

LEAMINGTON HISTORY GROUP

www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Welcome

Leamington History is buzzing around town: our new walks are booking up, attendance is increasing at both our monthly speaker events and our new Leamington History Café, and our archive is getting into shipshape. We reprinted our Global Leamington Books and are producing a new historic town leaflet with Warwickshire College to highlight Leamington's historical past.

Congratulations to Nigel Briggs who was interviewed recently by Times Radio for the "Leamington Best Places to Live award." We supported the Blue Plaque launch for Christopher and Janey Ironside. On 24th July, we are excited about our new local history video launch, ably led by Janet Ainley. Our new WWII event, on 7th October, "Their Finest Hour", will be here before we know it - get ready to bring your memories, stories and artefacts on this day and be part of our history.

Leamington History Café: Tuesdays

9.30 a.m.- 11 a.m. Band Factory 13 Althorpe Street

Our new informal coffee mornings, now include a short history talk. Join us at the Band Factory, 13 Althorpe Street each Tuesday! So far, topics have covered Warwick and Leamington Tramways, University of Warwick, Leamington Police, Gilbert Hopkins Forest: Pigman, Policeman and Publican and Victorian Cycling. See our programme on FB/website. Bring any historical items you would like to share with us! All welcome!

Leamington History Group Calendars 2024

2024 Calendars are on their way! Don't miss out: Pre-Order your copy now £6 to collect in person/ask for postage costs, secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Monthly Monday Meetings 7.30 p.m.

(Oddfellows, New Street, Leamington - unless stated)

26 June: *Care in the Community: The Leigh Family*

24 July: *Leamington History Group Video Launch at the *Polish Centre*

25 September: *A Second Peep into LHG Digital Archive*

23 October: *Friends of the Family*

Connections June 2023

"Global Leamington" Book Reprint

Now on sale for £20, this tells the story of Leamington and its diverse communities. Available from Anthony Eden's, Clarendon Street, the Leamington Spa Visitor Centre, Pump Room, and the Ukrainian Charity Shop, Royal Priors, Leamington Spa - or email: secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk

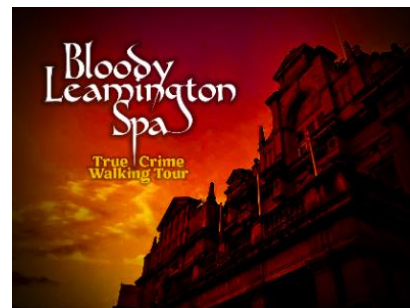
Free Leamington Town Walks

Supported by the RLS Town Council, our popular walks began in April, thanks to our excellent volunteer guides. Our themes are: Walk Back in Time; Imperial Leamington; Time for a Pee; Jephson Gardens; From Village to Spa; and Menage a Trois: An architect, engineer, and an aviary. Further walks will be added throughout the summer.

Booking: 01926 456950 Visitors Centre:

<https://warwickdc.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/173641519/events/428575692>

<https://warwickdc.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/173642382>



We have some new dark history walks from June 2023 too: "Bloody Leamington Spa True Crime" with crime writer, Adam Wood: Book:

<https://www.adamwoodhistory.com/leamington>

And Leamington Spa Railway Station Walking Tours – exploring behind the scenes with the Friends of Leamington Station. We also participated in Heart Community Rail Walks.



<https://warwickdc.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/173644221>

Contact: connections@leamingtonhistory.co.uk or phone: 07587 022366

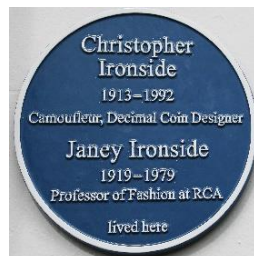
Tribute to Margaret Watkins

by Margaret Rushton

It is with great sadness that we heard of Margaret Watkins' passing recently. She was a very active LHG member from its earliest days at Bath Place School, and many other local associations and always gave a hand in our South Lodge Heritage and annual Local History Days. She contributed to Newsletters, produced articles, and donated many of her late husband's photographs to the LHG archive. Until she became too frail, Margaret never missed the annual Czech Memorial Service. She enjoyed her trips to The Loft, and to FLAG's Friday Focus talks.

Latest Blue Plaque: Janey & Christopher Ironside by Virginia Ironside

The latest Leamington Blue Plaque was unveiled in March 2023 was for Christopher, a Camouflage Officer, and Janey Ironside, a Professor of Fashion, who lived at 11 Lansdowne Circus during the Second World War.



At the time, Leamington was full of artists involved in this specialised war effort contribution. The Camouflage Unit existed at the Leamington Ice Rink

(Victoria Colonnade/Loft Theatre).

It was converted into a giant studio, housing models of vulnerable factories, aerodromes, and housing estates. The idea was to disguise them from enemy bombers by using netting, paint, and false scenery so that they looked like rivers, farmland covered in sheep or innocent forests.



By constructing a false sun, moon, and clouds, even the weather conditions were reproduced so that the disguises would look authentic at different times of day and in different weather conditions.

Mayor of Leamington & Virginia Ironside unveiling the Blue Plaque

Delivering Newspapers for W H Smith

by Terry Gardner



My friend Chris advised me that he was leaving WHS and did I want a job! I accepted this. The hours were 7 -8 a.m. Monday to Saturday and the Education Committee issued a card stating when I could work!

Chris was with me on my first morning. We went to the WHS back entrance, in Lower Bedford Street, where a man sorted the papers into rounds and addresses. Chris collected the papers into a heavy canvas bag with the WHS logo and we were off! I was paid 7s 6d per week - extra for evenings!

