the town. This entailed much discussion, but nothing came of it. However, the Civic Trust representative, David Williams, did remark on the unusually large quantity of work undertaken by volunteers in Ledbury. There had previously been published a 'Ledbury Story', privately produced, which had found no favour with our Society. It had appeared to be aimed solely at increasing and regimenting the tourist flow, without consideration for Ledbury's citizens. Furthermore it had proposed charging an entry fee to our own non-charging museum.

The Midlands Amenities Societies Association asked us to host a seminar in the Burgage Hall. We chose as a title 'Tourism – Servant or Master ?' – an apposite reflection for our town at that time.

### The Committee

Over the years an enormous amount of scrutinising, discussion, letter-writing and meeting has been put in by the Planning and Conservation Group. Chairmen of this important sub-committee have been: Bob Plenderleith, Philip Sharpe-Neal, Tony Watts, Ben Prince, Stuart Mollison, Mary Winfield, and Prue Yorke.

# Campaigns

## The River Leadon

In January 1978 the Severn Trent Water Authority advertised in newspapers from Gloucester to The Wash that it intended to designate certain rivers in that whole area, including the River Leadon from its source to Dymock, to be 'Main Rivers'. This gave them the right to remove all vegetation on each bank to a distance of 25 feet, and to widen and straighten the channel.

Tony Watts was a riparian owner at Dymock and persuaded councillors at the County of Hereford and Worcester to object to this designation. He also wrote to every Nature Trust and County Council in the twelve affected counties – and to other bodies. He joined the Society and gave an illustrated talk. The Society set up a public meeting with Severn Trent in the Market House, which was packed out. All were in sympathy with the objection. Whilst designated status was accorded to the Leadon, strict conditions were laid down which happily addressed our concerns.

Since we had agreed that there was a flooding problem at the bottom of Lower Road, an inspection tour was arranged for officers of the appropriate authorities, local councillors, and members, who walked from Lower Road to Ross Road. Out of one hundred and thirty-five trees listed, forty-six were recommended for felling, and six for pollarding, mostly willow, alder and elm. It was agreed that there should be an oxbow diversion of the river with a small island. A local patrol group was formed to monitor progress and the results have been satisfactory.

It has been reported that in 1947 flood waters reached Victoria Road.

## Upper Hall

Upper Hall had been the family home of Martins, the bankers ('at the Sign of the Grasshopper'), until it was put up for sale in 1919. Bought by Herefordshire County Council, it was the home of Ledbury Grammar School from 1923 until 1978, when the comprehensive system of education was implemented. It then became the Junior Department of the John Masefield High School where, under the headship of Peter Garnett, hundreds of local children were privileged to receive their schooling in this beautiful setting. With the completion in 1991 of extensions to the Mabel's Furlong site, Upper Hall became redundant and consequently, the estate was again for disposal.

An 'Upper Hall Action Group' was formed by Veslemøy Lunt with five Society members who felt very strongly that Upper Hall should stay in public ownership. The Group met fortnightly and, initially, paid expenses from their own pockets. A full meeting of the members was called at which Bob Plenderleith moved two resolutions:

1. The Trust would give every support for the creation at Upper Hall of a centre for educational, cultural, sporting and leisure activities, using the whole site including all the buildings.
2. The Council should delay sale preparations for three months whilst the Trust investigated options.

Peter Garnett published an informative booklet on Upper Hall and gave an illustrated lecture to Society members. The Group worked very hard over four years, exploring every avenue, even eliciting a financial contribution from American descendants of the Martin family, who visited the Hall and spent a day with the Society. Eventually Hereford and Worcester County Council arranged for the estate to be used as a training headquarters for Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade. This had the advantage of keeping the large area of ground as a single entity in public ownership. Unfortunately a local election resulted in a different voting majority; subsequently the budget which had been available to the Fire Service was re-allocated to the provision of nursery education. But the Action Group's labours were not in vain, for their perseverance and publicity had warded off commercial development.

Happily a London buyer, Christopher Johnson, came forward to develop the site. The school gym and all other 20<sup>th</sup> century additions were demolished, and the listed main house refurbished and converted into apartments, the occupants of which now benefit from the spacious surroundings.

As part of the development, four new houses were built on the estate. Malvern Hills District Council had granted planning permission for the houses as a means to finance construction of a public car park on an orchard belonging to the Upper Hall estate. The site in question was near to the Church, and would have been accessed from the Worcester Road. The scheme was tied to a business development plan by the owner of the Feathers Hotel to have dedicated parking spaces within the St. Katharine's car park. The application did not gain approval, but the Upper Hall estate retained permission for the houses.

Peter Garnett contacted Robin Holland-Martin who obligingly photographed old family portraits. This contact was useful to the new owner who was able to have them professionally photographed to supplement his own researches.

