

THE LEDBURY LETTER

Number 110 Autumn 2020



The Butcher Row House Museum.

Ledbury & District Civic Society

“Looking After Ledbury...”



Butcher Row House
Folk Museum

LEDBURY & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY
Burgage Hall
Church Lane
Ledbury
HEREFORDSHIRE HR8 1DW

Objectives of the Society...

To stimulate public interest; promote high standards of planning and architecture; and secure the preservation, protection and improvement of features of historic, natural and public interest in Ledbury and the surrounding district.

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Notice is hereby given that membership records of the Ledbury & District Trust are held on a database system. Those requiring access to the data held concerning themselves should contact the Membership Secretary. These are for administration purposes only, and an individual's details can be removed on receipt of a written request.

Copy deadline for the next Ledbury Letter: Friday, 12th February 2021

Chairman's Report...

Andy Tector

It seems a long time since our last newsletter, when we were looking forward to 2020, for the Society. This year has been marked by much sadness with the death of Chris Johnson, my predecessor as Chairman. The Newsletter contains a wonderful tribute to Chris, which I can only endorse and say what a privilege it was to work alongside him in his tireless efforts to promote the Society.

Covid 19 has, of course, presented the Society with a huge number of challenges, not least the closure of the Burgage Hall and the Museum. We are starting to open up the Burgage Hall to hirers again and the loss of income has been, to some measure, offset by a grant through Herefordshire County Council. Social distancing rules have meant the postponement of our AGM and cancellation of the Talks. Hopefully we can return to normal in the New Year.

The Butcher Row Museum has, sadly, had to remain closed this year. The Board felt that even when museums were allowed to reopen we couldn't comply with Social Distancing rules, to make it safe for our visitors and volunteers. I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

The one advantage that Covid 19 presented was the opportunity to complete the decoration of the Burgage Hall, ahead of our planned schedule, and to have undertaken the external decoration and some minor repairs of the Butcher Row Museum. Particular thanks should go to Nicola Forde for her work on getting the second stage decoration of the Burgage Hall completed and the work Ken Chapman did in organizing the works at the Museum.

The Board has had two "virtual meetings" since lock down began and we have been able to handle important and urgent business including a grant to Ledbury Places to reinstate and improve the alleyway access to the Burgage Hall, between Ledbury News and the Bra Boudoir, and a grant to the Friends of the Masters House for an Oral History Project. We have also made our annual donations to nine local schools.

Finally, during the summer one of our Board Members, Anthony

Peake, resigned from the Board which, with great reluctance, we accepted. Tony has been a real stalwart in providing advice on Planning Matters to the Board and his expertise will be greatly missed. This leads me to the final point I want to make: the Board is crucial to the smooth running of the Society as a whole and we are always looking for new Board Members. If you are interested in becoming a Board Member please contact me, or any of the Board Members, and we can discuss what this entails and even get you to attend a Board Meeting before you decide to commit.

From time to time the Society receives requests to assist in tracking pieces of family history. Sometimes these are fairly straightforward and on other occasions far less so. One such request has recently arrived asking if anyone in the Society knew the whereabouts of the Classical Academy and Commercial Boarding School in Ledbury. If anyone knows please let the Chairman know at chair@ledburycivicsociety.org or on 01531 670 351

Butcher Row House Museum...

Ken Chapman & Prue Yorke

The news of Chris Johnson's death was a great shock to us all and he will be a hard act to follow. For many years he was involved in the running of the Butcher Row Museum and the Burgage Hall, bringing professional expertise to ensure their long-term future and sound financial footing. Our thoughts are with Bella, Luke and Rory in these difficult days.

Covid 19 has changed everything and, sadly, because of the difficulties of social distancing in such a confined space as ours, we had no choice but to close the museum for the year. But with funds available, the opportunity has been taken to redecorate the exterior and our thanks go to Martin Jeynes for doing such an excellent job. We have a carpenter lined up to make a replacement oak window at the rear and to repair the building frame in two places. It will then be good for at least another 10/15 years.

