

# THE LEDBURY LETTER

NUMBER 117

Spring 2024



*Butcher Row House Museum*

**Ledbury & District Civic Society**

*“Looking after Ledbury...”*



*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.

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**Editors:** Nicola Forde/Patrick Goode

**Technical Editor:** Nicola Forde

The Ledbury and District Society Trust Ltd  
[www.ledburycivicsociety.org](http://www.ledburycivicsociety.org)

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## Trustees & Officers of the Society 2023/24

President	Veslemøy Lunt
Chair Legal	Mark Lister, 01531 631 503 chairman@ledburycivicsociety.org
Treasurer	Holly Welford treasurer@ledburycivicsociety.org
Company Secretary	Christine Tustin, 01531 634 934 secretary@ledburycivicsociety.org
Membership Secretary	Stuart Gray membership@ledburycivicsociety.org
Burgage Hall Booking Secretary	Nicola Forde, 07977781826 bookings@ledburycivicsociety.org
The Butcher Row House Museum	Carol Cullen, 01531 632 773 Ken Chapman, 01531 632 988
Talks Programme Town Council Liaison	Nick Morris 01531 631 388
Planning	Ann Lumb
Web Master	web@ledburycivicsociety.org
Trustees	Hilary Davis

Notice is hereby given that the membership records of the Ledbury & District Society 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 30th August 2024

# Chairman's Report Spring 2024.

Mark Lister

As we move into Spring following a very wet Winter the Society is looking forward to an active year ahead. Our 50th Anniversary was marked at the talk in November which was a happy occasion and enjoyed by all who came. We are now looking forward to the next 50 years.

The planning report on page 6 highlights Herefordshire Council's review of the Local Plan. Alarmingly the plan proposes another 450 houses for Ledbury on the Gloucester Road above the Hopfields development currently under construction. This will mean Ledbury will grow by a total of 1700 new homes in the first half of this century (and potentially 4080 new residents). The Society believes this is over-development, that the town's infrastructure will be over-burdened and its character changed. See Ann Lumb's planning article to find out how you can let Herefordshire Council know what you think about the proposals.

The Board of the Society is working well together and our new members have taken on responsibilities which allow us to plan for the future with confidence. Unfortunately we are looking for a new Treasurer as Holly Welford is unable to commit the time necessary to do the job. Unlike the rest of the Board she is working full time. She will continue in the post until a replacement is found and we would like to thank her for her work since she took over.

Our President Veslemøy Lunt kindly donated her accumulated papers relating to the Society. The Board spent a day sifting through the documentation and it has yielded a number of fascinating items which may lead to new projects and exhibitions. In particular we are intending to showcase some of the items in the Burgage Hall during the Heritage Open Days in September.

One particular project is to revive and revise the Ledbury Alleyways and Yards Trail. Some of you will remember that in 1993 the Society erected 22 grey and black plaques around the town centre to ensure that the folk memory of those parts of the town were not lost. An accompanying booklet created a trail for visitors and locals to follow in order to get a feel of what the town looked like during the medieval period up to the 19th century. We are hoping to carry out this work during the Spring and Summer and relaunch the trail before the end of the year with some modern technology incorporated.

The Society's website will undergo a major overhaul this year and we are looking forward to that. It is intended that the site will be much more user friendly and accessible to members and others who are interested in our work.

I am as ever grateful to my fellow Board members who undertake the many tasks that are needed to maintain the work and profile of the Society. There are vacancies on the Board and if, having read this newsletter, you are inspired to join us or just to help with a particular project, please let me know.

## Talks 2023/24.....

Patrick Goode

We have had an eclectic season of talks so far, ably organised by Nick Morris. Whilst all talks have drawn good audiences the February talk created unprecedented (at least in recent years) interest, with the Hall packed to the rafters. Do let us know what topics you would like us to feature and any good speakers you have come across - email: [talks@ledburycivicsociety.org](mailto:talks@ledburycivicsociety.org)

**29 September 2023 - Norman Stanier: History of a Fruit farm.** A perfect evening for the talk, the time of the September harvest moon. Egremont Russet apples and Comis pears were passed round; Mr. Stanier talked about the history of his family's 22 acre farm in Putley from 1953 – the year of 12" TVs, no mains electricity or war, the crop went off to Birmingham from Ashperton station – to the present day, when, paradoxically, life is much harder for fruit growers.

