

Chairman's Comments

by Barry Franklin

Well, these last few months have gone quickly, and LHG have been busy! Our recent monthly Zoom talks are well attended, particularly Anthony Coulls' insight into Warwickshire Transport, and Nigel Briggs' fascinating exploration of Leamington's Sari Fabrics.

In August, we premiered our 3rd LHG Video, 'Life After Victoria' supported by the Leamington Mayor, Susan Rasmussen. We invite everyone to view our new film - let us know what you think!

We have also been promoting LHG in the Town Centre, talking to anyone who wants to listen about our activities! We have made good links with Leamington Business Improvement District (BID) and WDC Media, discussing the Commonwealth Games and Leamington's creative events. Our presence on Facebook, Twitter and our website continue to increase.

Hopefully, we can look forward to meeting up in person soon. In the meantime, we kick off this month with our monthly Zoom talks, our 2nd Virtual Local History Days and some Town Walks. We have also put in a bid to Leamington Town Council for an exciting Global Leamington Book and Trail Project, which will engage more young people and communities.

Leamington History Monthly Talks:

27 Sep Leamington's Imperial Past: Ben Richardson

25 Oct Local Architects - from Queen Victoria into the Twentieth Century: Mick Jeffs

29 Nov Queen Victoria and the Royal Parks: Sheila Wolfe

13 Dec Christmas Social Members' Evening

Connections

September 2021

Our New Video

Life after Victoria (1900-1930)

We launched our 3rd Leamington History Film 'Life After Victoria' in style in August. This one tells the story of the town in the early 20th century – its contribution to the First World War and the Votes for Women movement, the transformation in living conditions and workers' rights, and the birth of some of Leamington's most treasured cultural institutions. We also bring the long-lost Leamington and Warwick Tramway back to life!



Special thanks to film producer, Mark Ellis, the Video Project team, to our specialist contributors and all our sponsors. Please view our film on www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Old Leamington Calendar 2022

Our Calendar 2022 is out now, only £5. It has 12 Leamington pictures, with a William Thomas building in Upper Holly Walk, once a fine gentlemen's residence named Oak House; and since the early 1950s, home to The Liberal Club, who rescued it from demolition.

(Available to purchase from Anthony Eden, Hairdresser, 97 Clarendon Street; Visitor Information Centre (Pump Rooms); Arts Trail Studios (Royal Priors) or email secretary@leamingtonhistory.co.uk)



Celebrating our Virtual Local History

We are delighted to invite you to our 2nd Virtual Local History Day which will take place over the weekend of 25-26 September. This will involve a series of talks on local history by our volunteer experts, including showing our new film, town walks and a quiz.

Saturday 25 September 2021

We will present a range of local history talks, including topics such as:

- Early Days of Flying in Leamington.
- History of the Loft Theatre; Shrubland Street.
- Tales of early Leamington's Architects.
- Pump Room Gardens Restoration.
- Transport and General Workers' Union in Leamington.
- Leamington People and Pubs; Trams.
- Votes for Women Campaign.
- Leamington Spa: at the Heart of Warwickshire History.

The final programme will be published soon on our website. You will then be able to access the links to each presentation on the day so you can choose which talks you would like to watch.

Sunday 26 September

Town Morning Walks

We are extending our local history provision this year by inviting you to book a place on a limited number of town walks. Booking details out soon on our website.

and

Local History Afternoon Quiz

Barry Franklin and Michael Pearson will be hosting an entertaining local history quiz and afternoon tea to complete of local history celebrations this year.

Again, we will have only limited places so booking will be required, until we can get back to some sort of normality!

Thomas Stedman Whitwell (1784-1840) Architect

by Mick Jeffs

It is strange to write about Thomas Whitwell because we have no record of him actually building in Leamington!



However, he did live in town for a while in the 1820s in Brunswick Street. His local claim to fame is that he planned a Utopian development off Brunswick Street which he proposed to name Southville. This address is used for 5 or 6 businesses in a Leamington Guide in the 1820s.

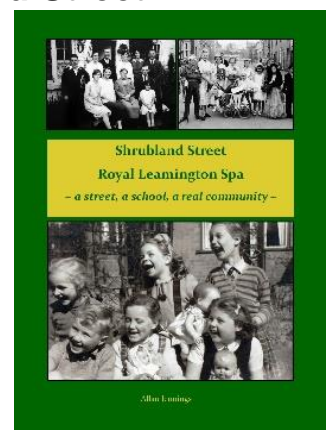
Whitwell's plan for this project was exhibited at the Royal Academy but today cannot be found. He went on to design a similar Utopia in Harmony, Indiana, USA for a visionary, Robert Owen. Again, this was not built. NB: He was the same Robert Owen who later was famed for designing and building New Lanark town.

His career fizzled out when he was involved with the rebuilding of a Whitechapel theatre which collapsed with the death of about ten people, even though Whitwell was not to blame.

New Book: Shrubland Street

Congratulations to LHG member, Allan Jennings, on publishing his new book:
Shrubland Street, Royal Leamington Spa.
For further details, please email:

allan.jennings1@ntlworld.com



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

Leamington's own resident Lord - the Rt Hon Lord Kenelm Somerville

by Michael Pearson

Kenelm was born in Bath in 1787. He was the third son of Hugh Somerville, a Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army. His mother was Mary Digby from Meriden, Warwickshire.

Kenelm was educated at Rugby, He then had a successful career in the Navy, rising through the ranks to become a captain until his retirement in October 1846.

