

# The Leamington Omnibus

Newsletter of the Leamington History Group

Summer 2015

## JM Marshall, Monumental Sculptor and Mason, 18 Clarendon Street



In the late 1890s JM Marshall acquired the old established business originally founded in 1840 by Mr William Warmington and carried on for many years afterwards by his son George.

JM Marshall had previously worked with Sir Gilbert Scott and later at home and abroad for many years with Farmer & Brindley of Lambeth. With this experience Mr Marshall was well qualified to start his own business producing exquisitely wrought sculpted designs in marble and stone: - Monuments, Crosses, Tablets, Mausoleums and other Mortuary emblems. He also produced architectural embellishments in marble and stone work. He was reputed to have the finest and most varied stock in the Midlands.

Mr Marshall executed commissions and sculptural work for the West Indies and other places abroad and had a rapidly expanding clientèle among the resident gentry in and around the Royal Spa. Mr Marshall only employed first class workmen under his own personal supervision and always guaranteed a high standard of excellence when his estimates were accepted.

In modern times, 18 Clarendon Street has been occupied by a number of different trades, - it was once a hairdressers, then a printers and is currently home to *Top Nosh*, who provide catering for parties and functions.

*Jo Clark*

## A Time to Remember



Thursday 18 June marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Anthropoid and the mission of the seven Czech soldiers to assassinate the Nazi tyrant Reinhard Heydrich. The Friends of the Czech Memorial Fountain, including many living relatives of the 4000 soldiers billeted in and around Leamington in WW2, gathered in Jephson Gardens on Sunday 14 June to pay tribute. Led by representatives of both the Czech and Slovak Embassies in London, Cllr Amanda Stevens,

Mayor of Leamington, Cllr Doody, Chairman of WDC, Michael Kalas, and Christopher Pavel laid wreaths in their memory. Alan Griffin, founder of the Friends, gave an address, and afterwards at a reception in the Glasshouse Studio, presented a further tribute based on his research into the assassination of Heydrich and the violent aftermath. Information about the Friends Association and the story of the fountain and the free Czech Army in Leamington in WW2, can be found at South Lodge, Jephson Gardens any Tuesday morning between 10 am and 12 noon, from the Aviary Cafe in Jephson Gardens and from the Visitor Information Centre at the Pump Rooms.

June 18 2015 marked another, more distant anniversary, the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo. Masterminded by military researcher and historian David Eason, a commemorative ceremony was conducted at the Parish Church by the Vicar, Rev Christopher Wilson, to honour the four veterans, each with strong local connections, who took part in the battle. Wreaths in memory of Major General Alexander McDonald, Col Charles Gold, Lt Col J C Wallington and Sgt Major William Lawton were laid by military representatives, pupils from Arnold lodge and Kingsley Schools, David Eason, the Lord Lieutenant, and William Lawton's great-great-grandson, Derek Billings.



## Church Bell-Ringing - a Brainteaser for the Uninitiated.

The peals of the church bells calling parishioners to worship is one of the traditional sounds of an English Sunday morning, but there is much more to ringing those peals than might at first appear. At St Mary Magdalene's, the Parish Church of Lillington, the fifteenth century tower at the west end of the church holds eight bells. The oldest of these bells is number six, which was cast about the year 1480 by Thomas Harrys. Around the crown of the bell is the Latin inscription '*Sancta Katerina Ora Pro Nobis*', (Saint Katherine, pray for us.) This is probably the same bell that was hung in the tower when both were new. The bell would have been rung when the priest was celebrating the mass and would have been clearly heard by workers out in the surrounding fields, reminding them to pause in their labours to offer up a prayer.

By the middle of the sixteenth century the tower held three bells, identified on an inventory ordered by the Privy Council of King Edward VI in the year 1551. Items deemed unnecessary or undesirable were removed from the church and sold because, "The Kinges Majestie [had] need presently of a masse of money'. St Mary Magdalene's Church was left again with only one bell, that dedicated to Saint Katharine. In 1625 a new bell, cast by Hugh Watts, was hung beside Saint Katherine's Bell and fifty years later, in 1675, a third, cast by Henry Bagley, joined them. So there were again three bells in Lillington and the art of change ringing was becoming popular. 'Change ringing' is the practice of ringing a number of bells and varying the order or sequence in which they strike. Three bells may be struck in six different orders. They are:

1 - 2 - 3 \* 2 - 1 - 3 \* 2 - 3 - 1 \* 3 - 2 - 1 \* 3 - 1 - 2 \* 1 - 3 - 2

If the pattern of changes is repeated once more, the order returns to 1 2 3 and the process may be continued. Number 1 is the smallest bell with the highest pitch and 3 is the largest. These changes were probably rung regularly at St Mary Magdalene's Church for the next three hundred years until, in 1927, five more bells were added by Mears & Stainbank of the London Bell Foundry, vastly increasing the number of changes available. The number of possible changes with eight bells is  $8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$  which comes to 40320! The number of ways in which these changes can be ordered is still being explored. New patterns or methods of change ringing are being devised all the time. Like so many things today, this used to be done by a man or a woman with a piece of paper and a pencil, but now it is done by a computer and methods of ever increasing complexity are being devised to test the brain of the most dedicated of campanologists.

*John Nutt*

## Leamington Free Guided Walks

The 2015 Season of walks began on Tuesday 23 June, after a photo call the week before with newly-elected Mayor Councillor Amanda Stevens. This year, guides will offer walks at 2.30pm on Tuesdays and at 7pm on Wednesdays from 23 June until the end of August. Walks will continue until mid-September, at 2.30pm on both days. We will be offering themed walks, covering the older part of town, its hidden alleyways and gardens, north east Leamington and the work of architect and builder William Thomas, a tour of [outside only!] some of the oldest Leamington pubs with author Tom Lewin, a tour of the Parade with local historian Alan Griffin, - try a Riverside Walk through the Pump Room Gardens to Adelaide Bridge, or you could follow the Jephson Gardens sculpture trail with Laura Smith. These are just a few of the themes we will be introducing, and full details can be found on LHG website, [www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk](http://www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk). Pre-booked group walks are most welcome, and for a small per capita charge, can be arranged at times to suit the group, outside the programme outlined above. Please contact us via the Secretary, 01926 424659, or email [rushonmm1860@gmail.com](mailto:rushonmm1860@gmail.com), if you are interested.

*Michael Pearson*

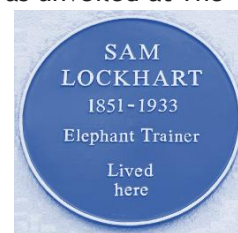
## Leamington's Blue Plaques



Ben Satchwell, village shoemaker, postman of Leamington Priors, and one of the fathers of the Spa, lived in a cottage close to the present Granary at the corner of New Street and is buried close by in the Parish Churchyard. With fellow discoverer of the Springs, William Abbotts, Satchwell promoted his home village as far and wide as he was able. Once taking Spa waters became the fashionable activity of the day, Leamington Priors expanded rapidly to become a very significant 19th century Spa town, attracting many rich and famous individuals and providing an astronomical income for the

good Dr Jephson, amongst others. On Wednesday 10 June, sponsored jointly by Parveen and Jat Rai, the owners of the building, and Leamington History Group, a Blue Plaque was unveiled at The Granary, to commemorate the man who did so much to promote the growth of Leamington "from humble village to splendid Spa."

Another, perhaps incidental, promoter of Leamington Spa was also honoured on 10 June. Sam Lockhart, the first man to train elephants to work in a circus environment, had a plaque unveiled at his former home, no 1 Warwick New Road, where a few years ago the apocryphal story of Sam burying one of his elephants in his garden turned out to have more than a grain of truth in it.



The bones of an elephant were discovered under the car park of the former District Council Planning Offices, during excavations for the foundations of new houses being built in the grounds. Janet Storrie, who first researched Lockhart's life for a children's book that she published in 1990, paid tribute to Sam and his pioneering work that eventually took him and his elephants all over the world. Sam's plaque, unveiled by a great niece, Kenilworth resident Mrs King, was sponsored by the residents of the apartment complex now on the site of his old house.

*All photographs in this issue by kind permission of Allan Jennings*

## A Recent Find

After languishing for years in a cupboard at South Lodge, its glass and cord broken, a framed plan of Jephson Gardens, designed by Gordon Gregory Frost, was refurbished by History Group members a couple of years ago, for display alongside the light boxes with their permanent exhibition. At the time, no one could remember where the plan came from, or anything about G G Frost, Esq.