**27 October 2023 - Liz Harvey: Planning - the Herefordshire Core Strategy.** Without using a word of planspeak and with a merciful shortage of acronyms, Councillor Harvey guided us through Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy. The Council's over-eagerness to meet the Government's housing target has overloaded us with housing. The speaker concluded with a useful set of guidelines, one of which is: tell the Civic Society if you come across a planning issue we should be commenting on.

**24 November 2023 - Denise North: The Herefordshire Hoard.** This talk had a dual subject. The hoard itself, which included a unique gold octagonal finger ring and a gold pendant dating from 5th-7th century A.D., was a very important find. It seems to have been buried in haste, with some of the objects 200 years old when buried. Its recent finders also acted in haste, as much of the hoard was stolen, and the thieves have refused to divulge where they have hidden what might be the greater part.

**26 January 2024 - Faith Tibble: The Crown of Thorns.** Today we think of the Crown as part of the brutal treatment of Christ. But before 340 A.D., the early Christians thought of the 'Crown' as equivalent to the acanthus-leaved wreath worn by triumphant Roman generals. St. Jerome added the word 'thorn' to a contemporary description of Christ's fate, and ever since Christians have seen the crown as thorny rather than triumphant.

**23 February 2024 - Steven Tibble: The Templars.** Their origins were in the Middle East, when they acted as hugely rewarded protectors to pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. On Black Friday (13 October) 1307, the pecuniarily

embarrassed King of France, Philip IV, had the Grand Master seized and tortured, and appropriated their funds. The Order then disappeared in Europe, but was tolerated by Edward II in England, and gradually faded away.

**22 March 2024 - Justine Peberdy: An Introduction to the Stories and Treasures of Hellens Manor.** The speaker told a fascinating tale about this famous house and collection of objects and paintings, weaving together 'fake news', a genealogical detective story, an outstanding collection of paintings, and exciting plans for development. The central character in the story was Malcolm Munthe (1910-95), the house's owner from 1943. He wrote the first set of guide notes (partly true), extended the collection, and steered the house/collection through the difficult years of the 1950s, leaving it in a good position to face the future.

We look forward to seeing you at the next talks:

April 26th: 6.30pm Carly Tinkler – Well Dressing (note the earlier time).

May 31st - 7.00pm LDCS AGM, 7.30pm Chris Watkins & David Bellingham – Temperance Lives and Landscapes.

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## **The Butcher Row House Museum**

Ken Chapman

We've been busy over the winter carrying out repairs and maintenance. Ben Williams, the Ledbury carpenter, has replaced some rotten timbers in the frame which we now know is watertight (the February rains proved that!). Our costume displays have been renewed by Jenny Silcock & Mary Every and Barry Sharples has set up some handling exhibits – thank you to all involved.

Also, thanks go to the three volunteers who have retired from the main rota: Anna Stenning, Martin Perry and in particular, Mary Winfield who has given many years of stalwart service, not only to the Museum but to the town. Martin and Mary continue as reservists.

And welcome to new volunteers, Sharon McCarthy, Patricia Wilkin, Dick James, (all on the main rota) and Sue Downing and Sarah Rea (both reservists). Many thanks to Carol Cullen for again putting together the rota.

As in 2023, the museum will be open from 10am to 4pm, Tuesday to Saturday. Our first day will be Tuesday 26th March and we will close on Saturday 2nd November. We're always on the lookout for anyone interested in volunteering, 2hrs a fortnight, and if that's you, do be in touch with Ken Chapman on 01531 632 988 or Carol Cullen 01531 632 773.

We look forward to seeing you, your family and friends in 2024!

The Civic Society responds formally to planning applications which we think may affect the town and we are now looking at these within the context of the updated Ledbury Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP, 2023). This sets out policies on many important issues: sustainable development (such as fixing a settlement boundary); housing (such as ensuring balanced communities); the built environment (such as design criteria); and the natural environment (such as protecting and enhancing green infrastructure).

