

# THE WARWICK SOCIETY

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS

*Spring 2011*

## SPRING EVENTS COMMENCE WITH AGM

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**WEDNESDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH, 2011**

### THE WARWICK SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are cordially invited to attend the Annual General Meeting. The evening will begin with the Warwick Society's School Awards presentations, followed by the AGM. Immediately after the AGM, around 8.15pm, John Turner and Sarah Hosking will speak about two of the founders of the Society, using material from the archives of Dick Hosking and Jim Pritchard. Members are then invited to stay for a glass of wine at around 9pm.

**Location:** The Lord Leycester Hospital**Time:** 7.30pm.

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**THURSDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2011**

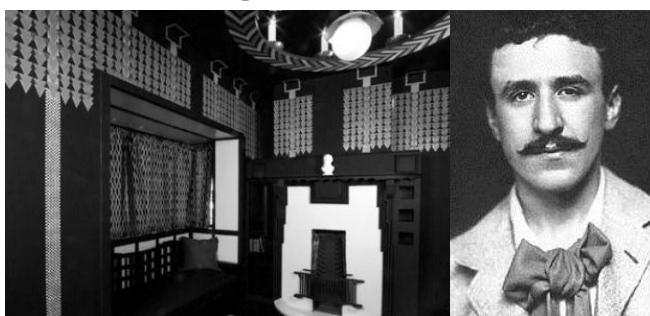
### CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH: 78 DERNGATE

*With Dr Sylvia Pinches*

78 Derngate is the only house in England designed by the world renowned Modernist architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

In the dark days in the midst of World War One, Charles Rennie Mackintosh created a stunning, jewel-like interior in a modest Northampton terrace house.

The house was painstakingly restored and opened to the public in 2003. Dr Sylvia Pinches was curator of 78 Derngate for four years. Her talk will discuss Mackintosh's design at Derngate, setting it in the context of his career, and explain the research and work that went into the restoration. For more information see [www.78derngate.org.uk](http://www.78derngate.org.uk)

**Location:** The Lord Leycester Hospital**Time:** 7.30 for 7.45pm.

The entrance hall at 78 Derngate (left). C. R. Mackintosh (right).

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**TUESDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011**

### THE LOCALISM BILL

*With Professor Patrick McAuslan*

Unveiled by Communities and Local Government Secretary in December, the Localism Bill is a landmark bill that heralds a shift in power to councils and communities overturning decades of central government control. The Localism Bill aims to put an end to the hoarding of power within central government, allowing local people the freedom to run their lives and neighbourhoods in their own way.

Patrick McAuslan, Professor of Law at Birkbeck University of London, will discuss the Localism Bill and its implications. Prior to Birkbeck, Professor McAuslan was one of the four founder members of the School of Law of the University of Warwick.

The Leamington Society has organised this topical meeting jointly with The Warwick, Stratford and Kenilworth Societies, all welcome. No charge.

**Leamington Venue:** Dormer Place Conference Centre, St Peter's Church, Dormer Place, Leamington Spa  
**Time:** 7:30pm.

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**WEDNESDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2011**

### HOUSE - BRITISH DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

*With Phillippa Lewis*

Author Phillippa Lewis will discuss her new book, 'House – British Domestic Architecture' in this special event presented by Warwick Books. Armed with a career's worth of experience and research, Phillippa Lewis has toured the country to find examples of typically British building, including cottages, manor houses, castles, bungalows, and flats. She also looks at houses built from a wide variety of materials, including stone, glass, wood, brick and even corrugated iron, in different settings such as rural, suburban, seaside and urban.

**Location:** The Lord Leycester Hospital**Time:** 7.00pm. **Tickets:** £3.50 (£2 Concessions) in advance from Warwick Books.

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**Advance Diary Date:** The Society Gardens Evening will this year be held on **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011** – full details will be listed in the Summer newsletter.



# THE CHAIRMAN'S DIARY...

*Warwick Society Chairman James Mackay writes on current thoughts, issues and topics.*

Perhaps inevitably in a time of economic stress, there's a strong economic emphasis to my notes this month.

