

Ludlow Heritage News

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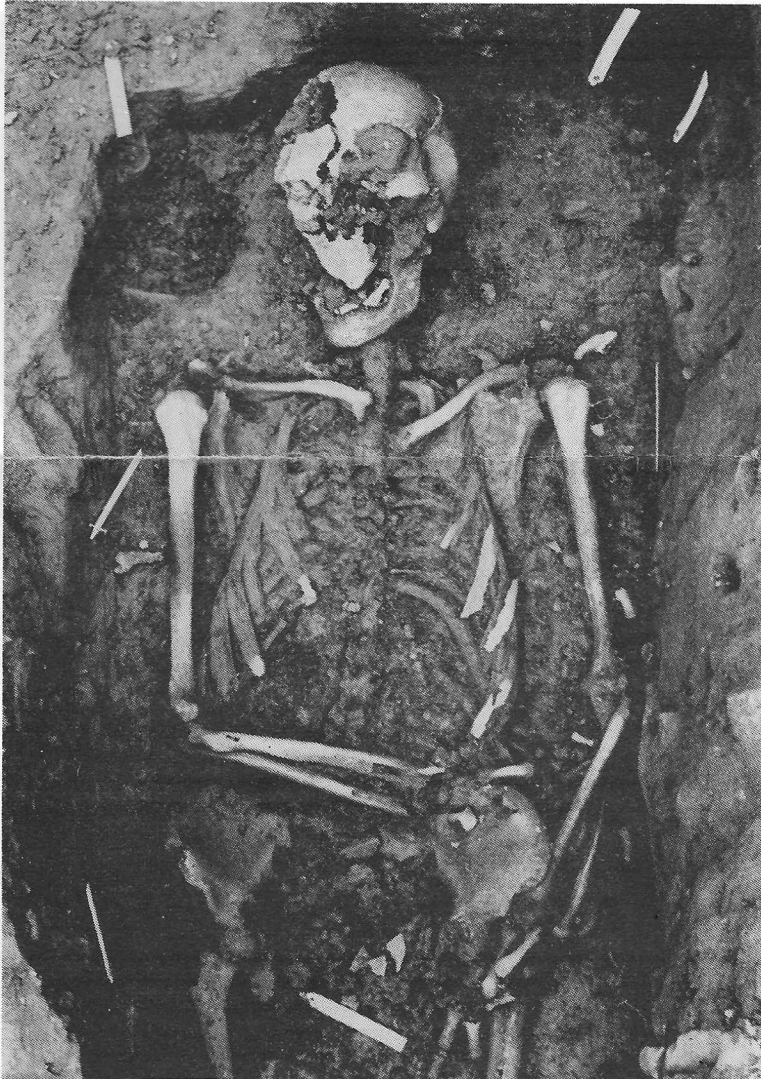
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Ludlow Historical Research Group

The Carmelite Friary excavation

Two years of painstaking excavation have now almost been completed on the site of the former Carmelite friary in Corve Street. The dig, undertaken by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in conjunction with the Ludlow Historical Research Group, has been hailed as a pioneering example of what can be achieved with the aid of local resources and public subscription, and it is hoped that it will be the first of a number of rescue excavations in the Midlands which can be made possible through public support.

Following the most successful dig last year which revealed the foundations of the Carmelites' refectory or possibly guest hall, together with five medieval burials from their adjacent grave yard, visitors during late June and early July this year were rewarded with

the view of an impressive mortar base for a tiled floor belonging to the late 13th or early 14th century house previously on the site and demolished in 1350 to make way for the friary. The tiled floor, being at the northern end, set around a large tiled hearth, was separated by a partition wall from the southern or service end of the house with its blackened rammed-earth floor. The one pre-friary coin, a silver long-cross penny of Henry III (minted 1247-1272), was found on this floor and supported the dating of the building. The substantial street wall of this house had been found last year between the refectory and the present churchyard wall but the west wall of the house, with a well-preserved stone threshold, remained to be revealed this year.



