

*Cover drawing:  
The former Post Office, Old Square, 1886  
Scale ~1:240.*

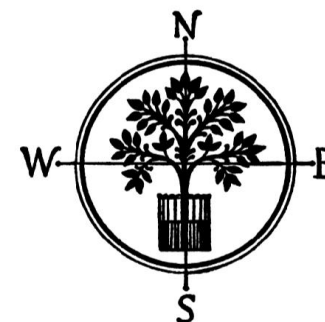
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## **THE WARWICK SOCIETY**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2010**

THE WARWICK SOCIETY has as its first aim to conserve, for the benefit of the public, or to encourage the conservation of, the natural, artistic and cultural amenities of Warwick and its neighbourhood.

It seeks to arouse in friends of Warwick a practical interest in the beauty of the town and its setting, and to persuade visitors that the attractions of Warwick lie not only in its famous monuments, but also in the streets and smaller buildings which make it one of the most distinguished towns of its size in Britain.



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The Warwick Society is a *Company Limited by Guarantee*, with no share capital. It is allowed not to add the word 'Limited' to its name, and is accorded charitable status by HM Revenue & Customs. Members each undertake, if required in the event of the Society being wound up, to contribute not more than £1 to meet its liabilities.

Membership is open to everyone interested in Warwick, and application forms can be obtained from the Membership Secretary. The annual subscription has since 2001 been £6 for an individual, or £10 for two people at the same address.

Members can increase the value to the Society of their subscriptions and donations by making a *Gift Aid Declaration*. This permits the Society to recover tax paid by members on payments to the Society, and for now enables higher-rate taxpayers themselves to claim further relief. Three-quarters of Members have made this declaration. If you have not, please ask the Treasurer for a declaration form.

The volunteer Committee welcomes the participation of members not just in the programme of events but in the whole conduct of the Society's business, for which it is responsible, and which is summarised in this Report. If you have something to contribute to the work of the Committee, or would like at any time to attend one of its meetings and to consider joining it, please contact the Chairman.

## **INTRODUCTION: SIXTY YEARS OF ‘LOCALISM’**

The Warwick Society was founded in 1950 and became a company in 1960. This report therefore covers both the sixtieth year of the Society and its fiftieth as a company. Since 1950, the population of the town has roughly doubled, to about 30,000, at a rate of increase only equalled during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Then, in quick succession, the canal, the turnpike road and the railway made its location at the south-eastern corner of the West Midlands advantageous for development. The physical evidence of that industrial era has, except for the canal and the railway, largely gone, leaving some housing but otherwise just isolated relics like the shell of the gasworks in Saltisford and warehouses in Wharf Street - and the former Post Office in Old Square, an elevation drawing of which forms the cover of this report.

The current surge is based again on economic geography and transport links, on the car, the M40, and improving train services; and in today's successor to the engineering works, the office block. The pressures that post-industrial development has created on the treasured but fragile town centre, on the transport and social infrastructure, on the green space at the fringes of the now-sprawling urban area, and on those who live and work in the town are changing the character of Warwick more than did the industrial revolution.

The Society does not oppose this development, the town's people and its buildings would suffer were it to become an economic backwater. But, in pursuing its first aim, 'to conserve, for the benefit of the public, or to encourage the conservation of, the natural, artistic and cultural amenities of Warwick and its neighbourhood', it has long worried that many important decisions are taken remotely from the town, by institutions and people who do not understand that its distinctiveness, its architecture, its streetscapes, and its green open spaces are good for its economy, not just for aesthetes.

Until 1974, Warwick had a Borough Council responsible for most of the political issues that faced the town, and for quite a lot of what is now known as 'the delivery of public services'. The significant

exception was planning, which was a responsibility of the County Council. Re-organisation in 1974 led to most local government activities becoming more remote from the town, but, under the new District Council, planning came a bit closer to local people.

However, the ‘optimum’ scope for planning has been the subject of continuous debate, change and power struggles. Until the 1990s, the *County Structure Plan* guided the *Local Plan* of each District. In 2001, it began to be replaced by the first *Regional Planning Guidance*, grouping Warwickshire with cities as distant and different as Hereford and Stoke-on-Trent as well as with Birmingham and the Black Country. To try to balance the central power of Birmingham, officers of local authorities combined in an informal and unelected ‘sub-regional partnership’, covering most of the area of the historic county by including Solihull and Coventry as well as the authorities of the present administrative county.

The *Regional Planning Guidance* became a draft *Regional Spatial Strategy*, ostensibly promoting ‘regeneration’ of the major urban areas weakened by de-industrialisation, but in practice reflecting developers’ and employers’ preferences for greenfield growth in the corner of the West Midlands nearest to London. Financial crisis in 2007 abruptly halted actual building, which has hardly resumed, and in 2010 the new Government abolished the regional strategy.

Instead, it promulgated the new doctrine of ‘localism’, with concepts of ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ which, like all vogue words, are used more than understood. The *Localism Bill*, published in December 2010, will not be enacted till later in 2011, and the processes that it advocates will take longer to become effective. So we do not yet know the practical impact of the words of the Orwellian-sounding Minister of State for Decentralisation: he writes\* of ‘the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people ... freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system

\* In the necessary *Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill*, DCLG Jan 2011, at [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk).

more democratic and more effective, and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally’.

This should be music to the ears of a Society which has often found itself opposing District, County and Regional authorities and regional and national companies with bad designs on the town. But we are apprehensive that, for most politicians, the ideal *locus* of power is just where they are, and that the poorly-defined ideal of ‘localism’ will only reach Warwick in watered-down weakness.

Local politics have not been kind to Warwick since the Borough ended. Its replacement parish council, while named a Town Council, has very limited responsibilities and influence; its significance is mainly symbolic. The town’s three wards divide it as Julius Cæsar boasted of dividing Gaul, the two sides of the High Street are represented by different councillors. The three members for each of the sprawling District Council wards have no close affinity with large parts of them. And we all read ‘local’ news in a *Courier* which, its late editor admitted, sees Warwick as a suburb of Leamington.