Last July we responded to Herefordshire Council's Place Shaping consultation on its Local Plan (2021 – 2041). We strongly objected to the proposal that Ledbury be selected for large scale growth, pointing out that the town had already received its share of growth and has built, or committed to build, far beyond the targets set in the previous Herefordshire Core Strategy. Disappointingly, the just published proposals for the new Plan include 450 new houses for Ledbury on the Gloucester Road above the Hopfields development. We believe this is an unsustainable development in an area identified in the Neighbourhood Development Plan as a Sensitive Landscape with very low to low capacity to accommodate residential development, primarily due to the visual impact on the setting of the town and the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In addition the proposed development is outside the settlement boundary set in the NDP. The Society believes that the current proposals undermine the value of the NDP, and are deeply disappointed in Herefordshire Council which purports to support local communities in making their plans. Finally the Society has no confidence that the proposed development will be better than the three the town has already been subject to; that expansion of necessary infrastructure will continue to be inadequate; the houses will not meet local need and that there will be poor provision of green and open space and trees. We fear this will be yet another 'placeless' development.

Last autumn, Cllr. Liz Harvey gave an excellent talk to the Society entitled: 'Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail'. One of her messages was that everyone can make a difference. One way members could do this is by responding to the current consultation - visit <https://hlp.commonplace.is>, scroll down to the box labelled 'Ledbury Place Shaping' – click on 'Have your say'. The deadline for responses is 20th May.

In October 2023, we wrote to Herefordshire Council and copied in our three Councillors to ask for action, as set out in the NDP, to improve green

infrastructure in the town's two main housing developments: south of Leadon Way and at the Viaduct site. Herefordshire Council's own Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) calls for green space, trees and other planting in and around these new housing areas to enhance the environment and create sustainable living places, yet this requirement has been largely ignored south of Leadon Way and is likely to be minimal at the Viaduct site. We have suggested ways in which green infrastructure could still be introduced alongside these developments to knit them into the existing natural environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. So far, we have had no response, except from Cllr. Stef Simmons. She agreed with our complaint to Herefordshire Council (January 2024) about the devastation and loss of green space caused at the start of the new development of 140 houses south of Leadon Way. She is focusing on various problems here, including landscape and ecology issues.

The Civic Society also wrote to Herefordshire Council in March 2024 about the application by Bloor Homes to delay construction of the Riverside Park and play area, because of adverse weather conditions. Our concern is that a variation in this planning permission may not be effectively scrutinised and result in failure to deliver the Riverside Park in its entirety, including the restoration of a section of the canal.

We also opposed the appeal by McCarthy Stone (March 2024) to build an apartment complex and associated car parking to the rear of The Knapp, the former home of John Masefield. Our opposition was again largely on grounds of loss of green space, as the site is protected in the Ledbury NDP, not for development. It is also identified in the Herefordshire Council Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of a green corridor (Local Strategic Corridor 1), which along with the Town Trail, forms a linear green space and wildlife corridor through the centre of Ledbury. This is arguably a unique feature of the town and highly valued by residents. Another basis for opposition is our belief that the scale of building will have an adverse impact on the historic character of this locality, including The Knapp itself and any remaining green space. The Appeal will be heard on 29th May.

Finally, please let us know your views about the above planning issues we have raised or let us know if you see something which you think we should be looking at.

Thank you!



## **Veslemøy Lunt (President and former Chair of the Civic Society), remembers...**

'I retired to Ledbury with my late husband in 1974. We bought the Station House from Ledbury's last Station Master, Eddy Russell, who left behind his official hat! Like so many buildings in Ledbury, Station House has been much altered over the years and has in fact a Georgian frontage with a medieval building at the back. You can clearly see the join if you go into the house today. Like many things in Ledbury, the railway was surviving – only just – and worth preserving; it was still single track in those days, and the road leading up to it was just a track too!

I eventually joined the Civic Society in 1978, to support their campaigns to preserve what was distinctive about Ledbury and have been involved with the Society in various roles ever since (volunteering in the Butcher Row Museum until a short while ago when I was 95). Then The Society had a very active body of Trustees, and was very effective at fundraising: large amounts were provided by the waste paper scheme, (my husband played a key role in that scheme), but we did not spurn the numerous small donations, and fundraising efforts including making coffee for Probus meetings.

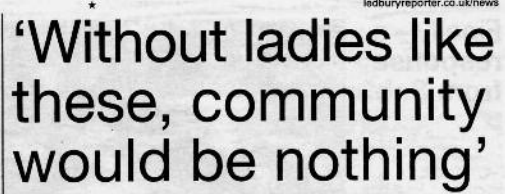
An important and useful task was meeting with planners (who used to come regularly to Ledbury to talk to the public about current applications) and with developers.