The skeleton found in 1985

Despite our appalling summer weather, excavation doggedly continued down through the layers beneath and revealed at least one if not two previous buildings on the site with yet another medieval wall running north-south and a number of patterns of wooden stake-holes which still await interpretation. These layers, showing continuous 12th and 13th century occupation, also yielded a splendid sequence of decorated green-glazed and coarse black pottery, and expectations that the site would provide a medieval pottery sequence for Ludlow were fully realised.

In the small portion of the Carmelite graveyard, in the north-west corner of the site, yet another skeleton was revealed which this time showed signs of a wooden coffin and, unusually for a medieval burial, having a necklace with the remains of a brass or possibly lead pectoral cross.

To the south of the site a large pit, sectioned last year and then thought to be for rubbish, was emptied to reveal that it was in fact the site of a bell-founder's hearth, where the friary bells were cast. Robert Mascall, prior during the 1390s, is thought to have completed the church and, as at Whitefriars in London, probably completed the steeple which, we are told, contained three bells of which one was much greater than the others. It is probable that all three bells were cast in the same hole but remains of the mould of the largest bell—some three feet in diameter and weighing perhaps eight hundredweight—were found at the bottom together with a rare sample of bell-metal which had leaked from the edge of the mould in casting.

Public support this year has once again been unstinting and generous and an open-day on 6th July, despite indifferent weather, was well attended; and throughout the season a constant stream of visitors to the viewing platform attested to the considerable public awareness and interest in the site. After *Heritage News 3* went to press, a splendid grant of just over £4,000 was made to the excavation by the Historical Building and Monuments Commission against fierce competition and this, together with a further £100 from the Walker Trust, has now ensured the completion of research and the publication of the project.

It remains to give our heartfelt thanks to all those who helped and volunteered this year, especially to our devoted team who manned the observation platform come wind and weather. There now follow many months of patient research and preparatory work to be done before publication of the history and the findings of the site. It is hoped however that the single piece of Roman Samian-ware, found at the end of the dig, will not have too shattering implications for Ludlow's early history!

Peter Klein

The Civic Society – resignations and elections

At the Annual General Meeting in May 1985 the Society heard with regret of the resignations of its President, Mr John Godrich, and its Chairman, Dr Martin Speight. Both have served the Society with distinction for many years and we rejoice that they will both be available to give advice and encouragement to their successors. John Godrich will be remembered particularly for his work with the Civic Society Housing Trust and Martin Speight for his successful chairmanship for ten years. Martin's knowledge and experience of local government have been of great value to the committee and he has steered us safely through a number of complex and contentious issues. We wish him and his family every happiness in their new home at Diddlebury.

As our new President we welcome Julian Critchley, M.P., an active and vociferous campaigner on a range of conservation and planning matters; his affection for the town is well known. As a new Vice-President we welcome Eric Mercer, O.B.E., a former Senior Inspector for the Royal Commission on Historical Documents who has recently retired to Shropshire. Eric's many books on architecture are widely known and respected and he has often helped us in the interpretation of Ludlow buildings.

Our new Chairman is Joan Nash, who has been a hard-working member of the

Committee for many years. She is the first native Ludlovian to hold this office and her affection for the town is infectious and well known.

The new Chairman shares the belief of her predecessors that the Society should be an active and ever-present force in the town. Anyone concerned for any planning, conservation or amenity issue is urged to contact her at once, either direct or through any member of the committee, the names of which are listed below. The committee are your *watchdogs*, please alert them immediately if you see or hear anything which alarms you for the future of our beautiful and precious town.

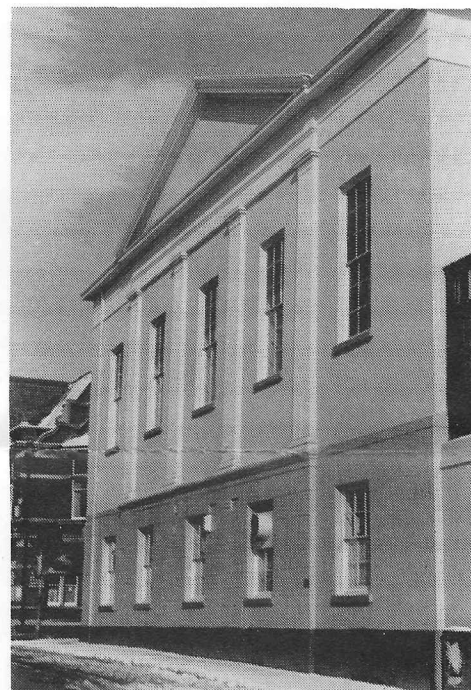
Bill Acklam
John Driscoll
David Holgate
Peter Klein
Alan Lane
David Lloyd
Richard Mercer
Averil Norton
Ran Ogston
Phyllis Ray
Ellis Shaw
Margaret Shaw
Dick Stephens