Instinctively, and through its own actions, the Society favours ‘localism’ and its aim ‘to place significantly more influence in the hands of local people over issues that make a big difference to their lives’. But the Society, as part of ‘civil society’, as well as being a civic society, will have to work hard to gain that influence. Councils which have been encouraged to see themselves as business entities, in pursuit of their own financial goals, may be quite reticent about letting local people really control their own affairs.

Looking forward to the next few years, rather than back to the last sixty, government policy may in principle give the Society, and all the people of Warwick, the chance to decide more of the future of the town. How in practice to grasp that potential and use it constructively remains uncertain.

The Committee hopes that its activities in 2010, summarised in this report, match members’ expectations of it, and is hugely grateful for members’ support - throughout those six decades of local action and, it hopes, in the ‘localist’ future.

## PLANNING POLICY

In 2009 we reported on how the *Regional Spatial Strategy* placed upon the District a requirement to provide 14,500 new homes between 2006 and 2026. To meet this externally-set requirement, the District Council's draft *Core Strategy* proposed extensive housebuilding on green fields to the south-east of the town. We particularly opposed development of the triangle between Myton Road, Gallows Hill and Europa Way, which, while very profitable for the charities which own it, would destroy the green gap between the Warwick and Leamington built-up areas<sup>†</sup> and generate traffic which none of the adjacent roads could accommodate.

But before the date set for publication of the final proposal for the *Core Strategy* in mid-2010, the new Government abolished the *Regional Spatial Strategy* and its top-down requirements. It said that the responsibility for deciding how many houses should be built in each part of the country should be local, to meet local needs.

There was uncertainty both about the legal basis of this policy reversal and about how the District Council would respond. While there were legal challenges elsewhere, no developer took advantage of the uncertainty to propose rapid development in Warwick. Given the surplus of unsold houses and unbuilt planning consents which has lasted since 2007 and shows no sign of ending, this was unsurprising.

At the end of the year, there was no sign of the District Council's new proposals, though consultation on them was scheduled for spring 2011. Meanwhile all relevant policies in the existing *Local Plan* have been 'saved' and will remain in force *sine die*, guiding the determination of planning applications.

<sup>†</sup> The Shires Retail Park, to the east of Europa Way, as well as much of the Heathcote industrial estate and Warwick Gates housing, are of course within Warwick. But the survival of the green wedge of farmland beyond Myton insulates the rest of Warwick from the lost landscape of the shopping centre, its intrusive signs and its dreary car parks. The gap makes many see the commercial development as part of Leamington, to its disadvantage. The owners deny its true location, having renamed it the '*Leamington Retail Park*', and we hesitate to correct them.

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND RESPONSES

We begin with an update on important applications which remained unresolved at the end of 2009.

The renovation of much of the **Market Hall County Museum** was completed. Externally, its appearance is much improved. Internally, inept automatic doors mar the approach to the upper galleries; and curators are concerned at the effect of sunlight on the exhibits. But there has been a series of lively temporary art exhibitions, and the Museum is clearly more appreciated as a result of the work.

We lamented last year the conversion of part of **38-40 Market Place**, previously Woolworths, into another café. The other part of the building remained in retail use, as *The Original Factory Shop*. That posted a gaudy sign which paid no regard to Costa's on the other part of the frontage, and which clearly damaged the setting of the Market Hall. We persuaded the WDC Planning Committee to go against its officer's recommendation disregarding this impact, and to refuse the retrospective application. We were delighted when on appeal an Inspector upheld this decision.

The very large office blocks at **IBM, now Opus 40**, on the Birmingham Road, were approved, in spite of the big increase that they will cause in traffic at the A46 junction north-west of the town centre. Another part of the same estate, adjacent to the cemetery, received consent for the construction of a Premier Inn hotel.

This year, in economic uncertainty, the number of applications has, been lower than in many recent years. Work has remained suspended on the most extreme of the boom developments, the flats on the Portobello Potterton site, where a security guard keeps vigil on unfinished concrete bases now greying with age. Several other developments which have received outline or full permission have not been started, and some are clearly the subject of second thoughts.

At **Tournament Fields**, there was an application for outline permission for ninety houses and another for a high-dependency care home, both on land designated for employment use. Although it could be argued that the care home, like the adjacent Circle Hospital

approved last year, would provide employment, we expressed the view that job numbers would be low relative to the area of land used, and concern that the loss of employment land for this or for housing would necessitate its replacement by greenfield sites.

We met the planning consultants for the housing development before they made their application, and suggested that the crescent which they proposed overlooking the ponds and the Stratford Road should face, rather than turn its convex back towards, the approach to the town. We were pleased that the eventual application took this advice, but disappointed that it still consumed some of the planned green open space for car parking, and that the rest of the housing was indistinguishable from that built all over the country in hundreds of thousands over the past decade. Our response to the District Council reminded it of the obligation for all housing developments in South West Warwick to make ‘section 106’ contributions towards the cost of reducing their traffic impact on Warwick town centre; and of the Council’s own policy that 40% of new housing should be ‘affordable’. The application was withdrawn before it was determined.

We objected to an application to release the flats at **22 Coten End, above the Sainsbury’s Local shop**, onto the private housing market. The development had been permitted during the time of the moratorium on housebuilding because the flats were designated as ‘affordable’. We were not convinced by the argument that no Housing Association would take them on. The selling price of the flats, we said, should be adjusted to make them a more attractive proposition to such a landlord. The Council did not determine the application within the required timescale, which led to the applicant appealing; and the appeal was eventually allowed.

