

Leamington Pioneers of Esperanto

Leamington's history is full of surprises: the latest was the revelation from Bill Chapman in North Wales, that at the turn of the 19th/20th century, Royal Leamington Spa was a pioneering centre for the study and development of Esperanto.

Bill writes: Esperanto is the most widely-spoken constructed international auxiliary language. It was created in 1887 by Dr L L Zamenhof (1859-1917), a rather idealistic ophthalmologist of Polish- Jewish extraction, and was first taken up by the inhabitants of the then Russian Empire.



The Leamington Spa Courier made several mentions of Esperanto in the years before the First World War, and the names and addresses of some early Leamington Esperanto speakers, complete with their registration numbers, can be found in the 'Adresaro de Esperantistoj' [contact list of Esperantists] between 1903 and 1907. Some of those Leamington pioneers included John Harrison, Miss A. F. Bone Hill, John Sibree, M. A., F-ino (=Miss) Frances E. Hill, & F-ino Olga M. Bland.

John Sibree, was a scholar and translator of Hegel's *The Philosophy of History*, and John Harrison taught boys in the upper classes at Clapham Terrace school in the daytime, and Esperanto to adults in the evening. The Courier in December 1908 was very encouraging about the class, which was

well attended. In May 1910, the Midland Esperanto Association held the first of their summer meetings at Leamington, with participants from Coventry, Birmingham, and Leamington. The press reported that after an enjoyable tea, speeches "en la kara lingvo" were delivered, and all agreed that "la urbo de Leamington bone meritas la unuan pozicion en la Somera Programo de Ekskursoj."

Unfortunately, John Harrison, chief Leamington exponent, died suddenly in November 1912 from a chill, at the age of only 46. Only the week before, he had been at work at Clapham Terrace Schools, where he had taught for 27 years. He was considered *the* pioneer of Esperanto in the town. He was a member of the British Esperanto Society and was its local Consul. In spite of the loss of their leader, the local group pressed on, and in September 1913, the Leamington Courier reported on the sixth quarterly Conference of the Midland Esperanto Federation, held at the Trocadero Café, and attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, their daughters, and Mr. Mellows (Director of Education). Mr. Mellows professed very great interest in Esperanto, not only because of its possibilities in commerce and education, but because its chief motive was to promote good feeling among the nations, to enable different peoples to understand each other's thoughts and feelings, and thus realise how much they had in common. Alfred Wackrill, son of Alderman Wackrill, was an enthusiastic upholder of Esperanto. He recounted how his well-travelled brother learnt Esperanto from a text-book, but thanks to the phonetic principle of the alphabet, was always able to communicate with other Esperantists. The business meeting was followed by a short programme of recitations, etc., in Esperanto and English, presented by Miss Payne, of Leamington, and Mr. A. J. Morgan, and Mr. T. Heise, of Coventry. The Conference was considered a success in promoting the objects of the Federation, - "to give opportunities for the exercise of Esperanto and the drawing together of its members in friendly intercourse."



Margaret Elizabeth Kirk 1915-2005.

Margaret Elizabeth Kirk was born in June 1915 in Richmond, Surrey, where her parents were living at the time. Herbert, her father was a Yorkshireman who started working life as a draper, and retired as a florist. Ann, her mother, could trace her family back through many generations of tradesmen to her 6x great-grandfather John Taylor, born in 1610. Another Taylor ancestor was a "joyner of Coventry" in the 1740s. Ann's grandfather William Leatherland Taylor was a grocer and ironmonger in Smith Street Warwick.

Herbert Kirk and Ann Taylor married in 1913. Margaret was their only child, and grew up in Leamington, at 71 Holly Walk (now an office block at the corner of Willes Road). Margaret and family often travelled to North Wales or to the Lake District and took many photographs of pre-war holiday destinations throughout the British Isles, all carefully mounted in albums. One is dedicated almost entirely to her pet dogs, - King Charles Spaniels, playing in the garden at Holly Walk and clearly doted upon.