David Lloyd

A Ludlow Architect Identified

The identity of the architect responsible for designing Ludlow's Assembly Rooms and Museum has long been a mystery and in *The History of Ludlow Museum* a number of tentative suggestions were made by David Lloyd. The solution to the problem was found recently when a Warwickshire historian, Mr Peter Bolton, came across the following reference in the *Warwick Advertiser* for 17 February 1838 which I gratefully reproduce in full:

'The sum of £5,800 has been raised at Ludlow to complete the extensive public buildings in the town. The original amount did not exceed £5,700 but the Committee wisely determined to extend subscriptions to £6,000 in order that a reserve fund may be ready in case of contingencies which frequently occur in such large undertakings during progress of work. Present plans which the Committee intend to recommend to shareholders consist of a Museum for the Natural History Society, Public Baths, Assembly Rooms, Billiard Room, Reading Room, Solicitors' offices, etc. etc., the whole of which are arranged with great judgement. The plans are those prepared by Messrs Stead and Sons, architects of Ludlow.'



Part of the Assembly Rooms,
February 1985

The Winter Programme 1985–86

All meetings will commence at 7.30 pm and will be held at the Prince Charles Suite in the Feathers Hotel unless stated otherwise.

Wednesday 6 November – Fred Reeves Memorial Lecture by David Holgate, a Committee member and former Secretary of the Society: 'Collecting Antique Porcelain with reference to the Severn Valley'.

Wednesday 11 December – 'The Pubs of Ludlow', a tribute to the work of Harry Baker, with readings by Betty Baker. Harry, a native of Ludlow and a well known journalist, died this summer and will be widely missed. As he would have wished, this will be a lively and cheerful evening and audience participation will be encouraged.

Tuesday 4 February – 'The Design of Infill – New Buildings in Historic Areas' by Lewis Braithwaite of Birmingham University. Lewis is a stimulating and sometimes provocative speaker and his talk is relevant to issues raised elsewhere in this publication.

Friday 21 March – 'Houses of the Welsh Countryside' by Peter Smith, a Senior Inspector for the Royal Commission of Historical Documents. Peter is a writer and speaker of international repute and in anticipation of a very large audience this talk is being given at High Hall, Castle Square.

Saturday 10 May – a talk by our new President, Julian Critchley; the title will be announced later.

Ludlow Historical Research Group: Town Tours 1985

Though final figures are not yet available, it is clear that the town tours were particularly successful during 1985, attracting well over 2,000 visitors, a much larger number than in any previous year. More than 20 organised parties visited the town, including four groups of Americans and a number of organisations with a national membership, including the Cambrian Society, the Historical Association and a branch of the Georgian Society.