At the **Boathouse**, the hire establishment in a very sensitive site beside William Eborall’s 1790 Castle Bridge, it was proposed to install a prefabricated box to be used as a changing room. We suggested that the scruffy but pleasantly 1930s boatyard required both renovation and careful enhancement, not the imposition of this alien structure. The need for it was put in doubt by its ‘access statement’, which proposed that, rather than the building meeting the

requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act for step-free access, disabled people could use the St Nicholas' Park changing facilities, only three minutes walk away! An officer of Warwick District Council, the freeholder of the site, used delegated authority to grant permission regardless, albeit only until 2015.

**Warwick Boat Club** proposed a modular concrete store on the other side of the Banbury Road, to which we also objected. Fortunately, the Planning Committee was not fooled by an offer that the concrete should be finished so that it imitated brick, and turned down the application.

At **Hill Close Gardens**, a proposal to erect ornamental iron gates and piers was badly out of keeping with both the nineteenth-century townspeople's ethos of these modest garden plots and the spirit of their restoration in recent years, which the Society has supported energetically. The original entrance from Linen Street had heavy wooden gates and it was our view that something like these should be replicated at the new entrance from the Common. Privately, we considered the proposed gates more suitable for a footballer's Wilmslow mansion. Faced with parallel objections from the Town Council and from the Warwickshire Gardens Trust, the planning officer sensibly consulted the applicant on the advisability of the proposal, and the application has not yet been determined.

We welcomed the **extension of the Conservation Area** to include Hampton Street and the Common, recognising the significance of their rôle as part of the historic townscape.

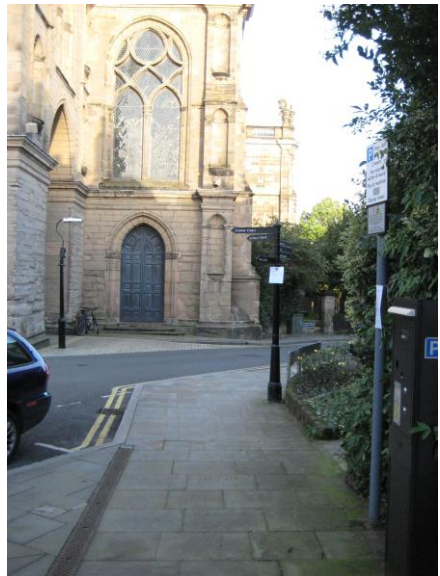
A revised application for a **hotel at the Racecourse gate to the Common**, within this extension, was made in August. It failed to address the concerns that were raised in 2009 by the Society and by local and other residents of the town. The Jockey Club asserts that declining income from horseracing makes it anxious to generate income from other activities to assure the future of the racecourse. It is determined to build on this particular site, again asserting that there are strong financial reasons for doing so. These are seen as over-riding the importance of protecting the landscape and amenity. The plan disregards the impact of increased traffic and pollution and

the threat to the children whose safe route to school would be broken by the development. Efforts to meet objections by tinkering with the design of the building have failed. It is in the wrong place, it is unattractive and too large, it blocks views from the town across the common and beyond, and it damages, not enhances, the Conservation Area. The illogicality of spoiling something in order to save it is apparent to all without a financial interest in the hotel being built.

**BT** put forward another financial argument for damaging the Conservation Area, to enable faster ‘broadband’ computer connections. Large cabinets could be installed as ‘permitted development’ outside the Conservation Area, and benefit from a quirk of planning rules which limits the time available for objections to proposed sites within it. Though we put forward within this deadline strong arguments for many of the first batch of installations to be underground, in car parks, or behind garden walls, the District Council’s conservation architect and its planning officer lamely failed to back us, and intrusive street clutter popped up in many unsuitable places:



△ *Lost: at the top of The Jitty*



*Saved: Old Square* ▷

A second batch included a cabinet in Old Square opposite the tower of St Mary's church, and another in West Street, just below the West Gate, close to the old red phone box which is an object lesson in making an architectural virtue of necessity. An appearance at the Planning Committee persuaded councillors to overturn their officer's recommendation and refuse these two applications.

As in previous years, **signs at commercial premises** led to several representations. While the occupiers of individual premises may feel that they have to do everything possible to be noticed, the effect of this 'arms race' is counter-productive. The more that one shouts, the less others are heard; and the ambience of the streets as a whole, the characteristic which makes Warwick distinctive and gives it much of its commercial value, is damaged. It is regrettable that many of the applications on which we comment are retrospective, though there can be no doubt in such circumstances, when the unsuitability of an existing sign is self-evident, that change is called for.

We were particularly concerned by the installation of awkwardly-shaped, badly-lit signs in unsuitable materials at the renamed **Globe Hotel**; though we welcomed the long-overdue removal of an unauthorised extraction duct on the Theatre Street elevation. While it is not a planning issue, we also deprecated the pejorative new name as much as the loss of the old. This application has not yet been determined.

We much preferred the approach of the County Council, which wishes to make clearer the range of services that are now provided within the Market Place frontage of the **Shire Hall**. We were invited to comment on a proposal long before it had been finalised. Accepting the need, we advised how a direction sign could both fit best with the building's architecture and be most effective in guiding its users. No planning application has yet been made, but we hope that, when it is, it will reflect our comments.

Similarly, we found it easy to suggest improvement to an application to repaint the Jury Street frontage of **Neville Court**. Swatches of several colours were painted on the walls when the application was submitted. We were pleased that our recommendation to use warmer

shades, related to those based on earth dyes which were all that were available when the stucco was new, rather than blues or greens, was followed by the conservation architect in dealing with the application. The resulting colour scheme is wholly satisfactory.

We have made representations to the District Council on nearly ninety planning applications during the year. As many of our comments tried to raise the quality of new development as to oppose it or just to protect the status quo. The Society is not just concerned with the old, but with the quality of the whole townscape and of the lives of residents and other users of it. National planning policy requires developments in the Conservation Area to enhance it. We make no apology for being the body which, when owners or planners need it, continually reminds them of this obligation.

The texts of all our written representations can be found on the Society's website at <http://warwicksociety.wordpress.com>.