Next year, all being well, will start with a volunteer's coffee morning (or

afternoon tea) and the date and time for this will appear in the next newsletter. We shall also contact all volunteers in early 2021 to tell them of the dates and arrangements for the year.

Lastly, we are always keen to enrol new volunteers, so if you know of anyone who might be willing to volunteer for two hours a fortnight, please put them in touch with us. Our respective numbers are 632 988 and 633 655.

Planning Committee Report...

Nicola Forde

Bovis application off Leadon Way (Planning reference P192482/0)

This application for outline planning permission, including access arrangements for 140 houses, was approved on 21st August with conditions. This is Bovis' second application for the site and is for fewer houses and on a reduced site. Access to the site will be via another new roundabout off Leadon Way. There will be cycle/ pedestrian links to Jubilee Close and measures to mitigate noise from the road. The Council has set out the types and sizes of houses to be built and 40% will be affordable. Look out for Bovis' application for approval of Reserved Matters as that will be an opportunity to comment further on the detail of the proposals.

The Viaduct site (planning reference P171532/0)

The developer (Bloor's) appeal against refusal of planning permission for this site was held virtually in the week beginning 13 July. As Herefordshire Council had decided not to defend its refusal for permission Ledbury Town Council applied for and was awarded Rule 6 Status which meant it could make representations at the hearing and cross-examine the other side. It is unusual for a Rule 6 group to be the sole defendant and preparing the detailed defence has been complicated and hard work.

The Council arranged for the public (limited numbers) to view the proceedings at the Royal Hall by video link. The Appeal ran out of time and will be reconvened on 22 September for four days. It is hoped the Town Council will again arrange for the public to view the

proceedings via video link. (Please visit the Town Council website for further detail).

The first half of the hearing concentrated on highways issues – is the proposed single entrance off the Bromyard Road satisfactory in planning terms? The second part of the hearing will look at the impact of the proposed site access (from the Bromyard Road) on Ledbury's conservation area and the setting of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and whether the proposed access complies with planning regulation as represented in the Herefordshire Core Strategy and Ledbury's Neighbourhood Development Plan. Barristers for the two sides will then summarise their arguments. After the hearing the Inspector will visit the site and then come to her decision. The Secretary of State has 'called in' the case this means the final say will be with him whatever the Inspector's decision. It is unclear why this has happened.

Triangle of land opposite the full Pitcher and adjacent to the Barratt development off the Leadon Way (planning Reference 201718).

This is an application for full planning permission for a Lidl store and children's nursery and outline planning permission for a medical centre. The store will have a green roof and part glazed front, surrounded by car parking. The nursery proposal comes from a company with existing nurseries in Hereford and Ross on Wye. The proposal is for a facility for 100 children ranging from babies to kindergarten and 23 staff. There are no firm proposals for the medical centre but a portion of the site has been allocated to such a facility. The Civic Society has objected to the proposals on the grounds that the applicant has not spoken to the local surgeries to assess whether this is a good location for a medical facility; that the proposed development will be dominated by cars and does not encourage sustainable travel; that it is unclear that there is a need for another supermarket in Ledbury; that this is outside the town centre and that it may have a detrimental effect on retail in the town centre. We also felt that the development should be linked via footpaths and cycleways to the Barratt's development and the riverside walk and that, as this is a visually prominent site and in effect a gateway to the town, the site design and the building design should be particularly attractive, sensitive and sustainable.

The Council aims to determine the application towards the end of September. You can comment on the application up until the date of determination by contacting the planning officer Carlo Brace: cbrace@herefordshire.gov.uk

Thanks to Cllr Phillip Howells for information on the Viaduct Site.

Burgage Hall...

Nicola Forde

The Burgage Hall has, of course, been shut since early March, and it is unlikely that all the previous users will be able to return in the foreseeable future. We took the opportunity of lockdown to finish off the re-decoration of the hall and, in the process realised that many of the coloured and opaque window panes were actually perspex, and, given their age, very brittle. We are replacing them with glass and this should be completed by the end of September. The Hall had last been decorated many years ago and was badly in need of a refresh. With new colours, new blinds, we think the effort was worth it and hope, that as users and Ledbury people in general get a chance to view the changes, they will agree.