We have been gratified by the many kind

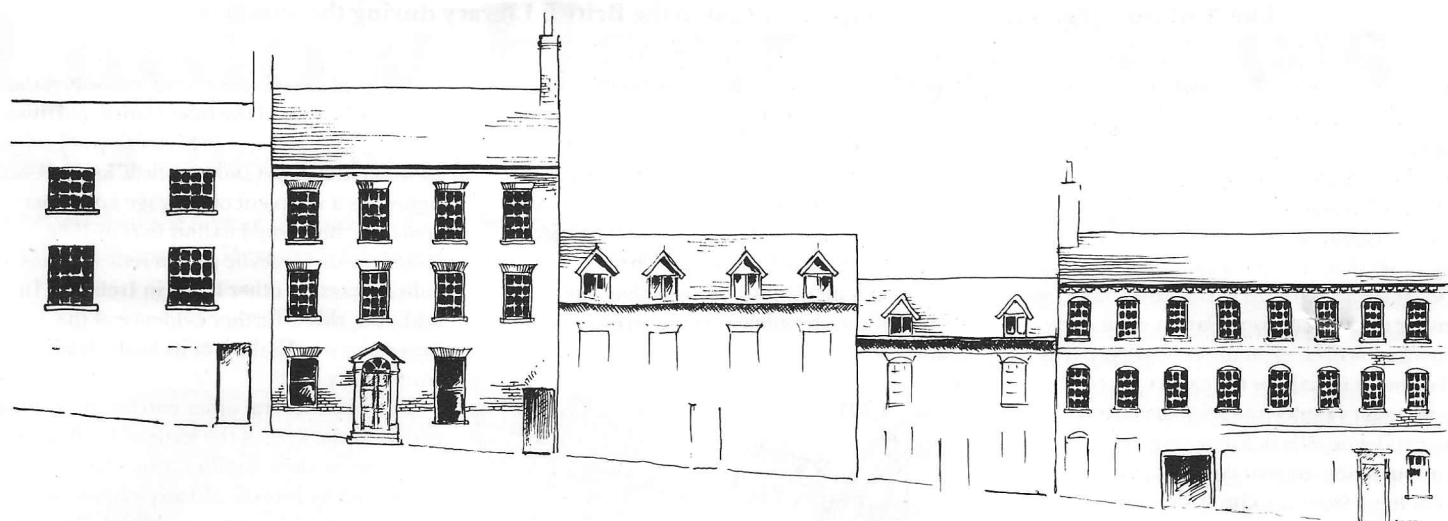
comments made about the town and about the quality of the guides. The reaction of many groups is typified by a letter from the organiser of an Extra-Mural group from Leeds

University who spent a weekend in the town:

'We departed utterly exhausted but with everyone demanding a similar weekend next year. But the Ludlow Historical Research Group will be a hard act to follow'.

Samuel Stead is better known for his work as a mason, which may be found represented by tombs in a number of local churches, including Leintwardine, Richard's Castle and Ashford Bowdler. The discovery of the architect of this important Ludlow building is a significant contribution to our knowledge of the architectural history of the town during its period as a fashionable resort.

Martin Speight



STANDING

DEMOLISHED 1930's

DEMOLISHED LATER

STANDING

The Clifton Cinema Site Development

A reconstruction of part of the east side of Old Street showing the buildings which were demolished to make way for the Clifton cinema and its car park

The streetscape above, drawn by David Bilbey of Church Stretton, has been reconstructed from old photographs of the east side of Old Street. It attempts to show the street as it was in the early 1930s, before demolition of some of the buildings to make way for the Clifton cinema (now the Essoldo Social Club). Most of the photographs used show this part of the street from a distance and at an oblique angle, so that many details of the demolished buildings had to be omitted. Readers who can supply other photographs or can recall what the buildings looked like are invited to contact the editors.

This part of the town was in the news last summer, following the announcement that the site of the Clifton cinema was to be sold. Applications for planning permission prior to purchase included a proposal by the property developers, McCarthy and Stone. They wanted to demolish the cinema and erect a four-storey building of well-appointed flats with a number of communal facilities. For reasons given below the Civic Society committee objected strongly to this scheme and made their views known both to the developers and to South Shropshire District Council, who eventually rejected the proposals.

The committee was not unsympathetic to the provision of sheltered housing, though we were not convinced that there would be sufficient local demand for this kind of high cost accommodation in addition to that already planned for the College/Quality Square area. Our major objection, however, was aesthetic. The street frontage proposed by McCarthy and Stone was large and overpowering and completely out of scale with the rest of the street. Visually it would have been as disastrous for Ludlow as the County Council offices have been for Warwick – or the new market hall for Shrewsbury!

The postwar years have seen a growing awareness of streetscape, particularly in historic towns.