Sorting out old files recently, I came across a cutting from The Coventry Evening Telegraph dated November 2001, which revealed that the plan had been donated by Hampshire residents Malcolm and Michael Frost, sons of Gordon, who produced the plan when he worked in the Gardens in the 1930s. Sadly, GG Frost was no relation to Leamington artist Terry, but nonetheless the watercolour is valuable, as part of the Garden's history. It shows in precise detail the pre-war planting scheme and the layout of the entire Park.

*Margaret Rushton*

## L H G Committee 2015

Officers: *Chairman*, Barry Franklin,      *Vice Chairman*, Michael Pearson,  
                   *Treasurer*, Terry Gardner,        *Secretary*, Margaret Rushton,

Committee members: Alan Griffin, *Ex Officio*, Jo Clark, Mick Jeffs, Tom Lewin, Maggie McGreevy, Tessa Whitehouse, Simon Yarwood.

## *Tessa Whitehouse Reviews*

### **Monday 27 April: Barry Franklin, Leamington Slum Clearance Co Ltd**

To a capacity audience, Chairman Barry Franklin gave the April meeting plenty to think about, with his presentation on Leamington's efforts to clear its slum dwellings. By the 1920s, it was realised that decent homes were needed to replace the slum properties found in the side streets and courts behind the elegant buildings on the Parade. By means of government grants, donations and a week's fund raising project ending with a carnival through the town the Leamington Slum Clearance Co Ltd found the necessary finance to make a start. Land was purchased at Lillington and families from Brook Street, Park Street and Kenilworth Street were accommodated in new properties at The Holt, where all homes had a bathroom, three bedrooms and a garden, at an affordable rent. The Holt was followed by similar developments at Windmill Farm on Tachbrook Road, Baker Avenue, Leicester Street and the Rushmore Estate. All the properties were eventually transferred to the local council and were the forerunners of council house building that we are familiar with today. Barry started his research when a friend asked about the plaques on some of the Windmill Road properties, and he discovered that they commemorate family members of some of the donors to the scheme. Few current residents had been aware of the history attached to these plaques but after talking with Barry they are keen to preserve another piece of Leamington's past.

### **Monday 18 May: Southam's Secret - The Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus**

On a slightly different subject than usual, in May we welcomed Mrs Gillian Grute to speak to us about the work of the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus who for many years lived and worked at the convent at Southam. This originally close order of nuns had its beginnings in Aachen in Germany and through their work set up convents in other parts of the world, including Southam. The sisters focused on their traditional roles of self-sufficiency, education for children and work in the community and to fund their lifestyle and daily needs they became needlewomen. Working together they used their combined skills to produce vestments, altar cloths, banners and other ecclesiastical items. The Southam work room closed in 1962 and the convent closed in 2005 leaving the remaining sisters to spend their retirement years in other parts of the country. Mrs Grute brought samples and pictures of the Sisters' work which showed the intricacy involved. We were able to look closely at some of the embroidery and marvel at the stitch work used to create strikingly authentic images. It is hard to imagine the work involved to produce such detailed symmetrical patterns, shading and skin texture without the use of modern machines. We are fortunate that at least some of their work survives today for everyone to admire.

### **Monday 22 June: John Wilmot, Illness in Victorian Leamington, Rich or Poor?**

John Wilmot gave us a fascinating talk on a largely unknown aspect of Leamington life, - how the rich and the poor in Victorian Leamington dealt with their health problems. Before hospitals, clinics and sanatoria were established, apart from family folklore and books such as Mrs Beeton's tomes on Household Management, the only medical advice for most people was from dispensaries, one of which, at 38, Holly Walk, remained in use until 1948. Dispensaries provided consultations as well as prescribed medication. Everything, of course, came at a cost which was not a problem for the wealthy but the poorer classes had to rely on contributions to Friendly Societies, if they could afford it. John illustrated his talk with references to the diary of Alice James, the youngest sister of the American novelist Henry James, who lived for a while at 11, Hamilton Terrace in Leamington. Alice suffered from a number of illnesses, including what today might be termed depression, fibromyalgia or M.E. Her diary recounts the many types of treatments she underwent until her death in 1891. In contrast there was a family man, Harry Simms, a cabbie from Cornwall Place who came into contact with many people and many sources of infection. He sought medical advice for a troublesome cough at a dispensary in Portland Street, where he was treated for bronchitis, given medication and recovered, thanks to the available funds from a Friendly Society. Another member of his family was not so fortunate and fell victim to consumption.

*Members can be contacted via the Secretary, through the website*  
**[www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk](http://www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk)**