

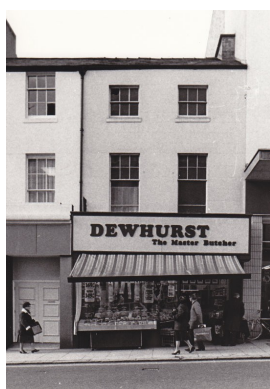
The Leamington Omnibus

Spring 2012

The Newsletter of the Leamington History Group

Alan Mayes Photographic Archive

Long before many other local photographers started to archive shops and other buildings before redevelopments such as The Royal Priors, Warwickshire County Council Conservation Officer, Alan Mayes was busy with his camera, particularly in Leamington.



Towards the end of 2011, Terry Gardner and Colin Jennings were invited to Riverside House, where Alan presented them with an extensive collection of photographs, slides, and glass-plate negatives. In return for this generous gift, Leamington History

Group will digitise and catalogue the collection, returning two copies in disc form to Alan Mayes.



There are shots of shops, offices, public buildings and private houses, taken over a long period, capturing the essence of our town. Once the collection has been uploaded to the History Group archive, it will enable future researchers to compare

the 'then' and 'now' of Leamington's visual history.

Leamington History Group is very grateful not only to Alan Mayes for the gift, but also to Alan Griffin, who has taken on the mammoth task of sorting the images, dating them where possible, and copying them on to disc. Good luck, Alan!

Colin Jennings

Warwickshire Landscapes

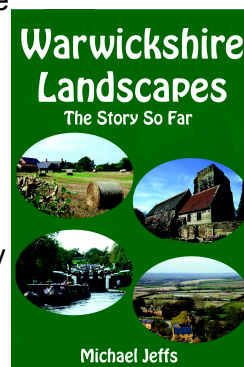
On 28th May I will be giving a talk at Dormer Conference Centre about Warwickshire Landscapes. Like my book, it will explore the development of the countryside of Warwickshire since time began. It explains why the county looks like it does today and how it appeared at various times in history.

From the distant times of continental drift, volcanoes and the ice ages the book follows the evolution of the landscape and the changes as man began to settle. The arrival of the Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans each had a profound impact. Population growth, the industrial revolution, wars and developments in local and international transport have all had an effect.

The book then looks at the planning system and other actions taken by government, whether central, regional or local, in the past century to limit development in the countryside.

It ends with a review of the future of the landscapes of Warwickshire, - a glorious county. You are bound to enjoy it more with some idea of its history.

All proceeds from book sales will be divided equally between the Warwickshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England and to Water Aid. **Mick Jeffs**



IMPORTANT REMINDER

Date for your Diary: **Saturday 19 May 2012**

Local History Fair, with displays from neighbouring local history societies.

10.30 – 3.30, Dormer Conference Centre.
Admission Free

The Diamond Jubilee

As we look forward to the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in June, we recall that of her four times great-grandparent, Queen Victoria, in June 1897. Royal Leamington Spa celebrated at length, as can be seen from the extract below reproduced by kind permission of the author, Lyndon F Cave.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 1897 – Leamington Spa

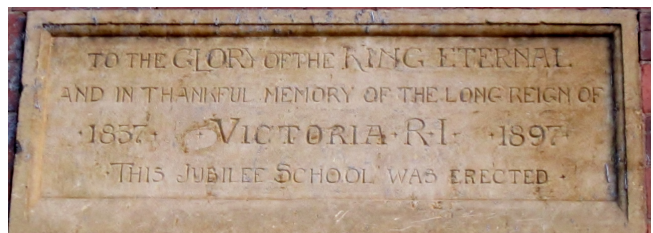
The Queen's Diamond Jubilee was marked in great style by the opening of Victoria Park. The Ground, originally the cricket field alongside the river walk, was purchased for £7,600 and £3,000 was spent laying out the park. A lodge was built at the end of Avenue Road so the keeper could 'see that proper order is maintained and the daily rules observed.' The strip of land between Archery Road and the river walk was laid out for tennis, bowls and croquet, the rest being used for cricket, or football in the winter. Jubilee day was celebrated very enthusiastically all over the country, but nowhere more so than in Leamington, with its privileged title of 'Royal'. In spite of the inclement weather, after a church service of thanksgiving the mayor and council, militia, Fire Brigade and a great number of the townspeople processed from the Town Hall along Avenue Road to the new park, where they crowded into a marquee to take refreshments. Four Thousand five hundred schoolchildren thronged the park, hopefully keeping quiet long enough to hear the speeches, sing the National Anthem and give the customary hearty cheers. Alderman Dr. Thursfield, the mayor, named the park and declared it open, saying that it covered 21 acres, had cost three farthing in the pound rate, or 13d for a man rated at £20 p.a., and was a bargain at the price. The first sports were held in the park later the same day, but by then a procession had returned to the Pump Room Gardens, where the festivities continued with a dinner in a marquee for those over sixty-five. There were street decorations, the band played in Jephson

Gardens which were illuminated with fairy and chinese lamps, and the day ended with a gigantic bonfire.

Lyndon F Cave: Royal Leamington Spa

Lillington

At Lillington Church of England School, where there had long been overcrowding, two new schoolrooms were added to the existing building, and a plaque affixed, to record the event.



The School was closed for a whole week's holiday in June, for Jubilee Week.

Milverton

At Milverton, a commemorative stone bench was placed at the centre of the village, inscribed
1837 V R 1897

Some schools presented the children with commemorative medals on ribbons, and many families became proud owners of medalettes such as this one, showing Queen Victoria and her descendants, future British monarchs, Edward VII, George V and Edward VIII (shown here as a baby)



THE MYSTERIOUS WALL TABLETS

On a number of homes in Tachbrook Road Leamington there are engraved stone tablets, dedicating the houses there to deceased individuals by daughters, wives and sisters. The houses form part of a council development carried out by the former Leamington Borough Council in 1932/1933, on the site of Windmill Farm in Tachbrook Road.