'Sixty years old and going strong' was the theme for both our anniversary celebration in January and for Robert Collins' excellent *Courier* report, reprinted on the opposite page. What I learned, or re-learned, from the anniversary evening, is the continuity of the Society's work. Many of the issues of past years remain alive today, perhaps above all the permanent struggle to build recognition that the town's economic development and its magnificent streetscapes and buildings are not in conflict but complementary. The town's businesses succeed because the town is attractive; and its buildings will be well-maintained only if the businesses and owners have a reliable income stream.

The District Council's draft Town Centre Plan options, which are making very slow progress, may not yet reflect this essential logic. Both it and the County Council risk pursuing their own separate

property development and financial objectives, instead of taking an overall view of the town centre, its economy and its character.

Influencing the Plan will be a key task for the Society in the months ahead; and our closest ally will, we are sure, be the Chamber of Trade.

Work continues in Castle Lane to widen and extend the pavement, to make it easier to cross, and to slow down vehicles. This first stage of the street-by-street measures should be followed early in 2011 by the more significant High Street and Jury Street. Round Table meetings for residents and businesses in those streets, Brook Street, Church Street and Castle Street, during March, will try to agree on precisely what should be done.

Deterring through traffic to improve air quality and rebalancing road space in favour of all the other users risk causing conflict between our wishes as drivers and the broader interest of the town as a whole. Achieving consensus is hard work, but essential. If you live or work in one of those streets, we look forward to seeing you again at

one of those meetings - and thank you in advance for giving yet more time to this process.

Work has also started on the long-overdue renovation of the former Post Office in Old Square. The top floors will contain two flats, the middle floor the existing chiropractic surgery, and the ground floor will become... yet another restaurant. Better this than an empty and decaying building. And it is partly because of the cafés, restaurants and pubs that Warwick is not suffering as badly in the recession as many other town centres. Nationally, 15% of town centre shops are vacant, but many fewer here. Most of the commercial estate agents' boards draw attention to empty offices upstairs. We hope that other firms will appreciate the advantages felt, for example, by DCA design, of giving their employees' the benefits of the town centre as a place to work - compared with a soul-less suburban business park.

I do hope to see you at the AGM on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

## A PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF WARWICK

**Part-funded by The Warwick Society, "A Photographic Portrait of Warwick" is a documentary project being undertaken by photographer and Society member Liz Drake.**

"Be a part of photo history" read the headline in the Leamington Observer Jan 27th 2011, inviting members of the public to be photographed as part of Liz Drake's 'A photographic portrait of Warwick' photographic project. On the day, 170 willing members of the public were all interviewed and photographed in the Warwick museum for the documentary study of the people, shops and businesses of Warwick. Once completed the study comprising over approximately 2000 photographs will be handed to the Warwick Record Office and held in perpetuity for the residents of Warwick. The study which began as a college photography project, initially was to feature just ten shops and businesses of the town, but has grown into a fabulous complete photographic record of the town of Warwick between 2009 - 2011. Liz says that undertaking the study has been a complete privilege and she has met

so many wonderful people. She commented that "I loved Warwick before the study, but I love the town and its' people, shops and businesses even more following the study". Liz would like to express her thanks to the Warwick Society for part funding the study. Liz Drake runs her own photography business, find out more at [www.lizdrakephotography.co.uk](http://www.lizdrakephotography.co.uk).



Society member Richard Eddy is photographed by Liz Drake

# STILL PROTECTING WARWICK'S HERITAGE AND CHARM AFTER SIX DECADES.

*The society's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as reported by Robert Collins for The Warwick/Leamington Spa Courier.*

They have saved some of the town's most historic buildings – campaigning against demolition and fighting to bring old buildings into use and encourage the best of modern design.

Over six decades, its members have moved from 'plotting' against the powers that be to taking a central role in the future of Warwick.

And on January 20th the Warwick Society celebrated its diamond anniversary at the Lord Leicester Hospital.

For chairman James Mackay, the aim of the society is to enhance the town for the people who live and work in it.

He said: "The reason Warwick is so distinctive and people like living here and working here is the architecture."

The group was formed in 1950 when Birmingham University lecturer Phillip Styles, Warwick Advertiser editor John Pritchard and Coventry Art School director Dick Hoskin became dismayed at the number of historic buildings Warwick Town Council was allowing to be pulled down.