Margaret Kirk never married, but as her great-great-grandfather Edwin Betteridge Taylor was one of a family of ten, she had, and still has, an extensive network of second and third cousins and their descendants. If any live locally, and would like the albums, and a mid-19th century studio portrait of Mrs WL Taylor and her sons William Leatherland and Edwin Thomas Taylor, please get in touch with LHG Secretary, via the website, www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk



The Beech Lawn 'BUDGET'



This fragile copy of 'The Budget,' discovered amongst the papers of the late Mrs May Jackson by her Australian grandson Geoff Bowd wasn't quite what he expected, - rather than a financial summary relating to the Beech Lawn Ladies' College and High School, it is a copy of the 1892 School Magazine. It contains pupil's poems and stories, accounts of school activities, successes in tennis and music, visits to concerts and recitals, celebrations of the birthdays of Miss Browne (Headmistress) and her nieces with whole days' holidays, and above all, (copied from the Courier) the presentation in July 1892 of Miss Browne to HRH the Prince of Wales at Warwick Castle. There were outings to the Royal Agricultural Show in June, and an Illuminated Concert in Jephson Gardens in July. Amongst acknowledgements for receipt of copies of other schools' magazines on p19, The Portcullis is mentioned, - a title which will resonate with Warwick School alumni, and which may explain a later family connection.

But, I am sure you are wondering, how did 'The Budget' find its way to Australia? Mrs May Jackson, née Mason, was a pupil at Beech Lawn, and kept The Budget as a souvenir of her time there, and her prize at the age of 16 for "pianoforte accomplishment." The oldest of a family of five, May was born in Wilmslow, Cheshire in 1876. Her father Thomas was a Hat Manufacturer, who sadly died in 1889 when May was thirteen and her youngest brother Carl just five. Two years later, May's widowed mother, Harriet, moved the family to Ventnor Villa, Willes Terrace in Leamington. May was confirmed at the Parish Church in February 1893, but not much else is known about the family's stay in the Spa. Geoff, however, remembers May reminiscing about living here, her fondness for literature and music, and ice-skating. May's future husband, Wilfrid Jackson, who came from a large farming family in Wellesbourne, had been a boarder at Warwick School, where he won prizes for excellence. Could they have met in Leamington? Might Wilfrid be the reason that the Masons soon left Leamington for Battersea? He became an advertising agent in London, and he and May married in April 1900 at Holy Trinity Church, Clapham. They had a son, Wilfrid George in July 1902, and a daughter Marjorie in 1904, who sadly died the same year. The Jacksons emigrated to Australia in 1905/6, where they went on to have two more children, Dorothy May and Alfred Herbert. Wilfrid died in June 1954, and May in March 1970, - and like many of us, Geoff now wishes he had paid more attention to May's stories, - and at least kept some notes. There is still lots of family history that he could investigate, - his paternal heritage traces back to the First Fleet of 1788, which means he is descended from a convict!

Margaret Rushton

A New Project!

LEAMINGTON HISTORY GROUP



Leamington History Group, under the leadership of Stella Bolitho, is looking to set up a new project to encourage younger local historians. We have worked with school groups in the past, and more recently, with students from Warwickshire College, and the University of Warwick, but we are keen to cast the net further afield. We can offer support, mentoring and coaching at all levels of local history study, and are keen to recruit volunteers. Do you have expertise/experience working with school groups, After School Clubs, Brownies, Cubs, Guides and Scouts, Community Service, or Duke of Edinburgh's Award?

If you do, and are happy to help, even for a short time, Stella would like to hear from you. Please contact her through the Secretary (www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk)

Louisa Bisby, Football Professional



Louisa Bisby is an Australian soccer player who started her football career playing for Aston Villa as a youngster in England, before moving to Australia in 1994 when she was 15. She was born and grew up in Leamington, attending Brookhurst Combined School with her twin sister and older brother. Louisa always excelled at football, and was admired and encouraged (even by the boys!) for her skills and success in the school team. She was the first girl player to represent the school, setting a precedent for others to follow. There were no girls' teams in Leamington and district in the 1980s, hence the long treks to Aston Villa, where Louisa literally found her feet in 1993.

Once in Australia, she quickly caught the attention of a number of coaches, and represented both the state and national teams at the highest level. Her glittering junior career included a tour of Holland with the Australian Under 18 team. A press headline in 2008 read: "Melbourne Victory Women will use the experience of key midfielder Louisa Bisby to the ultimate advantage in its inaugural Westfield W-League season." In 2000 she played professional football for Chengdu in the Chinese Women's Super League, before returning to Australia the following year to play for Box Hill in the Women's Premier League (WPL). Louisa spent three seasons with Box Hill, winning the 2003 WPL Gold Medal before moving to Europe for two years to play semi-professional football for German club FFC Brauweiler Pulheim (now FC Koln) in the Women's Bundesliga in Germany. Her full-time professional career came to an end with Melbourne Victory with a knee injury in 2012, but having completed a degree in Business, Sport and Leisure Management at one of the best sports universities in Australia, she stayed in the game, working at Melbourne Heart as a Game Development Officer, organising and leading football clinics for schools, clubs and other organisations like local councils. She clearly enjoys her work with young children: "The enthusiasm of the little kids is great. It's especially nice to see the excitement on the faces of kids who haven't played before. You can tell they are enjoying learning something new".

