

**Virtual Local History Day
Saturday 26th September 2020
9.55 a.m.- 4.30 p.m.**

We are delighted to invite you to our first Virtual Leamington History Day on Saturday, 26th September 2020, which will again celebrate Leamington's diverse past. We have planned a range of short presentations from local historians and societies with topics ranging from Leamington's Canals, the Home Front, Lost Pubs, Slum Clearance, A Cemetery Walk, Lillington Saxon Church; Leamington's first Hospital, Southam through the Ages; Shops; The London and North Western Railway; and Glimpses of Warwickshire. Our very own 'Genealogy Genie', Jacqui Kirk will be available with Family History advice and support.

At 4 p.m. Afternoon Tea, Cake and Quiz.

Please ask your friends and family around to join you for afternoon tea and cake at 4 p.m. when our quizmaster, Mr Barry Franklin, will be testing your knowledge of local history, in the comfort of your own home. Please email secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk to register for the Quiz.

Leamington History Group Old Leamington Calendar 2021



The Crown Hotel between 1892 & 1895, when Mr J G Franklin (no relation to the Chairmen) was manager.

We are pleased to announce that the Calendar for 2021 with 12 pictures of Royal Leamington Spa, is now available.

Calendars, complete with an envelope for posting, cost £5.00, and can be obtained from the LHG Secretary on receipt of cash.

Contact the Secretary, Margaret Rushton: secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Also available at Anthony Eden. Gents Hairdressers, 97 Clarendon Street, Leamington, Arts Trail Studios, Royal Priors and Visitor Information Centre, Royal Pump Rooms.

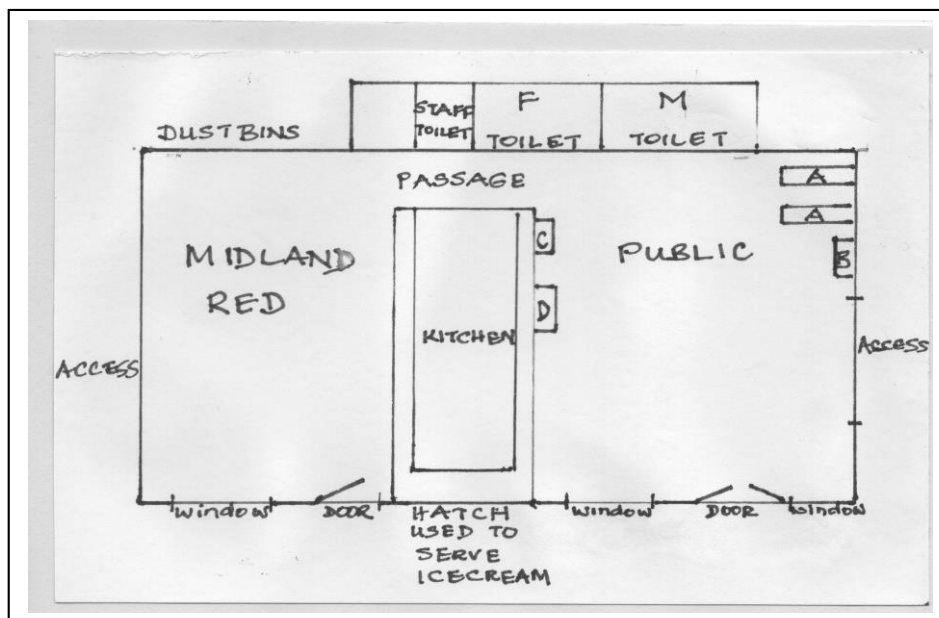
Simon's Place.



Simon's Place, formerly Alphonso's, and before that, The Bus Station Canteen, was set up close to Avenue Road Bus Station in 1965. Mr G E Fisk (father of LHG member Richard Fisk), submitted plans for a canteen building to Leamington Borough Council Public Works Committee on 8th January 1964, and three weeks later received the news that a formal application would be considered favourably. In February, the Health Committee of the Council passed a resolution that "The owner be informed that toilet facilities for members of the public be provided." Building started in late 1964, and the Canteen was completed early in 1965. The builder was Leamington man, George Bradford.

The canteen was single-storey, and divided into two areas, one for Midland Red Staff, and one for the public, each with a separate access. The kitchen was in the middle, and at a later date, a hatch was opened at the front of the kitchen, to serve ice cream to schoolchildren. Mars Bars were stored in a fridge to keep them cool. Bus crews were charged 3d per cup for tea, and the public paid 4d. Richard helped in the café as a teenager, and helped to draw the floorplan below:

Avenue Road Bus Station Canteen 1960s



Key: A: Pin Ball Machines; B: Juke Box; C: One Armed Bandit; D: Mars Bar Fridge
Drawing not to scale – R.Fisk, T.Gardner

Mr Fisk owned the canteen building until his death in 1971. For a while in the late 60s and early 70s, the Bus Station Café was still operating as a café, but many Leamingtonians will remember better the Army Surplus Store further along the road, - "P E Dowell & Co Ltd, Second Hand Goods Dealers," with its own distinctive, musty smell.

"Alphonso" later ran the Café for some time, upgrading to full meals rather than just cups of tea, to the type of all-day café often found in small towns and villages in Europe. It was often said at this time (when licensing hours were stricter,) that after closing time at the local pubs, young people went to Alphonso's for a meal, - and a further drink or two. Whether it is true or not, after a while, Alphonso made a hasty departure, - leaving behind stories of him owing money, being pursued by HMRC for non-payment of tax, and so on, and allegedly escaping abroad!