## **OTHER CONSERVATION ISSUES**

### **Town Centre Traffic**

Once it became apparent in December 2009 that funds from the South West Warwick development would start to become available in 2010/11, we were able to make real progress. After a Forum meeting early in the year confirmed the priority, another series of Round Table meetings involved residents and business in and close to Castle Lane in detailed discussions of the plans.

Those meetings were, satisfyingly, able to reach consensus. The WCC Project Manager presented the final case for it to the County Council's Area Committee in October, and work started in January 2011. Retaining the backwater character of Castle Lane, the result will be pavements where there are none, wider pavements where they are narrow, and changes in the road surface to make drivers want to go more slowly, and to make it clear that the road is being shared with people on foot.

This will be the pilot for work on many other streets in the town, rebalancing space between vehicles and people, making it much more enjoyable to walk around the town centre, deterring some of the 80% of the drivers using town centre streets just to pass through, and thus beginning to reduce the level of air pollution.

The Project Manager described the programme to the Area Committee as ‘a community-led project’, and the Society and all the other groups which have contributed to the work of the Forum can be proud that, after the problems of the 2003/04 proposals, we have been able to influence the outcome so much for the better.

### **Town Centre Partnership and Plan**

The District Council-led Town Centre Partnership, preparing a new plan to direct conservation, enhancement and development of the town centre, is at a much earlier stage. It carried out a consultation in the spring, asking citizens of the town, ‘What are the Issues?’, and began in the autumn to develop Options based on the answers. But it fell behind schedule late in the year, mainly because the County and District Councils wanted more bilateral discussions over the future of the Shire Hall estate. We expressed concern that, though nominally in a Partnership, which includes the Chamber of Trade and the Town Council as well as the Society, the two main councils are not sharing their deliberations with the other parties, and risk producing unsatisfactory proposals.

### **The Court House**

The Town Council, however, was happy to involve the Society early in its development of proposals to repair, renovate and improve the Court House. It was successful in the first stage of a bid for Heritage Lottery funding for part of the work. This will include providing step-free access to the ground floor, replacing the existing lift, work on the roof and services, and changes in the internal layout.

Lottery funding requires interpretation of historic buildings, not just their maintenance, so, under the title of *Unlocking Warwick*, displays of artefacts and contemporary media will be used to present the history of the building and the town.

We did express concern at the intention to build a ramp to the side door in Castle Street. This would clutter the street, the main promenade between the Castle and the town. Antonio Canaletto made a drawing of this prospect, using pen and brown ink, and grey wash, in 1748/49, inscribed *Ingresso nella Piazza de Varick*:



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He idealised the view, paving continuously across the High Street, broadening and levelling Church Street and diminishing the scale of the Aylesford so that it did not rival the Court House. We are very keen, for historical, visual and practical reasons, that any change to the building recognises its significance, and enhances its presence. We are working with the Town Clerk to achieve this.

### **East Gate and St Peter's Chapel**

In mid-January, with little forewarning, the owner of the East Gate, and St Peter's Chapel upon it, put it up for sale by auction. Its significance in the townscape is emblematic, and uncertainty over its future was unsettling.

The Society's committee considered very carefully whether it could act to reduce this uncertainty, either by leading a bid for the building or by encouraging another more capable body to do so. Our conclusion was that the liabilities which the building carries with it and the cost and effort of ownership, restoration and future maintenance would be very much greater than the Society could bear. There was no prospect that a fundraising campaign, seeking the support of substantial and national grant-giving bodies, could be conducted in the twelve weeks before the auction.

On 14 April, therefore, members of the Society could only be spectators in an excited crowd at the Warwick Arms Hotel. The successful bidders at once disclosed their intention to convert the chapel for use mainly as a holiday home, the only potential source of income which we had discerned. They said that they would leave its external appearance unchanged, and expressed the hope that the town would support them in their work. In the autumn, after an invisible process whereby English Heritage gave Scheduled Monument Consent, work began on repairs to the roofing and internal improvements, the effect of which cannot yet be fully assessed.

### **Warwick Castle Park**

The Castle Park also changed hands, late in the year. The intentions of the new owner, also a private individual, for restoration or development, were not known by the year-end.

## Warwick Castle

The Castle, traded in recent years by Pearson Longman to a middle-eastern investment trust and then to Merlin, the USA-based second-largest operator in the world of ‘theme parks’, showed more signs of the strongly commercial intentions of its new owners.

They appealed successfully against the refusal of consent to remove the flower beds which defined the purpose of the late C18 Conservatory (listed Grade II\*), to make the building suitable instead for weddings and their receptions.

They applied to retain for a second five year term the foundation on the Avon island for the imitation mediæval siege engine or ‘trebuchet’. We objected, emphasising the status of the Castle as an Ancient Monument and a Grade I listed building, with the grounds also listed as grade 1 parks and gardens of special interest. We explained that this artificial structure intrudes into the internationally famous setting of the Castle, as painted by Canaletto, and damages its character, setting and historic integrity.

We had become increasingly concerned about other works at the Castle, some without consent, which detract from the quality of the listed building and the landscape. Our strong objection drew the attention of the then manager of the Castle to the unease that we and many neighbours felt over its increasingly sordid adaptation and exploitation.

Addressed by a member of the Committee and of the Warwickshire Gardens Trust, the Planning Committee rejected an officer’s report which, without supporting analysis, had dismissed our arguments. It granted temporary consent for just one more year, till April 2011.

In December we met the new manager of the Castle, Tim Harrison-Jones. We noted that he is keen to restore the relationship between Castle and the people of the town, and that the owners continue to spend substantial sums each year on the necessary ‘capital maintenance’ of the great structure. We agreed that we would return in 2011 to debate further the economic significance of the Castle to the town, and Merlin’s plans for its future development.