The last straw was when a row of 17th century alms-houses were earmarked for demolition. The 'three plotters' held a public meeting and recruited members with Pritchard becoming the first president.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time when people were keen to do away with the old in favour of progressive functional architecture but the new group campaigned to preserve what it saw as the town's heritage.

Society president John Turner joined in the earlier 1970s, soon after moving into an old house in West Street.

Concerned by the state of St Mary's church and derelict cottages he decided something needed to be done.

Mr Turner said: "It was a lovely town but it looked as though it needed some tender loving care."

Among the more hair-raising proposals was an underground bus station in Market Place. This never materialised, and the society managed



Market Place (above) could have had an underground car park!



to save a listed house on the corner of Brook Street, but failed to prevent the now notorious Barrack Street car park.

It didn't win every time, but Mr Turner believes the society helped persuade people there was a value in historic buildings.

He added: "All we did was generate an atmosphere that you shouldn't do these things."

"Nobody would dream of taking down a listed building now but in those days people didn't think twice about it."

The pendulum may have swung back, but Mr Mackay is adamant the society is not against modern architecture – both Mr Turner and Mr Mackay are fans of Shire Hall's Festival of Britain-era facade, citing the characteristic windows, columns and stonework quarried from near Edgehill as reasons to preserve it.

He cites Warwickshire County Council's buildings at Saltisford and flats at the former Potterton's site as buildings that could have been built "anywhere in the world".

Instead, the society has a prize – which often goes unawarded – for



good design, and is closely involved in a project to reduce congestion in the town centre. This week work began on a project to remove signs and manage traffic in Castle Lane, restoring its 'country lane' feel.

With two thirds of Warwick's town centre traffic bound for elsewhere, Mr Mackay says similar work will begin in the High Street and Jury Street with the aim of getting more vehicles out of the town centre.

Preserving old buildings is still on the agenda and the society is concerned with the future of the former Country Court at Shire Hall, about which Mr Mackay says the county council is being "less than transparent" and former townhouses in Northgate Street.

But as much as grand monuments, there are also the little things, Dr Christine Hodgetts, a member for almost 30 years, believes the group's work lies in making people more aware of the heritage around them and giving them a way to get involved in its preservation.

She added: "What's concerning is the incremental changes that can progressively undermine the character of a place. Standard shopfronts, standard signs, and you end up with everywhere looking the same.

"That's one of the things hardest to resist and the hardest to prevent."

*First published in The Warwick Courier (January 21st, 2011). Our thanks to Mr Chris Lillington, editor of The Courier, for permission to reproduce this feature.*



## RAISING A TOAST AT THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011 the Warwick Society celebrated its diamond anniversary at the Lord Leycester Hospital, displayed are some of the memories and participants from the evening.

1. Trudy Offer, Deputy Mayor cutting the cake.
2. The anniversary cake.
3. Derek Barrowcliff.
4. Sarah Hosking.
5. Chairman, James Mackay.
6. Liz Drake.
7. Geoffrey Holroyde.
8. Archie Pitts, proposing a toast.



### THE PURPOSE OF THE WARWICK SOCIETY

*To preserve the heritage and improve the town environment of Warwick by encouraging high standards of design, architecture and planning.*

### MEMBERSHIP & CONTACTS

The society is proud to have almost 381 members. If you know someone who would like to become a member please contact John Fletcher on the number below who will be pleased to send a membership form.

<i>Chairman</i>	James Mackay	498381
<i>Treasurer</i>	Antony Butcher	492975
<i>Planning</i>	John Turner	491410
<i>Membership</i>	John Fletcher	493066
<i>Programme</i>	Liz Holroyde	492329
<i>Newsletter</i>	Mark Robertson	496643
<i>&amp; Website</i>	& Richard Eddy	496643

Treasurer: Antony Butcher, 49 West Street, Warwick, CV34 6AB, 492975.

Email: [sec@warwicksociety.org.uk](mailto:sec@warwicksociety.org.uk)  
 Web: [www.warwicksociety.wordpress.com](http://www.warwicksociety.wordpress.com)



Facebook members: Just search for **The Warwick Society** and hit 'Like'.