Users are slowly returning, albeit in a post-Covid friendly format, lower numbers per group and with permitted activities restricted. For example we will not be resuming the monthly Society talks this year – this will be reviewed in the winter.

If you are interested in booking the hall please contact our bookings secretary – Kay Stevens - bookings@ledburycivicsociety.org

Chris Johnson...

Andrew Bromwin

Chris Johnson, who died on 31 March following infection by Covid-19, did not follow the usual route for a professional forester. For the first twenty years of his working life he was a city lawyer ending his legal career as a partner at Clifford Chance specialising in pension law. In 1995 he bought Upper Hall, a large house and grounds in Ledbury, which for many years had been the town's grammar school. Never one to be phased by a challenge he embarked on a huge project converting the house and old coach house into upmarket apartments and building

five new houses, including his own. He delighted in turning up to site meetings having driven from London in an old Peugeot 206 turning on its head the concept of the slick city property developer. His capacity was immense for hard work, endless decision making and dealing with the frustrations of the local planners.



He decided his second career would be in forestry. He had already bought a pretty, mixed woodland near Gloucester with impressive views over the River Severn. He joined a local forest management company, gained chartered status and managed a number of estate woods. His refusal to invest in a decent car continued and for many years he drove a battered VW Passat. He was never concerned about the image and clients soon realised that it was the person behind the wheel that mattered,

not the car. He brought to forestry all the skills of a good legal mind - clarity of thought, attention to detail and excellent writing skills. The one thing he refused to do was keep timesheets which held too many memories of long hours at his London office. It was worth looking the other way on that one.

In 2000 he became secretary of the Herefordshire Division of the Royal Forestry Society, a role he carried out with his usual efficiency and diplomacy. Members will have fond memories of being effectively ushered between stops by Chris wearing his ubiquitous straw hat with the megaphone in hand ready to cajole those at the rear enjoying a chat. He had now upgraded to a Subaru Forester, not a new one of course, but he had begun to appreciate the advantages of some comfort and reliability. Chris had a wonderful sense of equality and fair play. He treated everyone with the same courtesy and respect giving generously of his time and advice. He will be a hard act to follow and much missed.

His interests ranged far beyond forestry and he continued in property development albeit, more modest ventures than Upper Hall, loved his cycling and took an active interest in Ledbury and the town activities. Travel was a big part of his, and the family's, life - walking trips, including to the base of K2, jaunts with Bella and visits to their sons, Rory and Luke, in whichever part of the world where they were working or studying.

Chris's life was well-lived. A decent, thoughtful man who knew the measure of a person's life was by what you gave, with consideration for others being top of the list. A man for our times.

Andrew Bronwin 14 May 2020 Llandrindod Wells, Powys

Other Tributes...

Chris's involvement in Ledbury was wide ranging. Under his watch as Chair of the Ledbury and District Civic Society, he prevented the closure of the Heritage Centre by the then owners, Herefordshire Council, by negotiating a management transfer of the building to the Civic Society, and subsequently facilitated the ownership transfer to Ledbury Places.

He and his team modernised the Burgage Hall with improved heating and lighting, a reliable sound system, a new kitchen and, recently, redecorations throughout. The Burgage Hall is now one of the most

popular venues in Ledbury. As booking secretary, he had boosted hall hire to an average of 3 regular bookings a day, with additional users fitted in where timetable space allows. This is up from only 2 regular bookings per week before the improvements were made.

Ledbury has had a number of planning applications for big housing development in recent years and Chris did much of the work to coordinate a community response, being able to draw on his legal experience to prepare the detailed Civic Society responses.

Chris's involvement with other organisations included Ledbury Places, the Ledbury Poetry Festival, the Ledbury & Strömstad Twinning Association and he was the Secretary to the Herefordshire Division of the Royal Forestry Society. He was also active in supporting the Ledbury Area Cycle Forum, assisting as marshal/mechanic on community bike rides and maintaining the signs along the popular Ledbury Loop cycle route.