Number 193 is dedicated by Mary L Jenkinson to the memory of her mother Lady Jenkinson, who was born at Enniskerry Ireland 1830, and died in 1915.

Number 195 is dedicated by Veronica Batchelor, to the memory of her husband Allen Edward Batchelor, born at Maindee, Mon [Montgomery] in the year 1853, and died in 1916.

Daisy Rooper dedicated number 197 to the memory of Percy Lens Rooper, born at Uppingham in the year 1861, and died in 1930.

And in Windmill Road, numbers 38, 40, and 42 are dedicated respectively to "Edward H. Douty", by Mrs Graham Rees-Mogg, to "Two Sons killed in the Great War", and to "A beloved brother, Arthur Llewellyn Lloyd, born 1855, died 1926".



Dedication Panel at No 195, Courtesy Barry Franklin

Any information about this conundrum will be gratefully received, especially if anyone can link the dedicatees, or those who funded the installations. Given their varied home towns and backgrounds, they seem very unlikely to have an obvious connection to the provision of Council Housing in the 1930s.

Barry Franklin Bfranklin600@aol.com

A Regal Ghost



● The Regal Cinema, 1969, (courtesy of Regal cinema management).

Leamington's Apollo 4 Cinema started life as 'The Regal', designed in Art Deco style by Horace G Bradley and opened in September 1931. It was then one of the 15 largest cinemas in the UK. Remodelled several times since then, it is reputedly haunted, by a lady thought by many to be the late Edith Devis.

Mrs Devis was the widow of a wealthy local man who sponsored a number of pre-WW2 Warwickshire charitable endeavours, including the founding of the Munro-Devis Maternity Home in Stratford upon Avon.

According to family members, Mrs Devis gave substantial sums towards a number of local ventures, including the building of the Regal cinema, though this last was never publicly acknowledged.

The ghost is said to have made its first appearance shortly after Mrs Devis' death in a car crash. Have any of our readers ever seen her?

Margaret Rushton

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday 19 May 2012 10am-3pm, Dormer Conference Centre,
next to St Peter's Church, Dormer Place**

Leamington Local History Fair

Guest Speaker: Dr Gill Draper of the British Association of Local History Societies

Monday 28 May 2012

Mick Jeffs : Warwickshire Landscapes

An illustrated talk based on Mick's book of the same title

Monday 25 June 2012

Mindy Chillery: Craig: A story of Victorian Leamington.
(See panel below)

Monday 24 July 2012

Alan Griffin A Leamington widow & her plantation

slaves: A tomb in All Saints' churchyard led to some fascinating discoveries

Monday 24 September 2012

Jo Clarke Humble Village to Splendid Spa

Jo presents another in the late Bill Gibbons' slide show/talks on Leamington

Monday 29 October 2012

Allan Jennings Leamington pubs in 1852

Allan looks back a hundred and sixty years to the licensed houses in the town in 1852.

Monday 26 November 2012

**Chris Baker Murder most Foul: Sir Bernard Spilsbury
in the Great War**

Born in Bath Street, Bernard Spilsbury became the most famous forensic scientist of his day.

Monday 17 December 2012

Christmas function with refreshments

*All Monday meetings take place at Dormer Conference Centre,
starting at 7.30 pm*

Mindy Chillery: Craig: A story of Victorian Leamington.

Using digital images and drama, Mindy brings to life the Reverend John Craig, Vicar of All Saints' Parish Church, Leamington. This presentation focuses on the life of the calamitous and often controversial Rev. Craig, eccentric Victorian Vicar of Leamington for close on 40 years. Craig was a man of energy, passion, humour and intellect who reached for the stars, both metaphorically and practically, even going so far as to build a gigantic telescope on Wandsworth Common. Mindy also reflects on the changing fortunes of the exciting new Spa town and its church during the reign of Queen Victoria and the incumbency of the notorious Reverend.

HELP!

Member Tessa Whitehouse would very much like to recover the copy of one of her old school reports, brought to South Lodge, along with photographs and other memorabilia. On returning home, the report was missing. Could you please search your papers, to see if it has become interleaved with a newsletter? Many thanks. Ed

***Leamington Looks Back: A
Festival of Heritage & Culture***

Fiona Henderson and Jenny St John, of *Heritage Matters*, are organising a new history festival, ***Leamington Looks Back: A Festival of Heritage & Culture***. For 16 days in June, incorporating the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, there will be more than 50 events, most of them free, showcasing local heritage activity. They will include exhibitions, walks, talks, films, live performance, learning workshops and some school presentations. Events will take place in and around the town, from cafes, parks and museums to community centres. A free printed programme will be available soon. Find out more on the festival's website:, www.leamingtonlooksback.co.uk or phone: 01926 774373.

Jenny St John

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2012-13

Alan Griffin, Acting Chairman
Terry Gardner, Treasurer
Margaret Rushton, Secretary
Jo Clark
Mick Cullen,
Ronnie Goldstein
Maggie McGreevy
Robin Stott

All members can be contacted via the Secretary, through the website,
www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Alan Griffin

Finally, the editorial team would like to record our warmest thanks to Alan Griffin, who has edited and produced The Leamington Omnibus since its inception. As Alan retires as Editor, and we pick up the baton, - we aim to keep up the high standard he set. Give us a hand! Send us an article.

*Colin Jennings, Ronnie Goldstein
& Margaret Rushton*