

Ludlow Heritage News

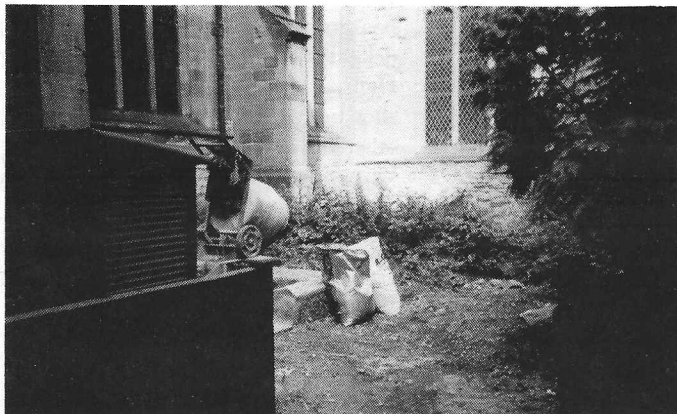
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ST LAURENCE'S PARISH CHURCH, LUDLOW

Provision of Amenity Area on the Eastern side of the South Porch



Ludlow Parish Church – area to the east of the South Porch. Photograph by John Hardwick

Among the many attractive features of Ludlow, the parish church of St Laurence must rate highly for its architectural and historical qualities. Its site lies within the historic core of an outstanding conservation area, and the nobility of its architecture must rank it with the other two great churches of the west – Tewkesbury Abbey and Malvern Priory. The structure of the building, dating back to the 12th century, has seen many vicissitudes, probably reaching its nadir in 1860 when it was described as being 'in a ruinous condition' by an eminent architect of the day. Since that time there have been several major restorations, and as the years have progressed, a more enlightened public has been seized of the importance of maintaining this glorious piece of our heritage in a sound and worthy condition.

One of the innovations introduced in 1860 was the provision of a system of 'warming pipes' heated by hot water from a solid fuel boiler. Historical record has it that the system contained some 7,000 gallons of water and it took three days to fill up – presumably by a somewhat tiring process involving a chain of men carrying buckets of water to the header tank. Whatever the delights of that operation happened to be, the installation of the heating system called for a stacking area for the solid fuel, and somewhere upon which the clinker from the boiler could be spread. The area chosen for this purpose was to the east of the South Porch. It became a tip for fuel and while its operational use to warm the church could not be criticised, the environmental aspect was severe, especially so in such close contact with the main structure of the building.

Time moved on. Public opinion became concerned about matters relating to the environment, and the visual amenities of sensitive areas. Inflationary pressures also made themselves felt in church budgets; a bountiful supply of methane was found in the North Sea and eventually the PCC of the day reacted to all these changes and converted the solid fuel boiler to gas – partly in the hope the new fuel would stabilise or hopefully reduce costs! The effect of the change was to make the tip site redundant, but as is often the way in public affairs, the future condition of the area used as a tipping space was forgotten. Consequently, it remained untended, a dumping ground for rubbish from the church, an area in which dustbins were left untidily for all to view, and the surface of it, elevated by the earlier depositions, soon became covered with a strong weed growth. In all, it deteriorated to such a degree, that it became, without doubt, the most unsightly space within the conservation area.

Sadly, this has happened immediately adjacent to the main walls of the church, and near the South Porch which forms the entrance most frequently used by visitors to, and worshippers at the Church. A further practical point was that the loose fill over the area and its weed growth were both instrumental in causing blockages to the drainage system. This needs to be well maintained to avoid the possibility of surface water adversely affecting foundation stability.

What could be done to improve matters? Under the leadership of the Rector, a small investigating committee was set up, and in view of the fact that there is no permanent verges at the Church, it was considered that

a solution requiring the minimum of maintenance was essential and it should, as an equal priority, also embrace a scheme which removed the eyesore and restored the area so as to accord with its architectural background.