## **Miscellaneous activities**

### **Domesday Survey**

In 1984, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings asked the Society for volunteers to help them in their 'Domesday Survey' of old barns. Presumably this was to mark the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986 of the Domesday Book authorised by King William I, one of the earliest planners! Margaret Clarke and Margaret Chapman took on the job of answering a straightforward questionnaire on each barn examined.

### **Cobbles**

Following the installation in 1996 of new water pipes in Church Lane, cobbles had to be relaid – a real jig-saw job which took three workers three months to complete. Inevitably in the trench-digging some of the cobbles had been jettisoned with the mud, so the hunt was on for replacements. These were not available from the County Archaeological Services because their small size makes them a rarity and a Ledbury speciality. Veslemøy Lunt became chief cobbler and could be found poking in people's cellars and scavenging in waste skips to bring the numbers up to scratch. There is an old photograph in a Butcher Row album showing the pavement outside the almshouses completely surfaced in similar cobbles.

### **Services for the Elderly**

In October 1988 Herefordshire Health Authority invited a delegate (Diana Merry) from the Society to attend the monthly meetings of a 'Review of Services for the Elderly'.

In 1990 the Civic Trust invited their Amenity Societies to send a delegate to a weekend conference at Christchurch College, Oxford, entitled 'Vision for the Nineties'. It was a privilege to soak in the atmosphere of this venerable institution and to eat 'in hall' under the painted gaze of past eminent professors. Lectures from a variety of experts - planners, architects, housing officials, and engineers were all very informative.

In other years two of us went to a country house near Wrexham for a similar day seminar, and Veslemøy Lunt, Harry Brazier and Marguerite Evans went to an event in Malmesbury.

# Marking the Millennium

## Victorian Evening

In early 2000 Pam Jukes organised a celebratory Victorian Evening of songs and music-making in the drawing-room style of 100 years before. An entertainment of song and verse was master-minded by Della Robertson with eight talented performers. Burgage Hall was full of happy guests, many of them in appropriate costume, as were the concert party.

## Ledbury 2000, a Photographic Record

The main project was a photographic survey of Ledbury in the Year 2000. Each of a core group of twenty volunteers was allocated a specific subject matter or area of the town to record. Three albums of photographs were assembled — one each for the Society, the town library, and the County records office.

An informative leaflet about the Society was designed by Gwentyth Kalmar (later Pickering), printed on golden yellow card and delivered to all new houses — mainly in Deer Park.

## Publicity

An informative leaflet about the Society was designed by Gwentyth Kalmar (later Pickering), printed on golden card and delivered to all new houses - mainly in the Deer Park. The "Caring for Ledbury" leaflet has recently been updated by one of our trustees, Humphrey Britton-Johnson, and will be distributed to all households in the district during June.

## 1978 - first Newsletter

A regular thrice-yearly newsletter was compiled and churned out laboriously on an old Gestetner duplicator upstairs in the Butcher Row House. Until 1991 this was written by the secretary Diana Merry, subsequently by Gareth Davis, Alan Lloyd, Gillian Mortimer, and Clive Jupp. Stan Wilkin then produced it in the A5 booklet form, and Mary Winfield and Prue Yorke edited some issues before handing on to James Nicoll for the January 2000 and subsequent issues.

Press releases are now undertaken by Roy Haworth who succeeded Pam Jukes in 2000. Pam has taken on the role of Membership Secretary, formerly in the hands of Marguerite Evans, Mary Salmon, Gabrielle Barling.

# Fund-raising

## Newspaper salvage

Newspaper salvage, operated from St. Katharine's Barn (sometimes known as the Master's Coach-house), has been our most consistent money-spinner, with the extra benefit that the hard-working bundlers and loaders are helping the environment as well as the Society's funds.

It was started by Eleanor Philpott to raise money for refurbishing the long-time derelict St. Katharine's Hall. One of her helpers, an octogenarian Mr. Hunt, said that he had witnessed indiscriminate tree-felling in Canada, and if his help could save but one tree then he would be happy to continue at the Newspaper Shed.

In 1973, when St. Katharine's Hall was completed, the salvage operation was handed over to the Society. Eleanor Philpott continued as organiser for some years; the names of Iris Kirk, Dorothy Meadows and Jessie Heeler figured large in the earlier operations. Eleanor was succeeded by George Codling, Lloyd Evans, William Golding, and James Salmon. They and the teams have been most dependable in keeping bundles tidy and loading them onto the collector's lorry. The paper used to be taken to East Anglia for egg boxes but latterly it has been more profitable to sell it to a Tewkesbury racing stables which had purchased a shredder. They find it cleaner than straw as bedding for the horses. Prices fluctuate enormously but our collection has averaged £1,800 per annum. By 1985 the newspapers were contributed so generously that the workforce actually won a £100 prize for making the biggest neighbourhood collection.