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Our speakers covered a very broad range of subjects, from the global environment and electoral politics to the buildings of Warwickshire towns. Members benefited from hearing and seeing what the speakers had prepared, and contributed fully to the questions, answers and discussion which always followed.

The year began with an extensive tour of north Warwickshire, seen through the eyes of John Burton, who chairs the Bedworth Society. He used 'before and after' photographs of buildings, villages and townscapes to review the history and the development of the part of the county that seems to be a long way from Warwick, across the North-South divide. Many old photographs showed lost buildings, including the centre of Bedworth, replaced by a sixties shopping precinct against the trenchant advice of Ian Nairn; but also some delightful survivals. He concluded with an invitation to visit Bedworth - which we did in May.

In February, Sameera Hussain and Kenneth Smailes, now former pupils of Aylesford School, made a welcome return visit. They had talked in May 2009 about the Eco School project, shortly before joining the Prime Minister's Global Fellowship scheme - Kenneth in Brazil and Sameera in China. The programmes were demanding. They lived with families, in Sameera's case speaking very little English. After intensive language learning they undertook work experience, and had opportunities to travel outside their base areas. It was nice to see them again, and to see how they had grown in confidence and maturity.

Seven weeks before the General Election, the constituency candidates of the three main parties took part in a Society *Any Questions?* The questions ranged from the inevitable 'Can we trust politicians?' through several on the value of pensions, to sustainability, hunting, euthanasia and Coventry Airport. It was a valuable opportunity to hear candidates' answers and their explanation of their parties' policies at first hand, rather than through the distorting filter of the news media, and before either election fever or election boredom set in.

After the AGM in March, the Chairman provided members with a progress report on *Warwick: Reducing the Impact of Traffic* and on the *Warwick Town Centre Plan* and the Partnership which is directing its preparation.

The Leamington Society hosted our joint meeting in April. Martin Lawson, shortly before his retirement as editor of the *Courier*, spoke at length on the history of the newspaper. He reflected on the changes in technology and in the economy which have drastically changed journalism during his forty-year career, explaining, for example, that photographs in the paper are increasingly provided by readers from their digital cameras rather than by his two staff photographers. His statement that, from his perspective, Warwick is part of Leamington, made starkly real the regrettable lack of a real local paper for our town.

On the first warm evening of summer, a very small, select group of members took up the invitation to visit Bedworth. This proved that Pevsner's labelling it 'a depressing small town' was less than fair. The Chamberlaine Almshouses, built in 1840 in a style, anticipating Pugin's, of Tudor and Gothic revival, share the qualities of an Oxford college quad. They stand only because the Bedworth Society narrowly halted a 1970s proposal to replace them with a shopping precinct. The enthusiasm of John Burton in averting this, and of Linda Burton for the nearby Old Meeting independent chapel, inspired us as to what civic effort can achieve.

The date of the Gardens Evening is of course fixed long in advance, and there is always uncertainty about the weather in the weeks leading up to it, and its effect on growth and blooms. This year, there was a run of warm dry weeks, and the owners who were going to open their gardens were busy with watering cans. At almost exactly the moment at which the evening's walk was due to start, the clouds opened and the gardens got the drenching that they needed; but so did members on their way to the walk. No matter, within an hour it had passed, and members were able to appreciate both the tour and drying off afterwards in the Unitarian Chapel. All were grateful for the generosity of the owners, who revealed great diversity in their private spaces, from the luxuriant near-country garden to the

intensively-filled urban yard. The warm, dry conditions returned the next day and for weeks.

Our activities resumed in September when Ian Davison spoke on the local impacts of climate change. His expertise both as a scientist and as an academic enabled him to present a comprehensive but comprehensible summary of the evidence for and the effect of climate change. His receptive audience broadly supported his conclusion that economic growth, as measured conventionally by increases in consumption, is neither a measure of the quality of life nor sustainable. Demonstrating that conventional approaches - the search for other fuels for cars, for example - will not prevent dramatic damage to the climate, food supply, and lifestyles, he proposed instead a low-consumption, high satisfaction society; and related this to policies for Warwick itself.

Our planned speaker being unavailable, we merged our October meeting with that of the Leamington Society. This was helped by the fact that the long-earlier arranged speaker in the Pump Room was our own Chairman. James Mackay illustrated his enthusiasm for modern, and especially post-war, architecture. He demonstrated its origins, in the nineteenth century and in Weimar Germany, its diversity, from après-Gothic and to post-Modern, its innovation, from cast-iron frames to sustainable energy, and its internationalism. Perhaps some in the audience left just a little less dubious of the architectural achievements of the twentieth century.

By contrast, November was firmly historical, and local. Some ninety people filled every available seat to hear Christine Hodgetts speak on the Leper Hospital and its Masters' House. She traced its early mediæval origins as St Michael's Chapel, its relatively brief and little-recorded period in the use which gave it its usual name, and its much longer period as a precursor of the workhouse, accommodating charitably the poor of the town. She then covered, using original source material, the sorry story of the last fifty years of discovery, philistinism and prevarication, which have left unresolved the conservation, restoration and future use of the two buildings.

The Christmas musical supper again took place in the Court House Ballroom, in the presence of Chris White, our new MP, and of the Deputy Mayor, Trudy Offer. The Oken Singers entertained us before we ate and between courses with a varied programme of Christmas and twentieth-century music, and Sue Butcher and many others fed us beautifully. The evening delighted everyone present, and launched for us all the Christmas season.

### **The Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration**

Our first meeting of 2011 celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Society on 15 December 1950, prompted above all by the demolition of Puckering's Almshouses, Brook Street, of which a photograph was included in Philip Chatwin's *Old Warwick*:



Eight speakers gave an enthralled audience perspectives of Warwick and of the Society over the whole length of its existence, through their memories and photographs.

Sarah Hosking spoke of her father Dick Hosking who, with Philip Styles, Jim Pritchard and Philip Chatwin, initiated the Society. She

described how he drew its emblem, using as his model an ilex tree which still stands in Coten End at a once-claimed centre of England.