Accordingly, it was agreed that the area should be levelled, and surfaced with natural stone, the drainage piped under the proposed new surface, a raised flower bed provided, a new stone wall on the existing base provided around the heating chamber to screen the air inlet to the boiler, and to provide a site within which the dustbins could be hidden. It would still be possible to look over the wall to see the old 12th century buttress and lavatorium, or to gain access immediately thereto via an oak door leading to the heating chamber.

After the preliminary work had been done, the town was saddened by the death of Samuel Burgess who had been Chairman of the Friends of St Laurence, and a keen supporter of both church and town activities, particularly the Ludlow Summer Festival. It was considered that this area, when improved, would provide a fitting location for a memorial. The area, on completion, would also be a place which would be open to all who wished to take their ease for a few minutes, to eat a sandwich perhaps, or just sit quietly within the precincts of the church, to relax or chat a while.

It is not easy to give a clear indication of the final appearance, for it is mainly a surfacing scheme, with a limited amount of stonework, all to be done to the highest standard of workmanship in natural materials. The final drawing, which is on display in the South Porch of the Church, indicates what is to happen, but its attraction will lie in its natural texture and colour, and the skills of the men engaged.

The Hook Mason partnership of architects in Hereford produced the finished drawing as a thank offering for the life of Samuel Burgess. The provisional estimate of cost is £5,000. Contributions from interested organisations are being sought, but for any individuals who would like to be associated with this scheme, the St Laurence's Amenity Account has been opened at Lloyds Bank, Broad Street, Ludlow. All contributions will be gratefully received. The Civic Society has offered a contribution of £1,000 towards the additional costs involved in improving the visual amenities of the site. The Friends of St Laurence have agreed a contribution of £1,500, the family of the late Samuel R. Burgess have made a generous contribution, and with a little more help the scheme could start in the spring of 1987.

Ellis Shaw

CIVIC SOCIETY NOTES

Annual General Meeting – in brief

Julian Critchley, having agreed to accept the Presidency of the Society last year, was re-elected to the position. Sir Jasper More and Eric Cockeram were also re-elected Vice-Presidents, together with former President, John Godrich. John Godrich resigned from the Presidency last year, and had thought to 'retire' from the Society. However, it was made quite clear at the meeting, members were determined the person responsible for our greatly enhanced finances should be honoured in this way. We are delighted he has accepted.

While Ran Ogston could not be persuaded to retract his decision to retire as Secretary – known to all members for infinite patience and good humour – we thank him for all the work he has undertaken for the Society since moving to Ludlow. We are delighted he will continue to play an active role as a member of the Committee. It is with pleasure that we welcome *Jeanne Rhodes as our new Secretary. Jeanne retired to Ludlow with her husband over three years ago, and they have both contributed much to local organisations, especially for the house-bound population of the district. While Jeanne has started her term of office with enthusiasm, members must realise she cannot yet know them all by name, we trust all members will be as helpful as possible in this matter. We most sincerely thank those members, Alan Lane, Averil Norton, Richard Mercer and Phyllis Ray, who have served the society loyally for many years, we welcome some new members who will bring a fresh outlook to our deliberations.

*Derrick Banks, a retired official of the Law Society, has been a member since his arrival in Ludlow three years ago. He has known Ludlow as a visitor for many years, and we are delighted he has chosen our town for his retirement.

*Peter Bell is well known to both Ludlovians and visitors for his superb bookshop. He tells us he is not really a Ludlovian, he has only been here since he was six years old!!

Last but by no means least, *Howard Cheese, technician at our much prized museum. A loyal member of many years' standing – he must have been one of the youngest recruits ever.

Other members re-elected to the Committee are:

- Vice-chairman* – Bill Acklam
Treasurer – John Driscoll
David Holgate
* Peter Klein
* David Lloyd
Ellis Shaw
* Margaret Shaw
Dick Stephens

* indicates membership of the Historical Research Group, which since its inception has been closely associated with the Civic Society.

* Joan Nash, Chairman

Environment Week 1986

The Questionnaire which was despatched with the previous issue of *Heritage News* recorded 15 different suggestions for the most appreciated building – architecturally. However, the Parish Church won by far the greatest number of votes, polling 43, as against 20 for the castle, and 18 for the Broad Street 'street scape'.