Chris is survived by his wife and two sons.



Andy Tector Chairman on behalf of the Ledbury and District Civic Society

The Board of the Civic Society were deeply shocked by the sad news of Chris's death and our thoughts and hearts are with Chris's family at this difficult time.

Chris had become the cornerstone of Ledbury and District Civic Society having been Chairman for a good number of years. He was instrumental in helping establish Ledbury Places and had worked very hard to secure our financial security through his active involvement in marketing the Burgage Hall. He was an enthusiastic volunteer at the Butcher Row Museum. All of the Board members recognised that Chris's enthusiasm and energy had reinvigorated the role the Society has within the community, particularly over campaigning on the large planning applications that Ledbury has had to deal with recently.

In many ways Chris's approach to his work for the Civic Society was best summed up by one of the hirers of the Burgage Hall who said:

"He was such a lovely man and such a pleasure to work with, nothing was too much trouble for him and he always managed to find an answer for any problem we put to him."

These are sentiments that are so true.

Mark Waller

Chairman Ledbury Places

The people of Ledbury owe Chris a huge debt of gratitude for the contribution he made towards the preservation and maintenance of many of the historic buildings, which make our town unique.

Nearly ten years ago now, Chris's reinvigoration of the Ledbury & District Civic Society enabled it to obtain and manage a significant feasibility study grant, which in turn led to the formation of Ledbury Places. His inspirational ideas and boundless energy will always be remembered.

He was also heavily involved in keeping the Heritage Centre open and strengthening it, until such time as Ledbury Places was in a position to take it on. His management of the Burgage Hall has given the town a vibrant venue from the Country Market to fitness classes, meetings, events and so much more. Chris was always at the very centre of these valued community activities. We must all ensure that his legacy to our town lives on.

Peter Arscott

Trustee LPF

All of us at the Ledbury Poetry Festival are reeling at the news of Chris's death, and our hearts go out to his family. He was an incredible champion of the Festival and helped out in many ways from the moment he arrived in Ledbury with his family; easy to talk to and always willing to help and go the extra mile. He was also full of good ideas and generous with his time, and we are going to miss him. Not only the Festival, but the whole of Ledbury will feel the loss - he was such an important part of our community.

Jill & Clive Jupp
Association

On behalf of Ledbury & Strömstad Twinning

All those connected with the Twinning both here and in Strömstad is stunned and shaken to hear the news of Chris's death. He was a tremendous supporter of the links between our two communities of friends and had hosted people from Strömstad on several occasions, particularly during school visits.

The Association has contacted the teacher, Ninni Liljestränd Qvicklund and her students from the Strömstiernaskola, some of whom were hosted by Chris in 2017 and 2019. They are very distressed to hear the news and are putting together their own condolences message.

We can pay no higher tribute than echo the thoughts of everyone we have spoken to about his passing: he was an incredible force for good in the town and his loss leaves an enormous hole in the community. Our thoughts are with Chris's family at this sad time.

Steve Glennie-Smith

Chairman, LACF

Chris has helped with the organisation of a number of Ledbury Area Cycle Forum leisure bike rides over the last 15 years or so, principally to coincide with the Big Apple event in October (and its blossom event in May), and also a ride to Putley that is part of the Poetry Festival. He had nearly always been a marshal at these events, and often went out by car in advance to check for last-minute obstructions and hazards. He was

always most reliable and very efficient.

I know he was very active in the community, being a past chairman of the Ledbury Civic Society, but also was involved with the local rail user group and with his wife, a keen supporters of the Market Theatre. He will be very much missed.

Councillor Phillip Howells Mayor of Ledbury on behalf of the Councillors, the Clerk and the Council staff

Communities thrive through the enthusiasm and energy of its citizens who volunteer to help and support community life. Ledbury has a rich community spirit and many contribute in different ways to make Ledbury a wonderful place in which to live and work. However, no one could have been more committed than Chris Johnson was to Ledbury over many years, not only typically in a leadership role in several prominent Ledbury community groups, but also in his willingness to give freely of his time to help in any way in which he could contribute.

A Ledbury Wedding in 1914...