Dr Derek Barrowcliff, the Society's longest-serving member and its Secretary throughout the 1960s, twinkled and chuckled as he told of the misplaced deeds of councils and developers, and of energetic opposition by the Society's early committees.

Janet Mannall, contemporaneously growing up in the surviving wing of the Priory, related an idyllic childhood when cattle grazed in the Park and the class size in the Borough School was a dozen.

Geoffrey Holroyde described a simpler, plainer, musically superior St Mary's Church in which, in the 1960s, several of his choristers were Janet's schoolfriends.

Dr Charles Brown welcomed the change during his own career in attitudes to conserving old buildings, using as his example the Society's work, fighting for years the philistine County Council proposal to demolish The Bear and Baculus to build an access road for buses.

Steven Wallsgrove reported on his research into three 'ordinary' Warwick houses which, ostensibly an early C19 brick terrace, are beneath the skin a C14 hall house - with physical and documentary evidence for their remarkable if invisible history.

John Turner's first picture showed the drama of the demolition in 1964 of the tower of the old All Saints' Church, made inevitable by its structural failure, and he told of the life of the church which as a boy he had shared.

Finally, Liz Drake provided a commentary on photographs which she had gained permission to take on the last day on which Warwick Crown Court sat in the Shire Hall. She led us along the routes of three participants in the day's proceedings, the defendant, the barristers and the jury. Her story concluded, extraordinarily, with a single picture, for the taking of which the sitting had been suspended, portraying all the court's officials in their seats. That ended Warwick's 255 years as the county's seat of justice.



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The evening ended with Archie Pitts, lately Chairman of the Leamington Society, proposing a toast to the Warwick Society, and Trudy Offer, Deputy Mayor of the town, cutting the anniversary cake.

All present would agree with Derek Barrowcliff's conclusion that 'Not one of us went away without learning something new about the Town, some of us quite a lot, and with an enhanced love of it, and an appreciation of what good fortune we have to live here'.

### **The Report of The Honorary Secretary for the year 1951**

On the next two pages we reproduce, at three-quarters of its original size, *The Report of The Honorary Secretary for the year 1951*. The report was considered at the Society's first AGM, in January 1952. A longer report, in similar typescript, was compiled for 1952. The intention to circulate an Annual Report was not realised until the third year of the Society's existence, 1953, when the first booklet - of which this is the most recent in an unbroken series - was produced.

## THE WARWICK SOCIETY

### The Report of the Honorary Secretary for the year 1951

As an Annual Report is to be circulated to all members I will only briefly outline some of the things that have been achieved during the past year.

The first year of the Society's existence has been eventful and members will agree that the Warwick Society has by now become almost a Warwick Institution!

The Society was started by a large public meeting on 1st November 1950 in the Court House, at which his Worship the Mayor presided. Constitutionally the Society dates from 10th December 1950, when the draft constitution was approved by a meeting called for that purpose.

During the year the membership has grown to 158 members, of which 5 are junior members. The interest in the aims of the Society has not been confined to the people of Warwick and Leamington. Requests to join have come from Birmingham, Coventry and other parts of the County, and it is hoped that the membership will be at least doubled during 1952, and members are urged to do everything that they can to help the Society in this way.

In the past year two most interesting lantern lectures were arranged. One on 25th April, when Miss Agnes Baker, Hon. Secretary of the Friends of Abingdon, spoke about the work of that Society, and another on 11th October, when our member, Mr. A. H. Gardner, gave an "Introduction" to Architecture.

In addition, on Saturday 26th May, members visited Broughton Castle, near Banbury, where they were shown round the Castle by Lord and Lady Saye & Seal, and on their return were invited to tea by Mr. A. C. Wood at Arlescote House. Also during the Summer, three evening visits to Warwick Houses and buildings were arranged. On Thursday, 28th June, to the Priory, Northgate House and the Shire Hall, after which members were entertained by Mrs. Reynolds. On Thursday, 26th July, to Lord and Lady Ilkeston's house, The Masters' Lodgings at Lord Leycester's Hospital, and the Friends Meeting House, after which Mrs. Barker entertained the party. In September, the Society had the privilege of being invited by the President to see those parts of Warwick Castle which are not normally visited by the public.

As these visits and lectures have been so much enjoyed by the members, it is intended to arrange a similar programme for 1952. And on behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all the members who helped to make these visits possible.

However, the work of the Society has not been confined to these meetings. Once a month the Committee has met to discuss local problems which have been brought to their notice, and the following examples are some of the matters that have been discussed :-

1. With the co-operation of the Town Council the Society will now be notified of any old houses, which have to be considered for demolition, at the same time as the owners are summoned to appear. This allows the Society a months' notice, should it be desirable to make any comments or take any action.
2. The Ministry of Town & Country Planning (as it then was) submitted their provisional list of "Buildings of Historic and Architectural Interest" in Warwick to the Committee to revise and comment upon, before publication.
3. Similarly the Committee made suggestions to the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, earlier in the year, with regard to the problem of traffic damaging the East Gate.
4. The Society was consulted on two matters which affected the appearance of the town. A member of the Committee, at Mr. Dean's request, advised him on the heraldic colours to be used on the seal over the entrance to the Court House; and at the request of the Town Council drew out suggested lettering to be used on Castle Hill.

The Committee feel sure that all the members would wish to express their appreciation of Mr. Dean's work on the front of the Court House, which gives so much pleasure to so many people.

5. As a result of representation from the Society, Country Life published 4 articles on the architecture and history of Warwick. These articles, which are illustrated with excellent photographs, have aroused a widespread interest about Warwick which the writer describes as one of the 10 most beautiful towns in England.
6. It is still too early to say anything definite about the fate of Guys Cliffe. At the request of the County Planning Committee the Society was represented by the Chairman at the meeting in August when the future of the building was discussed. At the request of that meeting the Society tried hard to find a suitable use for the building. When nothing was found which seemed feasible, on behalf of the Society, and with the approval of the owners, a letter was published in the Times, on 14th November, making it clear that the owners and the Society had done all they could to save the building. As a result of this letter some further suggestions have been received which may offer a slight hope of saving Guy's Cliffe.