A building is important not just for its own architectural qualities but for its place in a street sequence. The televised programmes of Alec Clifton-Taylor, who regarded Ludlow as his 'favourite small town', have helped to popularise this view, but it has been urged by other writers, including Christopher Hussey, a former editor of *Country Life*, and Nikolaus Pevsner, editor of the remarkable *Buildings of England* series. Hussey's articles on Ludlow in *Country Life* in late 1945 and early 1946 should be required reading for anyone concerned with planning issues in Ludlow.

The essentials for a pleasing street sequence are continuity, scale and materials. Uniformity of style is less important and sometimes, indeed, undesirable. Some of Ludlow's most successful postwar developments have followed these principles. The housing west of Holgate Fee, for example, has a continuous street front, matches the scale of the buildings across the street and uses materials consistent with local traditions. The restoration of No. 40 Broad Street and the conversion of the backbuildings of No. 38 Corve Street were successful for similar reasons.

Some of the worst 19th century developments, on the other hand, ignored these principles. The new Methodist Chapel at No. 52 Broad Street, described by Pevsner as 'a painful jog', was a great act of faith by a small congregation, but it sadly broke the continuity of an otherwise unblemished part of the street. No. 18 King Street (Currys), styled a 'Victorian abomination' by Clifton-Taylor, is not only out of scale with its neighbours, but has 'pasty' yellow bricks quite alien to Ludlow's red clay. The modern extension to the Midland Bank is a disaster because it transgresses the same principles.

The demolitions on the east side of Old Street removed some of the town's worst slums, which had developed as back buildings along the medieval burgage plots running east to the town wall. They also made room for a much needed social amenity. But by breaking the continuity of the street frontage, they ruined the appearance of what had previously been an attractive stretch of townscape. The Civic Society is not suggesting that replicas of the demolished houses should be erected; but they *do* urge the restoration of a continuous street front with buildings *in scale and harmony* with their neighbours. On a smaller scale the recent development across the road, at Ashford Mews, is a model of how well a building of the 1980s *can* blend with a pre-existing streetscape.

These proposals, it must be stressed, are not incompatible with retention of the cinema building as a community centre. Several members of the Civic Society committee admire the building as a fine example of 'between-the-wars' architecture and accept the point that the cinema auditorium would be an asset to the town and district. But this does not alter our primary concern for the *appearance* of the street. Fortunately, there is plenty of room *in front* of the cinema for the sort of development we have advocated and this indeed may be the means for recovering some of the capital outlay necessary to purchase the cinema and to operate it as a viable financial concern.

David Lloyd

How to join the Societies

Full details can be obtained from the secretaries:

Civic Society: Mr Ran Ogston, No. 1 The Vineyard, Ludlow. Tel. Ludlow 4718.

Historical Research Group: Mrs Margaret Shaw, Cliffdene, Dinham, Ludlow. Tel. Ludlow 2850.

The 'Chronica Landavensis', an important find in the British Library during the summer

I am indebted to Dr M. E. Speight for drawing my attention to a Latin manuscript in the Cottonian Collection in the British Library (Cotton Nero A.IV), described in the catalogue as '*Chronica Laudanensis*', but of particular relevance to Ludlow. This is a chronicle or, mainly, a set of annals from the legendary past to 1338. It seems to be all in the same hand, so was either an original compilation of an early 14th century writer, or, more probably, partly based on other annals for the earlier part of the work; textual evidence suggests the latter.

The catalogue-title is a meaningless misreading of the manuscript title (in a different hand from the chronicle itself) which is '*Chronica Landavensis*' or 'Llandaff Chronicle'. Presumably the MS was found in Llandaff cathedral, but the text suggests that it was written at Wigmore abbey by a Ludlow man, a contemporary of Roger Mortimer, first earl of March, and whose interests included the Lacy, Geneville and Mortimer families, lords of Ludlow, Wigmore abbey and Ludlow itself.

The first yearly entry affecting Ludlow is for 1085, which, in Latin, reads 'There died Sir Walter de Lacy, lord of Lodelowe'. The next Ludlow entry is for 1200 giving a different version of Wright's account of the discovery of the remains of Irish saints when Ludlow church was extended. The 'Llandaff' version is textually similar to Wright's, but more corrupt; it does however contain facts not given in Wright's source, which suggests a common origin, but perhaps more than one. The interesting aspect is not the Irish saints, (scorned by Eyton), but the nature of the church extension – 'the bell-tower of Ludelowe with the body of the church was built from its foundation.'