Celia Kellett

Just six months before the start of WWI a wedding took place in Ledbury. On Monday 23 February Harry James Smith, a carpenter, the eldest son of James and Ann Elizabeth Smith, married Florence Shinn the eldest daughter of the carpenter and joiner Thomas Benjamin Shinn and his wife Fanny, who lived in the Homend. The groom's parents lived in Albert Road, in the newly developed area called Newtown in Ledbury. The happy couple were married by the newly ordained curate Oswald Strickland, who went on to become the vicar of Queensborough, Kent

The bridegroom was a locally well-known and popular sportsman, being the right-back of the defence of the Ledbury Town Football Club team and its vice-president. He had also been the wicket-keeper of Ledbury Cricket Club for the previous two seasons and had headed the batting averages in the previous season.

The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a dress of cream serge, trimmed with cream satin and lace, with a matching hat, trimmed with osprey feathers. She carried an ivory-bound prayer book, the gift of the bridegroom. Her bridesmaids were her sisters, Hattie and Elsie, who wore silver-grey poplin, tunic-style dresses, trimmed to match with lace collars and cuffs, and black velvet hats, trimmed with old rose. They carried bouquets of pink tulips and each wore a gold brooch, the gifts of the bridegroom, whose brother William was his best man.

After the ceremony at the parish church, a wedding party was held at the home of the bride, 147 The Homend, to which relatives and friends were invited. A list of the donors and the wedding gifts received by the happy couple was published in the local newspapers and makes interesting reading over a century later:

Mr-T.B.Shinn	couch	Mr-J-Smith	brass-fender-&-fire-irons
Mrs-T.B.Shinn	household-items	Mrs-J-Smith	feather-bed,-pillow-and-bolster
Mr-Frank-Shinn	dinner-service	Mrs-Watson	hearth-rug-&-counterpane
Mr-Bennett-Shinn	toilet-ware	Miss-Violet-Smith	clock
Miss-Hattie-Shinn	tea-service	Mr-W-Smith	hanging-lamp
Miss-Elsie-Shinn	cruets	Mrs-Barker	easy-chair-and-eiderdown
Master-Arthur-Shinn	paper-rack	Mrs-Hodges	antique-tumblers
Mrs-Bromley	damask-tablecloth	Miss-R-Gurney	afternoon-tea-cloth
Miss-D-Farley	linen-chamber-towels	Miss-Pready	jam-dishes
Miss-Gurney	»	Mrs-Fowler	cheese-dish
&-Mr-Fardon	hemstitched-tablecloth	Mr-Harry-Walker	brass-lamp
Mrs-&-Mrs-Floyd	tapestry-tablecloth	Austin,Daisy	»
Mr-C-Smart	gilt-picture-frame	&-Joe-Floyd	chamber-towels
Mr-Warren	bamboo-table	Mr-C-Barnes	plants
Mr-&-Mrs-Ward	table-knives	Miss-Preece	tea-tray
Mrs-Bray	fern-pot	Miss-Matthews	ornaments
Miss-Bray	cushion-&-curtain-ties	Miss-Dovey	hemstitched-pillow-slips
Mr-Turvey	photo-frames	Miss-Dorothy-Phillips	table-centre
Mrs-Palmer	ornaments	Mrs-Morris	plant-&-cake-stand
Miss-Allison	toilet-covers	Miss-Taylor	teapot
Mr-Harris	table-spoons	A-friend	pair-of-blankets
Miss-Wood	chair-back-and-book	Miss-A-Pready	fern-bowl
Mrs-A.C.Ford	cake-stand	Mr&Mrs-W.Maddox	oak-tea-tray
A-friend	teaspoons	Miss-L-Mayor	»
Mr-J-Hughes	wine-glasses	&-Mr-W.Eddan	-coal-scuttles

And from the players and members of Ledbury Town Football Club clock

Only a month before this joyous occasion the newspapers had carried news of the newly completed Ledbury Power Station, built in Bye Street on part of Brewery Orchard, facing the GWR railway line, which already had some 50 consumers of electricity, including a few residential houses, supplied by the overhead wire system. Today we cannot imagine a life without electricity, but a century ago it was a strange, unknown and probably frightening, new source of power and light which none but the most forward-thinking businesses or the very rich residents could afford. It is no surprise that the above list includes no electrical items.