Prior to this, Kenelm married Francis Louisa Hayman in 1833. Frances was 29 years old, some 15 years younger than her husband. He settled in Leamington to raise his family. His first child Louisa Harriet was born in 1835, followed by Emily (1836), Mary (1837), Hugh (1839), Frederick (1840), Selina (1841) and Julia (1844).

In 1842, by complete chance, he inherited the title of Lord Somerville, from the Peerage of Scotland.



Kenelm managed to arrange a long lease of the Willes family home, Newbold Comyn Hall and remained there until his death in 1864. As a Lord, Kenelm held a privileged position in Leamington Society. He sat on and chaired many committees, was a member of the Real Tennis club and had a particular interest in the development of Jephson Gardens. He died at the Hall in 1864 and was buried in Aston Somerville in Worcestershire.

Mysterious Local History Photographs

by Allan Jennings

Recently, I acquired 3 small photographs (2"x2" monochrome images), apparently taken in

Leamington around the 1960s, including Jephson Gardens and Queen Victoria's statue and this one here.



I could have filed it and guessed where it was taken – maybe Bath Street - but it didn't look right. I showed it to experts, Peter Coulls and Frank James, who quickly solved the problem – it wasn't Leamington at all! It was 38-39a High Street, Stratford Upon Avon! The moral of the story – don't take everything at face value and use the experience of other talented Leamington History Group members!

Did you know? Where is Duke House, Grove Street?

by Barry Franklin

Tom Lewin and myself run our LHG Facebook page. We often get asked by some of our 4050+ followers about interesting local history topics.

Recently, one follower asked where Duke House, Grove Street was, as a distant relative attended school there. Making good use of the British Newspaper Archive and Ancestry for a census search, we soon gathered some information – but still we were unable to identify the property.

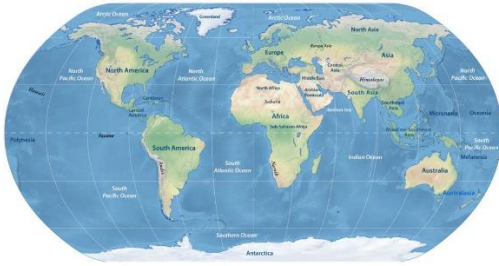
Remembering that Mick Jeffs had photographed the Board of Health Maps, he was able to identify the property. We found it on the corner of Portland Place West and Grove St.

Originally, this was property was occupied by a Major Duke. I have now managed to get a copy of his will (1833), and this has some interesting content! His house became a school for over 50 years.

If anyone has come across Major Duke from the early 19th century, I would be happy to hear it!

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Global Leamington Research Project – Get involved!



Our new LHG flagship project will explore our connections with 'Global Leamington.' We intend to invite community and school groups to get involved in researching and writing about their global connections. We have just applied for a new grant to complete a new local history book and a global trail around Leamington.

This project aims to tell the story of the town's global connections (including history, culture, politics, social, environment and economic aspects) throughout the 20th to 21st centuries. It will look at the development of Leamington town, with a particular focus on the emerging diversity of the communities who settled in our town; and the people from these communities who made Leamington the town it is today.

Firstly, we will explore Leamingtonian's who went out in the world and made a difference. Secondly, we want to hear about the people who came to Leamington and make up our town community today. We want everyone to have the opportunity to tell their story and record their history. We will then collate our research and publish a new local history book, written by LHG members, community groups, school children and university students.

Alongside this, we are thinking about also developing a new Global Leamington Trail for town visitors and our community, highlighting key places with connections across the world.

We want to discover the impact of our town, and particularly its people, around the world.

If you are interested in getting involved in this, please get in touch. We need members to help with their ideas, research, telling your stories, running workshops in schools, liaising with communities, writing, and editing too!

Obituaries

by Margaret Rushton and Kay Bugg

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to three of our LHG members. They will all be greatly missed.

Beth Faccini died after a fall at home in June. She had trained in London as a beautician with Elizabeth Arden; and then worked in both New York and Washington, meeting many famous people and once even made-up Jackie Kennedy. Returning to England, Beth was employed at Rackhams, Birmingham; and as housekeeper at Ashorne Management Training Centre. There, she met her husband, the AMTC chef. They bought a house in Willes Road where Beth lived for the rest of her life. Divorce led to increasing involvement in St Mary's Church, Leamington. She loved books, theatre and cinema and was also a keen member of literary, poetry societies, the LHG and Sydenham History Group.

Derek Billings passed away suddenly in July. He was a long-standing member of the LHG, a modest, unassuming but stalwart supporter of every venture. Derek's interests were wide - from photography to Industrial Archaeology to Transport to Local History. He could always be relied on for news and website articles, and calendar and display photographs - where his skills as a printer came into their own. We all learned a lot from Derek and will miss his conviviality, his experience and deep local knowledge.

Lillian Pratt: When Lily joined our LHG, she found her niche and effectively took on a new lease of life. She loved being involved, welcoming visitors to South Lodge on Heritage Days and selling our Calendars at Local History Days. Lily couldn't bear to miss our Tuesday get-togethers, even though teased about her concerns about modern dress and manners. On arrival, Terry Gardner would sweep the door open, declaiming "Dame Lily!", the men would jump to their feet to salute her, and Ken Owen always had her coffee ready! We will all miss Lily, for her kindness, generosity, and sheer goodwill.

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