

THE WARWICK SOCIETY NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2015

A NEW SEASON OF SOCIETY MEETINGS STARTS AT ONCE

Tuesday 8 September

Warwick Buildings

Three speakers will contribute to our first meeting of 2015/16.

Mike Hornsby will describe his family's courageous project to build a contemporary, sustainable house in the garden of a very old one, with an address in Emscote Road but an entrance in Wharf Street.

Steven Wallsgrove will report on his research into a Warwick manor which demonstrates puzzling layers of evolution. Part is timber-framed and probably of the C17, part may be either of the later C17 or of the early C19, the whole is little-known.

Lastly, we will have a report on a contemporary house of forty years ago, physically in the centre of Warwick but in spirit overlooking the Mediterranean coast.

Tuesday 13 October

The Local Plan:
the saga continues

Councillor Stephen Cross has taken up the District Council rôle of portfolio holder for development, and will speak on his perspective of the Local Plan. His talk will

take place a fortnight after key decisions on the progress of the Plan are expected to have been taken at a meeting between all the Councils faced with Coventry's projected future demand for housing sites. This will be an important chance to discuss the implications directly with Councillor Cross.

Tuesday 10 November

St George's Chapel,
Windsor

Dr Charles Brown will talk of his part in the maintenance and restoration of what Pevsner calls 'one of the masterpieces of late mediæval architecture in England'. The chapel was begun by King Edward IV, and it is the ceremonial setting of the Order of the Garter. It was constructed mostly between 1475 and 1512, but has of course been the subject of continual restoration and change since then. Christopher Wren and George Gilbert Scott have been among those engaged in its gradual renewal. Charles Brown will describe his part in the continuing story, and tell us of the work that he led to keep the old in order, and to enhance the royal chapel to meet evolving needs.

This note corrects, with my apology, the erroneous brief description of Charles' talk which I provided in the last Newsletter. JM.

These three meetings will all be held in the Great Hall of the Lord Leycester Hospital, starting at 19.30 with an update on current Society business and ending, if you wish, with more conversation over a drink.

MORE EVENTS

On the *Heritage Open Days*, **Thursday 10 to Sunday 13 September**, over forty buildings in the District, many of them not normally open, will be accessible. On the first day, Roger Cullimore will lead a tour of the remains and sites of Warwick's fortifications: book by phoning 412717. Society members will lead walks in the town centre at 11.00 on the Friday and the Saturday, starting at the Market Hall Museum and tracing the course of the Great Fire of 1694 and the rebuilding after it. Copies of the programme are available in the Court House Visitor Centre.

Two events at great houses nearby:

At **Compton Verney** a good exhibition on *The Arts and Craft House, Then and Now*, continues until 13 September.

And at **Packington Hall** on the evening of Tuesday 15 September the *Coull Quartet* will perform works by Haydn and Debussy in aid of the Children's Cancer Charity CLIC Sargent. The concert will be followed by a drinks reception. It is a rare chance to visit Packington, not normally open to the public. Tickets, which are £35, can be obtained by emailing worstedweavers@gmail.com; or phone me if you'd like more details: 498381.

James Mackay

Further ahead, enjoy the splendidly festive *Victorian Evening* on **Thursday 26 November**, as a prelude to the opening of the Christmas season.

The Society's *Informal Musical Dinner*, which will take place on **Friday 4 December** in the splendidly restored Court House Ballroom. Details and a booking form will be contained in the next Newsletter: put the date in your diary now!

Our first meeting of the new year will be held in Leamington, jointly with the Leamington Literary Society, on **Tuesday 12 January 2016**. *Brian Halford*, a Warwick author, will speak of cricket, Jeeves and the Great War. Details of this meeting and of the programme into the spring of 2016 will be provided in the next Newsletter.

FOXES STUDY

A new application, and an appeal against the refusal of last year's, for wooden lodges, a banqueting hall, and other buildings in the wood has attracted a lot of attention in *The Courier* and other media.

We do not repeat here the arguments summarised in the Society's *Annual Report* for 2014, but consider some of the questions raised in the recent debate.

Is the Castle a Theme Park? Yes, Merlin's Annual Report puts it under that heading.

Is the provision of accommodation essential to the Castle's financial survival? No, Merlin is a very capable and profitable company.

The proportion that the lodges would add to its worldwide cash flow would be just 0.01%.

Wouldn't the lodges be good for the town?

Merlin's strategy is to prolong visitors' stay and increase their spending on-site. The benefit of the lodges, mainly to nearby pubs and restaurants, would be slight.

Why deny Warwick's businesses that chance?

The planning balance is clear: there is not enough economic benefit to outweigh the harm which would be done to a landscape of national significance.

Why does the Chamber of Trade disagree?

You must ask the Chamber that. But there seems to be a surplus of anecdote and assertion and no hard evidence. It is of great regret that this gap divides us.

The Society's Committee is considering an objection to the application. Members will be able to express their views on it at our meeting on Tuesday 8 September.