## Bottle Bank

Following a winter lecture by a successful salvage group in Bristol, the Society felt that, as good citizens, they should start a bottle bank. Tony Watts consulted the Glass-Makers Federation in Birmingham, and in 1980 the operation began using a hired skip. Initially this made a loss, so the helpers began to crush the glass down with a weighted pole used through the apertures; this effectively increased the skip capacity such that a profit of £173 was recorded for the year.

Although recycling materials was becoming a nationally accepted goal, the District Council declined to reimburse the Society for the equivalent weight-saving in its refuse collection. In 1992, after twelve years of operating, often at a loss, the Society handed the glass recycling operation over to Malvern Hills District Council.

An aluminium saving service was sited in the Barn by Cyril Evans, but, when the policy of re-using materials had gained ground, both glass and aluminium collection was taken over by the local council, as we see today.

## Individual Fund-raisers

The Society was grateful to Colwall Choir for putting on a good concert in Burgage Hall. A 1987 jumble sale raised £335 with the assistance of Mrs. Mitton and Mrs. Eaton and the stoicism of chairman Don Howe and his wife, who could barely circulate in their garage and ground floor for the contributions accumulating there. In 1988 we had another evening at Haffield, this time a garden party, to see the tulip tree in bloom.

The Phoenix Choir, from Bromsgrove, put on an excellent concert, their second, in 1999, courtesy of Arthur Bowkett. He is interested in the town because he had ancestors here, several of whom were inhabitants of the original Butcher Row in the High Street.

Joe Hillaby revised his book on Ledbury – then out of print – and allowed the Society to publish the new edition and benefit from sales.

Coffee-making for regular morning lessees at Burgage Hall is an on-going earner.

# Social Programme

Originally there were five lectures per winter, increasing to seven, on a wide variety of subjects. It is not practicable to quote the possible 162 titles, so there follows a small sample that has sprung to mind.

- Three of our local District Councillors, talking about their work.
- The Hereford School of Romanesque Sculpture.
- Joe Hillaby on sister towns, Leominster and Ledbury.
- The Chartists at Snigs End.
- Hereford Chapels and Meeting Houses.
- John Masefield and Songs of the Sea.
- The Making of Musical Instruments.
- Rock around Ledbury.
- Role of the Bank of England in Gloucester.
- Prison Governor and Hereford Chief Probation Officer.
- Madresfield Court.
- Derek Foxton's aerial view of Herefordshire.

## Day Outings

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1979 | First coach trip – Ironbridge museums.                                      |
| 1980 | Avoncroft Museum of Buildings.  |
| 1981 | St. Fagan's Museum, Cardiff.<br>Cirencester, and Chedworth Roman Villa.     |
| 1982 | Bristol, guided by Joe Hillaby, and SS. Great Britain.                      |
| 1983 | Monmouth and its museum, guided by Joe Hillaby.                             |
| 1984 | Bath City and the American Museum.  |
| 1985 | Berkeley Castle.  |
| 1986 | Harvington Hall and Hartlebury Museum.                                      |
| 1987 | Portsmouth, for the Mary Rose and HMS. Victory, also Avebury Stone Circles. |
| 1988 | Calke Abbey restoration and Lichfield Cathedral.<br>Stourhead.              |
| 1989 | Sudeley Castle and Beckford Silk Mill.<br>Shugborough Hall.                 |
| 1990 | Powys Castle and the Welshpool Canal.<br>Avoncroft Museum of Buildings.     |
| 1991 | Black Country Museum.   |
| 1992 | Caerleon and Raglan Castle.   |
| 1994 | Ironbridge museums.<br>Berrington Hall and Croft Castle.                    |
| 1995 | Oxford City.  |
| 1996 | Savernake Forest and Marlborough.   |

- 1997 Alcester and Coughton Court.
- 1998 Henley-in-Arden and Kenilworth Castle.
- 1999 Cirencester guided walkabout and Chedworth Roman Villa.
- 2000 Much Wenlock and Stokesay Castle.
- 2001 The Upper Wye Valley  
Wigmore Castle

John Reed holds a PSV licence and for nine years drove the coach for our excursions as his contribution to the Society. He also made the Burgage Hall notice-board, which stands firm after twenty-one years.

## Short visits

- 1976 Moccas Park.
- 1979 Hellens.
- 1982 Ledbury Park (then occupied by H J Chapman, the stationery supplier).
- 1986 Burton Court.
- 1987 Newent Civic Walk.
- 1996 Brian Wilder's hop farm.
- 1997 Brockhampton House.
- 2000 Madresfield.  
British Camp.  
Evesham.
- 2001 Newent.