Not all of our campaigns were successful. The Society supported a campaign to preserve the cattle market, by the 1980s, a vanishing feature of small market towns, such as ours. The public took out 'shares' in the market but eventually the developers offered the shareholders a sum they couldn't refuse.

But our successful campaigns and collaborations have been of lasting benefit to Ledbury. Hard to imagine that there was a proposal to build a large housing scheme in Ledbury Park! The Burgage Hall, the Butcher Row Museum, the Painted Room, the Master's House, Rutherglen, (the Magistrate's House Church Lane), to name just a few, all essential and much used parts of Ledbury's heritage. Ledbury has done well to retain its essential character, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Civic Society and many other devoted groups and individuals. One of the most interesting projects I worked on was the mapping of the various alleys in the town and the distinctive silver plaques identifying them. I also campaigned to keep the cobbles (or Ledbury marbles as they are called) on Church Lane in a good state by saving cobbles that came loose for re-laying at a later date and keeping them in our cellar at Station House.

What would I change (or preserve) about Ledbury now? I would like to see the town make much more of its connection with John Masefield, so I would like to see his house Listed, and am delighted to learn that the Civic Society is supporting the commemoration campaign.'

Veslemøy was interviewed by Patrick Goode & Nicola Forde



Veslemøy has featured in the local press many times over the years. She was recognised in 2012 with a Distinguished Citizen's Award.



**The Burgage Hall ... Nicola Forde**

It was a pleasure talking to Veslemøy who for many years looked after the Burgage Hall, a role I have inherited. We are probably still using the good systems she put in place back in the day! We have recently had the Hall professionally surveyed and have put in place a programme of works to keep it in good condition. It is our main source of income (and expenditure!) and hosts a wide range of activities and celebrations but there is always room for more!

If you are planning a celebration or new activity do consider booking the Hall hire rates are very reasonable, acoustics are (now!) very good and it has bags of character! Email bookings@ledburycivicsociety.org or call 07977781826 (leave a message or text if there is no reply).

# Annual General Meeting - Election of Directors

At the 38th AGM at 7.00pm on Friday 31st MAY 2024 an election is to be held to fill seven of the nine places for Elected Directors.

Any paid up member of the Society may seek nomination, by two other members, to stand in the election.

Nominations should be sent to the Secretary at the registered address by Friday 19th April 2024.

Note: The Constitution of the Society allows for nine Elected Directors. Each Director is elected for a period of three years; and, normally, three are elected each year.

Retiring Directors may, if they choose, seek nomination to stand again for election, on equal terms with any other candidates.

(Additionally, up to six co-opted Directors may be invited to serve on the committee to help in particular capacities).

To: The Secretary, Ledbury & District Civic Society  
Burgage Hall, Church Lane, Ledbury HR8 1DW

**NOMINATION OF AN ELECTED DIRECTOR FOR ELECTION AT THE  
37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LEDBURY & DISTRICT  
CIVIC SOCIETY ON 31st MAY 2024**

I wish to nominate: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Proposed)

I wish to second the above nomination:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Seconded)

I am prepared to serve as a Director if elected:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Nominee)

The Society's letter box is to the right of the Church Lane entrance to the Burgage Hall.

## **Ledbury and District Civic Society TREASURER**

The Society is looking to appoint a new Treasurer as Holly Welford, who has carried out the role for the last two years, is unable to devote the time that is necessary due to her full time work commitments.

The role is not unduly onerous and would suit someone with an interest in the work of the Society and the preservation of our local heritage and is vital to our operations.

The main tasks involve: the administration of membership fees, in conjunction with the Secretary; the oversight of income from the hire of the Burgage Hall; donations and receipts from the Butcher's Row House Museum; claims for repayment of Gift Aid and the payment of invoices.

An annual Budget is set by the Board and the Treasurer is responsible for reporting to the Board throughout the year on variances and compliance with that budget.

Finally the Treasurer prepares the Annual Accounts and submits them to the Society's Accountants for approval before submitting them to the Charity Commission.

Please let the Secretary know if you or someone you know is interested in the position.

Mark Lister  
Chair

**Ledbury & District Civic Society**  
*"Looking after Ledbury..."*