Confusion arises from the overlap between the new application and the appeal against last year's refusal. The latter will not be dealt with till next spring, with a November deadline for further comments.

The urgent one is the new application, with the WDC reference W/15/1203. Full details are on the Council's website. The deadline for objections (or support), via the website or by real letters, is Friday 11 September.

The Master's House, Saltisford

With no advance information as to what was to happen, it came as a surprise to many earlier in the summer to see the protective sheeting removed from the derelict Master's House.

Warwick District Council asked the project architect, David Willetts RIBA of PCPT Architects to provide a report, from which we quote at length:



... This is a much loved timber framed building which yields a wealth of original character and historic identity. It has been proposed for many years that this building would be restored ...

Finally, that time has come; funds, enthusiasm and 'know-how' are all in place in order to secure a full restoration. Warwick District Council, working in collaboration and partnership with the building owner, has managed to obtain important funding from Historic England. PCPT Architects and Nick Joyce Architects have been appointed to project manage and prepare detailed drawings and specifications which in turn will help realise the client's aspirations for the Master's House.

The first stage has been to reveal the current condition of the building by removing the protective tarpaulins, which were put in place a few years ago to keep out as much of the destructive winter weather as possible. At the same time a small temporary, but secure, door has been added so that access can be gained to the otherwise ... sealed building.

This is in readiness for a full measured and condition survey to be carried out which will then allow a detailed repair strategy to be formulated. The survey will involve producing accurate plans and elevations which will show the existing timbers in great detail including how they are connected together, and will highlight the missing and damaged components. The completed drawings ... will reveal how it would have looked originally. At that point there will be a whole series of decisions to make which will enable the final restoration strategy to evolve and develop.

There are also other considerations that will need to be taken into account, one of which is an ecology survey, which has recently been commissioned. When a site has not been used for such a long time the natural world tends to take hold, so it is important to find out which species of wild life are present ... This will not prevent work taking place but will enable a managing strategy to be developed and agreed.

It is anticipated that the completed Master's House, with an appropriate and sympathetic fit-out, will become one entity in a larger development on this area of land. The intention is to allow the building to be a living, breathing and vibrant location once again that can be visited and enjoyed by all.

So we are arresting the decay without knowing the ultimate outcome, nor with any firm idea about how we will get there. It is surprising that funding has been obtained on this basis, but at least we can be grateful that it has got so far.

OTHER NEWS

Gallows Hill Housing Appeal

The Public Inquiry into the refusal of planning permission for 450 houses to be built south of Gallows Hill and west of Europa Way began on 24 August. Members of Save Warwick, the Warwick and Leamington Societies, Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council and the Warwickshire Gardens Trust have all given evidence reinforcing WDC's defence that the site is unsuitable. The Inspector has the unenviable task of reporting whether the benefit of new housing outweighs the damage to the setting of the Castle and its Park, and to the Conservation Area, for a Ministerial decision.

Warwick Station in Bloom

The Committee has decided that the Society will donate £250 to The Friends of Warwick Station. It will help to fund an irrigation supply to the flower tubs on the Up platform. Warwick station, both for visitors and for its trains' many regular users, has been very welcoming this summer, and we are pleased to be able to support the Friends' work.

The Lord Leycester Hotel

The application to demolish the C20 extensions, to build new houses at the rear, and to convert to flats the main building has been approved by the WDC Planning Committee. It did not discuss the objection of Warwick Town Council. Nor did it heed the advice of the Conservation Area Forum or the concern of a member of the Society's Committee, both expressed at its meeting, that the new houses and their parking yard will damage the setting of the historic building and of others around it. We shall see.

18 Castle Lane

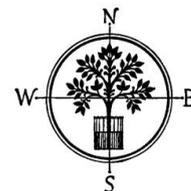
A plan to clad in insulating foam and cream render a house in Albert Street – at odds with the Victorian character of the street – was opposed by an energetic residents' campaign. The WDC Planning Committee rejected its officers' recommendation, this application,

and two similar ones in Coventry Road.

But an application to do the same at 18 Castle Lane was granted on an officer's delegated authority. The Conservation Area Forum heard professional advice that this material might well not achieve its objective of reducing damp, instead sealing moisture into the walls. Historic England had rejected an application to list the building for its architectural significance. We hope that a way will be found to avoid harming this, while ensuring that the house's qualities can be fully enjoyed by its new owners.

Warwick Welcomes Japan

Well, not all of it, but the Japanese team for the Rugby World Cup tournament, which will use Warwick School's pitches, indoor training facilities and swimming pool as its team base. We wish it success. But we do wonder whether the best way to welcome it is to string banners across the High Street and Jury Street which dominate views and photographs of two of the town's finest buildings, the Court House and the Lord Leycester Hospital. What do you think?



THE WARWICK SOCIETY

Keep in contact:

Postal Addresses and Phone Numbers are given inside the rear cover of the *Annual Report* circulated in February.

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