The newly weds set up home initially with Harry's parents in Albert Road. Sadly the newly wed Florence Smith was widowed the following year and her husband Harry James Smith, aged only 27, was buried in Ledbury on 2 October 1915. The funeral service was conducted by the Rector of St Michael's and Master of St Katherine's Hospital, Canon Arthur Thomas Bannister.

Sources: Ledbury parish registers, local newspapers and Ancestry.

Education Link...

Mary Winfield

All the schools in the area are grateful for the annual award, which they use to support their projects on local history, wildlife, natural history and the environment. It was most disappointing for Year 6 pupils at Eastnor, as the lockdown and consequent cancellation of this year's Spring Garden Show, meant that all their hard work in designing, preparing and planting their exhibition garden was not used. However, the school hopes to be able to fulfil the project next year, albeit without many of the pupils involved this year, as they will have move into secondary education. It is encouraging to have our local children involved in such imaginative projects, which are reflected in all the schools.

Annual Anniversary Lunch

Just to add to the list of cancellations and woes of 2020, it has been decided that there will be no Anniversary Lunch this year. Previous years have seen us enjoying a delicious lunch of cold meats, vegetarian option, salads and baked potatoes, followed by a selection of desserts. We hope that by next year we shall be able to hold it again, so look out for information about it. Thank you for your support in previous years. Keep safe, everyone.

Ledbury Letter

Twice a year we produce newsletters for all the members. Most of them are hand-delivered by our lovely and loyal volunteers, a few are sent by email and the rest go by Royal Mail. These go to all corners of the UK – Perthshire, Cornwall and London to name a few .However, there are some that go to addresses in the Ledbury area. Is there anyone prepared to deliver to Knapp Close/ Knapp Ridge and Upperfields and in Wellington Heath. The price of postage for the Spring 2020 edition of the Ledbury Letter was £64.74, but with postal prices having risen in Spring 2020, this amount will, of course, rise.

Please contact the Membership Secretary for a chat about what's involved.

Programme of talks: Spring 2021...

Mary Winfield

It was most disappointing to have to cancel the talks arranged for this Autumn, but it was the unavoidable consequence of the lockdown and the consequent need to safeguard the health of our members. However, the speakers involved have all been most sympathetic and understand the necessity. Some of them have visited us before and we have enjoyed their many and varied subjects. I have rearranged their talks for next year, in the hope that we shall be able to resume our monthly meetings in January. Several of our “regulars” feature again this year, as I like to have a mixture of local and national interest. I do hope we shall be able to welcome you back to the Burgage Hall in January.

On very rare occasions, through no fault of our own, it is necessary to substitute speakers. We e-mail those we have e-mail addresses for, and advertise the change on the railings outside Burgage Hall, the noticeboard by St. Katherine's Hall and in Ledbury News. If you have an e-mail address that you have not shared with us then please send it to the Membership Secretary so that you can be advised by e-mail.

SPEAKERS' PROGRAMME 2020/21

Meetings at The Burgage Hall, Church Lane on Fridays at 7.30pm

25 th September	No Talk
30 th October	No Talk
27 th November	No Talk
29 th January	“Brockhamton, the story of a moated manor-house” Malcolm Penney
26 th February	“The Changing Landscape, the art of Brian Hatton” Robin Thorndyke
26 th March	“Ringing the changes, an exploration of bell-ringing through history and Literature” Tim Keyes
30 th April	7pm A.G.M. followed at 7.45 “Breweries in the Mid-Borders” Gareth Davies
28 th May	The mystical imagery of Thomas Traherne Andrea McLean
25 th June	“The Scudamores of Kentchurch and Holme Lacy” Heather Hurley

If you have enjoyed reading this newsletter please pass one on to friends and family and encourage them to join.

Additional copies of this newsletter can be obtained from Graham Every.