I feel sure that members would like to know how much the Society owes to its Chairman, Mr. Chatwin, for the tremendous efforts he has made to save Guy's Cliffe. And that they would wish to thank the local and national press for their interest and support.

This report should show that this past year thoroughly justifies the formation of the Society and shows that it has much work in front of it.

## ACCOUNTS: TREASURER'S REPORT

This has been a much more active year for the Society. We made a £3,000 contribution from the Styles Bequest towards the cost of establishing the Children's Garden at Hill Close. We also contributed £500 towards the cost of the *Photographic Portrait of Warwick* (see page 28), and purchased for £540 a computer projector. We decided to support Civic Voice, the new national organisation for civic societies, though with some hesitation, at a subscription of £400.

For the first time in many years we spent nearly £800 more in running the society than we raised in income from subscriptions and fundraising events, such as the Gardens Evening and the Christmas Party, although both these events were well supported by both members and friends.

As I forecast last year the interest that we have received this year, both for the Styles Bequest fund and for our other accounts, is down to under £240 from £700 last year. As recommended at last year's Annual General Meeting, but after considerable administrative formalities, we placed £50,000, almost half of the Styles Bequest fund, in an 18-month notice bond with the Birmingham Midshires Building Society arranged through the Charities Aid Foundation, and this will provide a little more interest in the present year.

We were grateful to receive legacies from the estates of Mr John Gould and Mr John Wallis. The Committee has now decided that all legacies should be transferred from the general fund into a Bequests fund so that donors will know that their generosity is going to help fund 'Capital' projects that the Society undertakes, and not used for general running expenditure. These transfers will show in the accounts for 2011 and will include all the legacies from recent years.

The Committee has also decided not to raise subscriptions this year as we still have reserves from earlier years to support our ongoing work, but hope that we can recruit more members and raise more from our usual fundraising events.

I would like to thank Mr Jim Haywood for once again kindly checking the accounts and the bank statements.

*Antony Butcher, Treasurer*

# The Warwick Society Company Number 674282 Accounts 2010

2010

2009

## INCOME

Gift Aid Subscriptions	£1,939.50	£1,976.00	
Ordinary Subscriptions	£231.00	£311.00	
Inland Revenue Gift Aid tax refund	£559.26	£693.53	
Christmas Supper receipts	£798.00	£748.60	
Gardens Evening receipts	£216.00	£273.00	
Donations to the Society	£0.00	£19.14	
Town Trail Leaflet Income	£100.00	£162.50	
<b>Total Ordinary Income</b>	<b>£3,843.76</b>		<b>£4183.77</b>
Legacy from Mr John Gould	£500.00		
Legacy from Mr John Wallis	£1,000.00		
<b>Total Legacies received</b>	<b>£1,500.00</b>		
CAF Gold Styles Interest	£215.87	£644.95	
CAF Gold No.2 Interest	£16.15	£50.13	
Coventry Bldg Society Interest	£3.65	£3.78	
Lloyds Business a/c interest	£0.48	£0.58	
<b>Total Interest received</b>	<b>£236.15</b>		<b>£699.44</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>£5,579.91</u></b>		<b><u>£4,883.21</u></b>

## EXPENDITURE

### Committee Expenses

Planning issues	£400.28	£261.71	
Premises hire	£200.00	£235.00	
Printing & Postage	£259.86	£111.11	
Traffic Forum	£243.43	£93.75	
Committee Expenses - Other	£0.00	£2.40	
Books & Publications purchased	£0.00	£12.50	
<b>Total Committee Expenses</b>	<b><u>£1,103.57</u></b>		<b><u>£716.47</u></b>

### Membership Expenses

Annual Report & Newsletters	£732.53	£636.87	
Premises hire for meetings	£0.00	£520.00	
Speakers' Expenses	£106.81	£223.56	
Christmas Supper costs	£622.68	£526.37	
Gardens Evening costs	£87.42	£113.69	
Internet Service & Permits		£153.00	
<b>Total Membership Expenses</b>	<b><u>£1,549.44</u></b>		<b><u>£2,173.49</u></b>

Gifts & Donations to other bodies	£725.00	£250.00	
Insurance and Legal expenses	£200.00	£190.00	
Subscriptions to other bodies	£652.00	£272.00	
Projects (purchase of projector)	£541.99		
<b>Total other expenses</b>	<b><u>£2,118.99</u></b>		<b><u>£712.00</u></b>
<b>Total Expenses for year</b>	<b><u>£4,772.00</u></b>		<b><u>£3,601.96</u></b>
<b>Surplus of income over expenditure</b>	<b><u>£807.91</u></b>		<b><u>£1,281.25</u></b>

(if legacies excluded,  
operating loss £692.09)

## The Warwick Society

### Balance Sheet at 31 Dec

	2010	2009
<b>Current and Savings Accounts</b>		
Birmingham Midshires 18m Bond	£50,000.00	£0.00
CAF Gold Styles Bequest	£51,107.06	£103,901.19
CAF No.2	£8,087.96	£8,071.81
Coventry Building Society	£1,475.53	£1,471.88
Lloyds Business Instant Access	£917.45	£916.97
Lloyds TSB Current a/c	£1,295.31	£723.55
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£112,883.31</u></b>	<b><u>£115,085.40</u></b>
<b>Current and Savings Accounts</b>		
<b>Ordinary Funds</b>		
Opening Balance from last year	£11,184.21	£10,547.91
Surplus before interest received	£592.04	£636.30
Balance at 31 Dec.	£11,776.25	£11,184.21
Styles Bequest		
Opening Balance from prev. year	£103,901.19	£103,256.24
Donation Hill Close Gardens Trust	£3,000.00	£0.00
Interest received <i>less</i> £10 charges	£205.87	£644.95
<b>Balance at 31 Dec</b>	<b><u>£101,107.06</u></b>	<b><u>£103,901.19</u></b>
<b>Total Society Funds</b>	<b><u>£112,883.31</u></b>	<b><u>£115,085.40</u></b>