Louisa has also been a team coach and manager, enjoying the variety of tasks demanded of her. She reports that the role's diversity gives her a better understanding of the football landscape, players' needs as individuals and their goals for life after football.

Forthcoming Monday meetings at Dormer Conference Centre, Dormer Place, starting at 7.30 pm

Monday 23 September, John Berkeley: *From Pens to Particle Physics*

The remarkable story of Brandauer, skilled pen-makers and contributors to the Large Hadron Collider at CERN

Monday 28 October, Mike Musson and Friends: *The London & North Western Railway in Warwickshire*

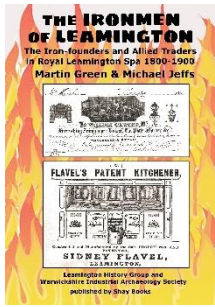
Monday 25 November, Sue Moore: *The History of the Loft Theatre and its role in the cultural life of Royal Leamington Spa*

Monday 16 December (Please note: 3rd Monday), *Members' Evening*

A social evening, with an opportunity to share research or archive material.

Members are invited to present a maximum of 10 slides on any history-related topic

The Ironmen of Leamington



It would appear that we are exceptionally fortunate in the Leamington area to have so many publications to draw on to illustrate our local history and one of the latest is "The Ironmen of Leamington" by Martin Green and Michael Jeffs.

This industry is one not readily associated with Leamington with its stately terraces and fashionable entertainments of days gone by. The book recognises the vital part the iron men played in the development and prosperity of the town and area. It is profusely illustrated with photographs, catalogue prints and advertisements besides illustrations of the beautiful iron work balconies for which Leamington is famous.

The most well-known manufacturers must be the Flavel family. William Flavel patented the famous Kitchener Range. Whereas today we simply switch our cookers on, in the early 1800's it was necessary to employ live fire to do the work and the Kitchener provided facilities to make this as easy as possible within the limits of those days, combining hotplates, oven and water heating. No self-respecting kitchen was complete without its black-leaded range manufactured by one of the local iron founders, often bearing a nameplate, indicating Leamington manufacture. Larger versions were installed in grand houses throughout the country and beyond, and a local example can be seen in the kitchen at Charlecote Park. Flavels' work was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Flavels were not the only company to provide iron work in the area and the contributions of other firms are summarised in detail. Apparently, with the exception of Barwell and Hagger of Northampton the decorative ironwork adorning the houses of Leamington carries no manufacturer's mark. A careful reading of this book will have pedestrians constantly staring at the ground and at railings in Leamington seeking indications of manufacture!

It seems impossible to effectively summarise the content of this intensive, detailed and carefully-researched book which summarises so well the history of iron work produced in Leamington and elsewhere for the embellishment of the town and it is highly recommended reading for all who wish to have a greater appreciation of their surroundings.

Graham E Cooper

Heritage Open Weekends, September 2019

This year, Warwick District Council will be supporting a 10-day event, with more venues than ever open to the public. As we have done since the scheme started, Leamington History Group will be stewarding the display at South Lodge, on the first weekend, - each afternoon, 12.30 – 3.30 pm on Friday 13 - Sunday 15 September.

Please spread the news, and if you can spare half an hour, come and give us a hand. We would be delighted to see you!

On Saturday 14 and Sunday 15, there will also be a free Guided Walk round Leamington Cemetery at Brunswick Street. Meet guide Barry Franklin, at the middle entrance for a tour lasting a little over an hour. There is no parking in the cemetery itself, but local G1 buses stop nearby. The walks are suitable for all ages and abilities, but in wet weather, some parts of the walk are not accessible to those with mobility difficulties.

Local History Day, Saturday 28 September 2019

The 'event of the year' for LHG will be opened by well-known local historian and author, Sheila Woolf on Saturday 28 September, at the Parish Church, when Local History Groups will be showcasing their research and publications for the eighth year running. Amongst exhibitors will be groups from Lillington, Sydenham, Whitnash, Harbury, Marton and the County Record Office in Warwick. The Police Local History Society and Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society will be there, along with Jacqui Kirk, to advise on Family History, and authors such as Allan Jennings and Graham Sutherland. Other groups such as Friends of the Pump Room Gardens and Warwickshire Gardens Trust will also have displays. The Church Café will be open all day for delicious sandwiches and coffee.