## Guided tours of Ledbury

The Society has led guided tours of Ledbury's centre – without charge – for groups from as distant as Manchester, Lytham St. Annes, Nottingham, and Swindon, as well as others from Ross-on-Wye, Upton-upon-Severn, Gloucester, Cowbridge, Hereford, Putley, Pershore, Alcester, Newent, Ashleworth, and Ledbury Round Table.

## Catering

Formerly the Society had a catering committee which occasionally provided a sit-down tea for such parties. The committee lapsed, but one member (Veslemøy Lunt) continues to raise funds for the Society by making coffee to serve at various Burgage Hall events.

# Major Disbursements

- 1976 The Bishop Foliot plaque, dated 1617, was restored and hung in St. Katharine's Chapel. He had instigated the building of St. Katharine's Hospital in 1232.
- 1977 Gates and six seats were provided for the Walled Garden. Elisabeth Hervey-Bathurst searched out benches with armrests for the weary.
- 1978 Contribution to new community minibus.
- 1980 Contribution to Cottage Hospital improvements. St. Katharine's Barn re-roofed and doors repaired. Main road town signs re-painted by John Cooper.
- 1982 Public notice-board set up on the end of St. Katharine's Almshouses by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral. It had taken eight years to effect this.
- 1989 £250 to Scouts' Building Appeal.
- 1990 Following the formation of the education link, grants of £100 to the John Masfield High School, and another £100 between Bosbury, Eastnor, Ashperton, Much Marcle and Ledbury Primary Schools, for prizes awarded for pupils' work on local history and the environment. Annual grants are made to the nine local schools now participating in the scheme.
- 1990 Prizes presented by the Society in the Library's competition 'Memories of Old Ledbury'. The write-up on the Museum's old slipper bath was one winner.
- 1990 £3,000 donated to the 'Painted Room' in the Ledbury Town Council offices, Church Lane. In addition, an interest-free loan of a further £3,000 was made so that a matching gift of £6,000 could be claimed from English Heritage. These 15<sup>th</sup> century paintings had been uncovered during the redecoration of the offices.
- 1993 Peter Garnett researched the town's alleyways and the Society donated twenty-two metal plaques to name them. Eighteen litter bins were donated to the town. Two new bollards were provided for Church Lane. We also gave £300 to the Day Centre and £6,000 towards re-building the Market Theatre.

## Wall plaques

Peter Garnett and Brian Hawcutt fix new plaques in the town.



- 1995 £100 towards the repair of the Sexty tomb.
- 1997 'Ledbury in Bloom' received £100 (increasing to £250, £300 and up to £500 in 2000 with the addition in 2000 of a seat for the Millennium Garden in Bye Street). This is an annual grant.
- 1998 £10,000 given to Ledbury Church Tower Restoration Fund, and £1,000 to Eastnor Church Restoration Fund.
- 2000 Support for a Millennium lunch for pensioners in St. Katharine's Hall.  
Grant towards cost of new walling at the Bowling Club.

# Officers of the Society

YEAR	PRESIDENT	CHAIRMAN	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1973	Major Alan Cadbury	E.L. Jeans	Mrs. A. Holland	J.H. Morton-Lloyd
1974	"	"	"	"
1975	"	"	Gwenyth Kalmar	"
1976	"	R. Plenderleith	"	"
1977	"	"	"	Mrs. P. Diggins
1978	"	Philip Sharpe-Neal	"	"
1979	"	"	F.E. Plenderleith	W. Caley
1980	"	"	Warner Davis	"
1981	"	Hon. Mrs. Hervey-Bathurst	Diana Merry	"
1982	"	"	"	"
1983	"	Tony Watts (as vice)	"	"
1984	"	"	"	"
1985	"	"	"	G. Codling
1986	"	Don Howe	D. Solven	"
1987	"	"	"	Beard
1988	"	Lloyd Evans	"	"
1989	Bob Walker	"	"	D. Smith
1990	Tony Watts	John Cooper	"	"
1991	"	Veslemøy Lunt	G. Mortimer	"
1992	"	"	"	"
1993	"	"	"	"
1994	"	"	Pat Wilkin MBE	Harry Brazier
1995	Joe Hillaby	"	"	"
1996	"	Clive Jupp	"	Gill Jupp
1997	"	"	"	"
1998	"	Prue Yorke	"	Alan Starkey
1999	"	Mary Winfield	"	"
2000	"	Veslemøy Lunt	"	"
2001	"	Clive Jupp	"	"

## Footnote

This booklet has been compiled by three long-standing members of the Society. A framework of a history of the Society was first mapped out by Denys Solven in 1982. It was edited and prepared for publication by James Nicoll and printed by Tilley Printing, Ledbury.

June 2002