

Chairman's Clipboard

by Barry Franklin



Welcome and Happy New Year to all our members! Today, we launch 'Connections' - our updated newsletter to keep our history community thriving.

Our aim is to share our Leamington History Group news, to promote upcoming events and publications. We encourage members to contribute to 'Connections' with their own local historical research and memories.

An exciting 2021 Virtual Programme is planned, kicking off with our Annual General Meeting/Leamington Photo Collage. Looking forward to receiving your comments, research and support in the coming year.

Leamington History Events

The Making of Leamington's Victorian Legacy

Over 280 participants enjoyed watching a recorded discussion between Mark Ellis, film maker and local historians about our recent LHG film "Leamington's Victorian Legacy."

Christmas Quiz/Entertainment 14 (December 2021)

Our very first "Virtual Christmas Quiz and Music Evening" was well received, with over 150 members participating. We hope the quiz was not too easy! Thanks to all contributors and to Ian McCutcheon for his excellent music.

Did you know... Window and Brick Tax? by Michael Pearson

No doubt you have all heard of the 1696 Window tax which was not repealed until 1851 and from which the phrase "daylight robbery" may have stemmed. However, did you know there was also a brick tax? This was introduced in 1784 (just as Leamington was developing as a Spa town) to help with the wars in the American colonies. Tax was paid at the rate of 4 shillings per thousand bricks.

Brickworks then simply made bigger bricks until the government legislated to stipulate the maximum size for a brick. This tax no doubt affected the architecture of buildings as more timber was used as an alternative. Finally abolished in 1850, it was regarded as being detrimental to industrial development. One wonders what effect the tax had on the early development and the design of Leamington's buildings. Perhaps we shall never know!

LHG Committee News

The Committee has continued to meet regularly, with virtual meetings being the norm. We have managed to plan successful virtual events, such as, the Leamington History Day (September) and our recent monthly presentations.

Unfortunately, our free guided walks programme and Mayor's Charity Walk (which the LHG organises to raise money) were cancelled this year. We therefore decided to donate £75 from our funds to these worthwhile charities, as a goodwill gesture. Similarly, we agreed to donate £75 to the Band Factory, to compensate a loss of income during the pandemic. Our twitter account @Leamhistory, Facebook and website continue to increase in participants.

LHG Research

Tell us about your recent research interests!
Email: connections@leamingtonhistory.co.uk.

Beauchamp Hall

Michael Pearson and Barry Franklin are currently researching the history of Beauchamp Hall. Built in 1863 by William Gascoyne, this is currently the home of Kingsley School for girls. However, prior to 1921, it was home to four separate families. Many fascinating stories have been unearthed, including great wealth, tragedies, suicides and Confederate conspiracies. Watch this space!

Lockdown Intergenerational Living History Research Challenge: January- March 2021

Everyone's experience of this current, unprecedented pandemic is different. Let's record our living history with an intergenerational challenge: Pair up with a member of the younger generation and each either write 200 words about their experience – or create a 10-minute video to share. Further details on the LHG website out soon!

New publications:

“The Ambitious Stonemason” by LHG member, Kevin Hunt.

A novel based on extensive research into the life and times of William Gascoyne, the man who built much of 19th Century Leamington.

“Colour 'Sketches' of Royal Leamington Spa and the Local Area” by Allan Jennings.

Local historian and LHG member, Allan, published a book in November of 114 coloured photographic 'sketches' as a way of raising money for the Intensive Care Unit at Warwick Hospital.

Joshua Harrison

by Mick Jeffs

Joshua Harrison was a maverick in the world of cast iron who Martin Green and I found when researching the book about the Ironmen of Leamington. Our first glimpse was Joshua working in Derby in 1846 when he registered the 'Derby' cooking range. By 1850 he was a manager for Sidney Flavel in Leamington but he soon set up on his own in Portland Street, Leamington. Flavel was well known for the cooking range styled as 'Flavel's Patent Leamington Kitchener' and must have been shocked and dismayed when Harrison began to sell ranges with the same description. Flavel took legal action but failed because he, himself, did not actually have an official Patent. Harrison moved eventually to Emscote Foundry for a short time and then disappeared from our radar. We think he reappeared making cooking ranges in the USA and taking out a patent.

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

Currently all our meetings are digital (Zoom) and start 7.30 p.m. If you need help accessing Zoom, please contact Barry Franklin 01926 316268 or email: bfranklin600@aol.com

25 January 2021: 13th Annual AGM/ Leamington Photo Collage

Chair: Mark Ellis (film/documentary maker and LHG website designer).

Please ensure that your subscription is up to date. A Zoom invite link will be sent to members to join the meeting. Agenda/ Minutes already distributed – please contact: secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk if you did not receive or need further details.

22 February 2021: Mr Locke's New House (Janet Ainley)

22 March 2021

The Origins of Warwick District Council Houses (Barry Franklin)