Enter "Simon", Francisco Simão, from the Butcher's Arms, Priors Hardwick, well-known all over the Midlands for its high standards and culinary flair. Simon arrived just as Leamington landed its own special 'catch', - the accolade of hosting the Women's Bowls Competition every July and August. From then on, he never looked back, and his most faithful regular customer, David Timms, still eats almost all his meals there. Simon specialises in Portuguese Cuisine, but is equally famous for his sumptuous breakfasts.

Simon is about to retire, but his legacy will live on. A colleague, Lina, (right, with Simon) has just taken over the business. She will continue to offer Portuguese dishes, - and takeaways.



Terry Gardner, August 2020.

Illustrations and photographs courtesy of Terry Gardner

Sydney Russell, 1886-1961



When Leamington History Group was lent the picture, left, for the 2020 "Old Leamington" Calendar, we searched far and wide to find the name of the man, the place and the occasion when the photo was taken. We even contacted Anthony Coulls, Director of the National Railway Museum at York, to no avail. Then, during lockdown, the image was seen on Facebook, and lo and behold, a great-granddaughter of our man got in touch, to ask for a copy of it! She is Claire Russell, and the man in question is Sydney Russell, Claire's paternal grandfather. Contact with Claire led us to her auntie Pat, a long-standing member and

archivist of the former Operatic Society, (now known as Leamington & Warwick Musical Society). Pat is one of Sydney's granddaughters, and a mine of information, as you will see!

Sydney Russell was born in Radford Semele, one of thirteen children of William and Harriett Russell. He married Louisa Maslin in September 1911 at St John's Church, Leamington and had three sons, Leslie, Stanley and Frederick. The family lived at 123 Shrubland Street, which remained Louisa's home until she died at the ripe old age of 92. Apart from Army Service in the Great war, Sydney was a railway employee all his working life.

He was a 'carman' for GWR in 1911, in charge of a horse-drawn delivery cart. He enlisted in the army in 1915, serving in France with the rank of Sergeant. Post-war, with the introduction of motorised vehicles, Sydney became a railway van/lorry driver, a job he held until retirement. He died in 1961 at the age of 74.

Wilf Bainbridge

Talking to a friend the other day, I came across the name Wilf Bainbridge for the first time. He was an uncle of my friend's wife. But that is not the whole story.

His local connection is that he was employed by Automotive Products as head of the department which was designing and developing the first automatic transmission for the company in 1965. It was eventually fitted in Minis and Austin 1100s.

The next part of the story is that Wilf Bainbridge fitted the gearbox in a Lancia Beta car and he used it personally as a test bed during which time it travelled 94,000 miles. The final part of the coincidence is that my friend bought the car from Wilf and used it for a couple of years before it collapsed into a pile of rust, - typical of Italian cars at that time.

Mick Jeffs

David Budd

Our oldest member, David Budd died aged just 90, in March this year. Known by many for his connection with the family firm of Tomes Printers, David also had a considerable reputation in the world of Magic. A lifelong member of the Magic Circle, he had an unrivalled collection of "magic memorabilia", relating to his own time on the professional stage, as well as that of other distinguished magicians. Like his mentor, Milton Woodward, son of the owner of Woodward's on the Parade, David really preferred the world of magic to that of the family firm, and until the last couple of years regularly attended Magic Circle conferences as far away as Chicago and Cuba. A true gentleman, who will be greatly missed, both here and much further afield.



Ray Pullin



On a cheerful note, former Leamington stonemason and well-known businessman Ray Pullin, will be 100 on 23rd September! Ray was a trustee at the James Hirons Care Home for very many years, only retiring at the age of 90. As Eileen was beginning to need support at home, they gave up their house at Offchurch, to be nearer to their son, and moved to Barford Court, Hove, where Eileen died in July 2017. On behalf of all members of LHG, we would like to wish Ray a very Happy Birthday!

Free Town Walks 2020

Leamington History Group, in conjunction with Leamington Town Council, runs a series of free guided walks every year between the months of June and September. This year everything was in place, the volunteer guides had been recruited and the walks programme was all ready to go. Unfortunately, the Covid virus then appeared causing LHG Committee to review the walks programme. It was decided that it would be unsafe to run the walks whilst there was any threat of infection to both guides and walkers alike. Most of the guides, because of age, fell into the 'at risk group,' making guiding the walks impossible. However, it was agreed to review the situation in September to see if the programme could be started, albeit on a reduced basis. After due consideration by the Committee at the beginning of September, it was decided to cancel the Walks for 2020. Members felt that the guides would still be at risk of infection, numbers of walkers could not be controlled and large gatherings of unrelated people were banned by the government. Although there was great regret that the popular and enjoyable walks programme would now not take place this year plans are already afoot to continue the programme in 2021. We hope you will continue to support the walks programme and join us again in 2021 for a welcome return to normality.

Michael Pearson

Postscript: LHG Committee is trialling a number of ways to keep in touch with members. We are looking forward to your feedback on the Virtual History Day, and plan to present an online meeting in place of our Monday evening meeting, in October. Jacqui Kirk has considerable experience of online meetings, presentations and attending conferences, and has offered to give the talk planned for June 2020, "Oh, Jane!" in October. Please pass on the news. More details nearer the time, -
Margaret