Please leave plenty of time for parking, as there is no parking near the church.

Reviews, with Tessa Whitehouse

Monday 25 March, Nigel Briggs: Sir Frederick Gibberd C.B.E. R.A. 1908 – 1984

Even though he was Coventry born and bred, not many local people know of Sir Frederick Gibberd whose work as an architect contributed so much to late 20th century Leamington. Frederick Gibberd began his career designing low cost housing in Pimlico, concentrating on creating homes with space, balconies, overhangs and green spaces which were to become his style. Declared unfit for military service during the war, he studied town planning, focusing on developing styles to meet future needs. His first major post war project was Harlow New Town, creating spacious living at all levels, in houses, flats and civic amenities. In Leamington, he later developed the Spa Centre, Kennedy Square, and the Gainsborough Drive area off Sydenham Drive, where small culs-de-sac, walkways, and landscaping along the canal frontage, created a pleasing appearance. Other planners were involved with the further progress of Sydenham creating the mixture of styles we see today. Sir Frederick also designed the flats on the corner of Northumberland Road, Nuneaton Library, and a development on the corner of Sheep Street in Stratford upon Avon which blends well with the surrounding area. He designed the new High School in Henley in Arden in the 1950s, and in keeping with the Tudor aspect of the town, he created a building with beams and pitched roofs. Further afield, he is renowned for his work on a certain cathedral in Liverpool, aka 'Paddy's Wigwam' or 'The Mersey Funnel'! Sir Frederick retired to live at Marsh Lane in Harlow where he died in 1984 leaving a great legacy both in Harlow and our town.

Monday 29 April: Martin Green: The Ironmen of Leamington

Many of us take little notice of street features such as manhole covers, drain covers, posts, bollards and especially the ornate ironwork on some of the buildings in town and give no thought to their origins, but from Martin's very interesting talk we learned that Leamington once had a very active ironwork industry. Many of the names of the manufacturers are still clearly displayed – at ground level. Foundries were set up and traded alongside each other, some, like Flavels, surviving and some lasting only a short while. Supply and demand fluctuated, alongside industrial rivalry, problems concerning patents, finance, and often bankruptcy. Another factor was that after two or three generations a family business often folded because inheritors lacked interest or skill, or both. The exception was Flavel's, which originally began producing kitchen ranges, - the hub of most homes providing warmth, cooking facilities and hot water. As time progressed, Flavels expanded their range of products to include gas cookers and other appliances. It is these high-quality products that have made the company it is today and enterprise and good workmanship ensure its survival at the Clarence Street premises. To most people it is now known as 'Rangemaster' but to Leamingtonians brought up in its shadows it will always be 'Flavels' and many people today, myself included, have fond memories of the children's' Christmas party at the Town Hall. 'The Ironmen' is a joint publication by Leamington History Group and Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society, and it features Flavels, but it is not a history of this one factory but an exploration of the whole industry of ironmaking in a 19th Regency town.

Monday 20 May, David Fry: A look at Leamington's early postcards and the photographers who produced them

David gave us an instructive insight into Leamington's early postcards and the sixty years' photographic evolution involved. From early Daguerreotypes using glass plates to create the picture, to the 'modern technology' of 19th Century photographic studios, David took us on a whistle-stop tour of the upper Parade and town centre, where cut-throat competition led to rapid developments in quality, quantity and cost. One of the last of the early photographic shops to survive in the town was that of Ernest John Bryan at 17 Regent Grove, which was still open in the 1950s. Creating local views became an interest, shared in the format that we now call the postcard. It was a convenient size and cheap to produce and post. As time progressed people realised the value of pictures of family and events, and although sitting for the photograph, for up to as long as five minutes, was involved, the result was a picture to be treasured. We were amazed that although taken at the turn of the century, the images were remarkably clear. Some had not been seen before. One picture in particular fascinated us. It was of Milverton cemetery and in the centre of the picture was a beautiful chapel which very few people can now remember. David also included rare views of the Parade, Shrubland Hall, Clarendon Street chapel, the Warneford Hospital. Would a talk on modern photography have such an appeal - ask your selfie!!