The Central Leamington Round covered: Hazel Smith, Regent St, Woodward's, Midland Bank, Cadena Café, Town Hall, Barclays Banks, National Provincial Bank, Wallhead, John Staite, Euston Place, 32 Hamilton Terrace, Jephson Villa, Health Office and 2 Regent Grove. Up to you to guess which papers each had!

We then cycled home! Next day I was on my own, with some extra Courier papers. I also delivered some evening papers to Clarendon Hotel, Regent Grove, Pump Rooms, Public Library, and the Bedford Inn.

During some heavy snow, I was the only paper boy who turned up for delivery – and one customer did complain that the papers were late! I can't recall if I ever had any tips at Christmas!

Their Finest Hour

David Morse, our Vice Chair has been working hard to organise our big event on Saturday 7th October at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Centre.

This is a national project organised by Oxford University to collect and preserve the stories and objects of the Second World War – poster overleaf – from the public. We will record your stories, photograph your items, and interview to add to this fascinating research project – of course over refreshment and great company!

Please support us – have a good dig around your loft and see what interesting things you can bring to us!

Contact: connections@leamingtonhistory.co.uk or phone: 07587 022366

Archive Antics

By David Morse

It's like a reoccurring nightmare. Deadline day has arrived but fortunately I have something for you. Not entirely about Royal Leamington Spa but there are connections. I was aimlessly wandering through the Archive. Sorry, that is supposed to read, studiously studying the Archive, when I came across Hampton on the Hill and Grove Park, and a fine house it looks or rather looked. Now the Archive is very sparse as far as information against photographs is concerned and not being familiar with this particular homestead, I asked the learned Margaret Rushton what she knew. Well of course, says M, it was the home to Lord Dormer as in Dormer School, Dormer Place, and any other Dormer you can think of.

I, of course, was none the wiser, and so I dived into the Internet. Well, there had been loads of them starting with Robert, Baron Dormer of Wyng. (It's alright I'm not going to blind you with history). Now, Robert was made Baron in 1651, with a succession up to the present William Robert Dormer, 18th Baron Dormer.

Then, through my delving into the internet, I located the picture on the left which is Grove Park in May 1633. That's 1633 BC, that's **Before Cameras!**



Right, so we have the place, we have the family, and we have some photos. But where is this, Grove Park? Well, it's in the Budbrooke area but on the outskirts of Hampton on the Hill. There is still a Grove Park House, the real one in the photos, below, was demolished in 1976. It was not just a 2 up, 2 down either.



There must be further information hidden away that I haven't found yet as to its actual size and number of rooms. As with a lot of these type of homes, use during

WW2, death duties, death watch beetles, death in the family and any number of financial factors meant that we lost to the nation over 5,000 substantial buildings such as this one.

I haven't had a chance travel up the track all the way to where the house used to be to see what's left but under the cover of a walker (training currently taking place!) I will be able to walk all the way along on either public footpaths or bridle ways. Also, in the grounds down where the house used to be there is the ruins of a Roman Fort. It gets even more intriguing.

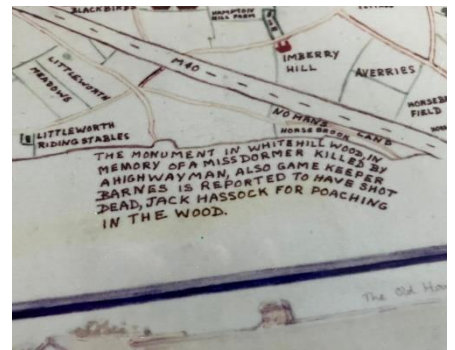


Then! My good friends have just moved into a Bungalow at the entrance to Grove Park. Maybe they can pretend to walk their dog and find out more.



A week later they returned with news that there is a Monument, to what, they know not, and here's the photos. The Monument is located in Whitehill Wood and the only inscription on it was one that stated that it had been restored in 1989, appearing on maps around 1900.

Then, a breakthrough came when one of my friends' relatives produced a map with a handwritten note. Miss Dormer, KILLED by a HIGHWAYMAN? Whatever next? Whose daughter was she and what was her name? When did it happen? What happened to the Highwayman? Did they know the Highwayman's name? All these things raced around my mind for minutes until I calmed down and delved once more into the Internet.



Aha! The 18th Baron Dormer was born in 1960 and as there is no death date, he must still be alive. A further delve produced an address down in Kent - not Grove Park. So, in for a Penny in for £1.10 of First-Class stamp, I fired a letter off to the Right Honourable, the Lord Dormer asking if he had any info on this sad event so that we can add it to our web site.

Gosh! Is that the time? Well, you'll have to wait till next month to hear the answers to my letter which may be a returned envelope.

Contact: connections@leamingtonhistory.co.uk or phone: 07587 022366



THEIR FINEST HOUR

A NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE THE STORIES AND OBJECTS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

DIGITAL COLLECTION DAY

Do you have any Second World War-related stories and objects passed down to you from your parents, grandparents and other family members?

Would you like to digitally preserve these stories and objects before they are lost to history?

Bring your diaries, letters, photos, memories, objects* or stories about your family's wartime experience to our Digital Collection Day, where they will be recorded and added to a free-to-use online archive.

theirfinesthour.org

*Please do not bring any loaded weapons or potentially dangerous objects to the Digital Collection Day.

Leamington History Group (LHG)
will be holding a Digital
Collection Day on:

Saturday 7 October 2023

between

10am and 4pm

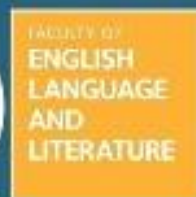
at

Ahmadiyyah Mosque Hall

Adelaide Rd, Leamington Spa,
CV32 5AH

For further information, contact
David G. P. Morse, Vice Chair
LHG

dgpmorse@btinternet.com
07747397172



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