Among several notes of Welsh wars (such as 1262 and 1294) we find for 1228 a 'massacre of the Welsh at Colmtone (Culmington) in Corvedale', perhaps an otherwise unrecorded battle close to Ludlow.

The Ludlow Hospital of St John (by Ludford Bridge) gets three mentions. In 1233 Peter Undergod's foundation was confirmed by Walter de Lacy; in 1236 the Pope promulgated it; in 1328 the bishop of Hereford dedicated its church.

One of the most interesting entries is that for 1256 when 'the Friars of St Augustine, having left their little dwelling in Cristecroft, first dwelt in Galdeford; of whom Friar Alban was the first'. It seems therefore that their home for the next 280 years, Galdeford, was preceded by a house in Dinham where the Croft Guest House stands today.

In 1269 an earthquake is recorded, perhaps connected with the next item: 'Galdeford Gate was begun from its foundations'. Other building works mentioned include the building of St James's Chapel in the parish church in 1295 and the beginning of the north aisle in 1308, to be 'finished three years later' – an entry which incidentally proves that this version of the chronicle was not written each year.



The long, narrow feature which runs south behind No. 11 Dinham is a prominent but puzzling feature of Ludlow's town plan. Originally it was probably a ditch protecting an early civilian settlement to the west but later it may have been used as a street. For some years local historians have identified it with the medieval 'Christ Croft' but the reason for the name was not known. It now seems likely that it took its title from the brief residence there of the Austin friars in the 13th century.

Those of us who are trying to unravel the complex history of the inheritance, partition and subinfeudation of the Lordship of Ludlow, in which the as yet unidentified 'lord of Cotes' figures as a recipient of burgage and other rents, are heartened to find that in 1282 'Geoffrey de Geneville gave a rent which is called Cotes for other lands in Ireland'. In addition, this is further evidence of the importance to Ludlow of its lords' Irish connexions.

There are several other entries concerning events in the lives of the lords of Ludlow and Wigmore or their families, which are confirmed by records already known, but, interestingly, Margery and Maud, the heirs of Walter de Lacy who died in 1241, are described as his daughters whereas they were his granddaughters. Not a mistake to be made by a contemporary, this suggests that some of the earlier parts were based on uncertain memory. The succession of Ludlow rectors between 1287 and 1305 is given, but, oddly, no later ones.

The chronicler recorded notable years of high and low corn prices: 1126 wheat 3d a bushel; 1203 wheat 15d; 1288 wheat 2d; 1295 corn 20d; 1315 corn 20d; 1316 corn 30d; 1317 corn 40d; 1322 corn 36d; 1326 wheat 3d; (it is likely that corn here was in fact wheat). The sequence illustrates eloquently the harvest disasters of the early 14th century which some historians think equalled the Black Death in their dire long-term effects. We are not told whether these are pre- or post-harvest prices.

In 1264 a bright comet appeared, being visible to the naked eye for 15 days. The chronicler, despite his interest in the Mortimers, does not say if he saw this as a portent of the battle of Lewes. Other events were the great mortality of 1149, the fatal coughing epidemic of January 1174, the inundation of Holland in 1178, Edward I's recoinage of 1279, the murderous hailstorm of 2 May 1286, the great blizzard of 15 April 1293, the cattle plague of 1319–20 and the grant of 30,000 sacks of wool to the king in 1337.

The chronicler took a detailed interest in the politics of his own time, particularly those involving Roger Mortimer, first earl of March, ending graphically with the latter's arrest and execution in 1330. There are no entries after 1338; perhaps the writer died then.

Michael Faraday

Although resident in Surrey, Michael Faraday is an exceptionally active member of the Ludlow Historical Research Group. He spent much of his boyhood in Ludlow and his parents have retired to the town. He and David Lloyd are the co-authors of the forthcoming volume on the history of Ludlow to 1660, which is to be published by Phillimore.