The Directors have:

- (a) taken advantage of the Companies Act 1985 in not having these accounts audited under section 249A(1); however, the books and Bank accounts have been checked on behalf of the Treasurer by a qualified accountant.
- (b) confirmed that no notice has been deposited under section 249B(2) of the Companies Act 1985.
- (c) acknowledged their responsibilities for ensuring that the Company keeps accounting records which comply with Section 221 of the Companies Act 1985.
- (d) acknowledged their responsibilities for preparing accounts which give a true and fair view of the Company and of its profit/loss (whichever is applicable) for the year then ended in accordance with the requirements of Section 226 of the Companies Act 1985 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of this Act relating to accounts, so far as applicable to the Company.
- (e) (i) taken advantage of the exemptions conferred by Part III of the Schedule 8 of the Companies Act 1985; and  
(ii) in their opinion the Company is entitled to those exemptions on the basis that it qualifies as a small Company.

Signed 20 February 2011

Chairman - *J Mackay* Treasurer - *A Butcher*

## AWARDS

### **The Society's Schools Awards**

These Awards recognise the work of young people who have carried out projects about the town, its history and environment. At the Annual General Meeting, Jessica Savage from Aylesford and Hannah Edwards from King's High were presented with awards. We are pleased that their schools were able to nominate them for their excellent work.

### **A Photographic Portrait of Warwick**

Liz Drake completed in the first part of the year *A Photographic Portrait of Warwick*. Her summer exhibition of portraits of the people involved in shops and businesses in the town at their places of work could only be described as 'stunning'. The Society was pleased to be able to provide sponsorship for her work, helping this record of Warwick at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century to be made available to the County Record Office, for the benefit of future generations of townspeople and historians.

### **The Society's Design Award**

No award could be made.

## MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

Quarterly newsletters, email updates and the Society's website, at <http://warwicksociety.wordpress.com>, have kept members and a wider audience well-informed. The website includes the Society's planning representations and details of forthcoming meetings.

Membership numbers are down a little from previous years, but fluctuations are normal in this sort of Society. Membership tends to increase when there are prominent local issues, and to decrease in quieter times. The next years will see more of the Society's work on reducing the impact of traffic and this may arouse wider public interest in the Society's activities as a whole. We are always anxious to attract new members, and younger people are especially needed to continue the work of the Society and its Committee into the future.

## **THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee met every month and the Plans Committee more frequently. We record our gratitude to Warwick Town Council and to Derek Maudlin, the Town Clerk, for enabling us to view planning documents: the alternative of searching on the District Council's website is a very poor alternative to unfolding plans on a large table.

Members of the Committee have maintained contact with and attended meetings of many other organisations, official and voluntary. These have included:

Warwickshire County Council: Warwick Area Committee;  
Warwick District Council: Conservation Area Advisory Forum,  
Planning Forum, and Planning Committee;  
Warwick Town Centre Partnership,  
Warwick Town Centre Management Group,  
Warwick Town Council and its Economic & Tourism Committee,  
Warwick Chamber of Trade,  
Warwick Words,  
The Friends of Priory Park,  
The Leamington, Kenilworth and Stratford Societies,  
The West Midlands Amenity Societies Association,  
English Heritage, The Campaign to Protect Rural England,  
The Historic Towns Forum, Civic Voice, and Cycleways.

Some of these contacts involve spending a lot of time at meetings in which the Society's interest is often dealt with briefly, others can be fruitless. But some achieve important goals and many help maintain the visibility of the Society in the local political maelstrom: Christine Hodgetts' address to the WDC Planning Committee meeting on the Castle's trebuchet base was a turning-point in the Society's and the town's efforts to restore some decorum to Merlin's treatment of Warwick's most important building; while the Chairman being heckled by a black Labrador dog at the annual meeting of the Town Council at least provided evidence that his report was being heard.

### **The Society's Constitution**

We have no progress to report on its necessary modernisation.

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE 2010/11

Patron	The Mayor of Warwick, Michael Kinson OBE	
President	John Turner	2008
Vice-Presidents	Dr Derek Barrowcliff, Dr Charles Brown and Geoffrey Smith	2008
Chairman	James Mackay 4 St John's Warwick CV34 4NF <i>james.mackay@talktalk.net</i>	2009 tel 498381
Secretary	vacant, but <i>sec@warwicksociety.org.uk</i> works	
Treasurer	Antony Butcher 49 West Street Warwick CV34 6AB <i>antony.butcher@lineone.net</i>	<i>ex officio</i> tel 492975
Plans	John Turner 59 West Street Warwick CV34 6AB via <i>sec@warwicksociety.org.uk</i>	tel 491410
Membership	John Fletcher 4 Chapel Street Warwick CV34 4HL	2009 tel 493066
Programme	Elizabeth Holroyde 38 Coten End Warwick CV34 4NP <i>elizabeth.holroyde@btinternet.com</i>	2010 tel 492329
Newsletter and Website	Mark Robertson Richard Eddy 71 West Street Warwick CV34 6AH <i>beamend@ntlworld.com</i>	2008 2010 tel 496643

### Other Members of the Committee

Richard Andrews	2009	Roger Higgins	2010
Christine Baker	2008	Christine Hodgetts	2008
Jane Beevers	2008	John Holland	2008
Richard Chamberlain	2010		
Liz Drake	<i>co-opted</i>	<i>The year in italics indicates when</i>	
Nigel Grimwade	2010	<i>each member was last elected.</i>	