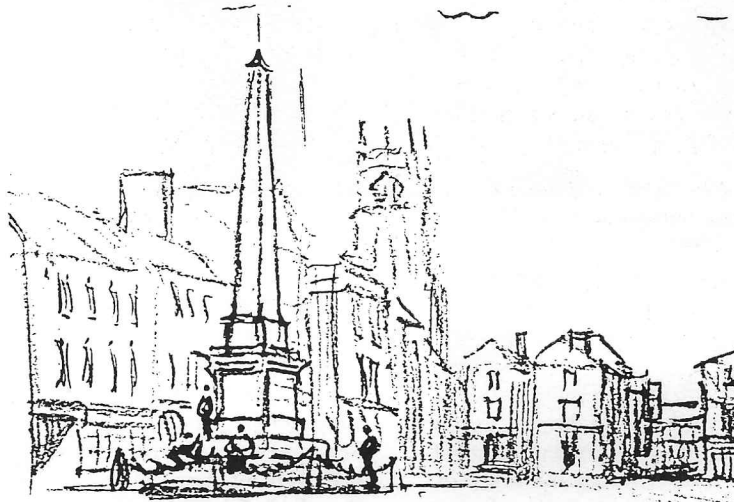
The Library just pipped the Feathers into second place as the building found to be of most service to those who voted – the Parish Church was once again among the leaders, coming third. Hence the decision by the Committee to pledge Society funds towards improving an area of the churchyard which has become a rubbish tip.

Our old friends, the Midland Bank and Essoldo Bingo Hall were voted the buildings liked least in the town. Traffic and litter were also prominent in the dislikes of the voters –

there is very obviously a strong feeling for a traffic-free area – especially in Castle Square, and that Castle Square should not only be traffic-free, but building-free.

A very interesting suggestion – a stone obelisk – was received from the distinguished artist, Dennis Flanders, a member of the Royal Society of British Artists well known for his townscape drawings. His drawing is reproduced below, your comments are invited.

We note Mr Flanders used the 'rubbishy' (see article by Stephen Dornan) buildings as a background for his sketch. Most members are delighted that the demolition of the Market Hall has already led to an improvement in the shop front at Kwiksave. There are no doubt other historic towns who would wish for a similarly sympathetic adaptation of premises.



Ludlow Civic Society Winter Programme 1986–7

All meetings are held at the Feathers Hotel, Prince Charles Suite, and start at 7.30 pm. New members are welcome, subscriptions are very reasonable – £2 per year, membership forms are available from the Secretary.

Saturday 25 October

The Rout of Ludford Bridge – October 1459
Geoffrey W. J. Hodges

Wednesday 5 November

Ludlow in the Civil War 1642–1646
David Lloyd

A lecture dedicated to Fred Reeves, a former Chairman and founder member of the Society

Wednesday 3 December

The Architecture of G. F. Bodley
Adrian Barlow

Wednesday 11 February

Masons' Marks
Dr J. M. Madison

Wednesday 11 March

The Enigma of a Shropshire Lad
Mr J. Hunt – of the Housman Society

Wednesday 8 April

Town Planning – The Seventh Lamp?

J. B. Caird, Planning and Development Officer for South Shropshire District Council

As a result of a visit by Leicester Civic Society to Ludlow last spring, we have been invited to visit Leicester. A city which far pre-dates our own historic town.

Leicester, according to the Domesday Book (1086) was an Iron Age settlement, later established as Civitas by the Romans. It was the Cathedral See of the Bishop of Leicester until the 9th century when it became a Danish borough – we, after all, only had the Welsh to worry about.

The city later achieved fame as the site of the first Parliament called by Simon de Montfort in 1265. Since the 18th century it has been an important manufacturing centre of both hosiery and the leather trade (boots and shoes).

It is likely that the Society will visit Leicester either the Sunday before, or the Sunday after Easter 1987. Further details will be available from the Secretary early in the New Year.

Mrs Jeanne Rhodes

1 Cliff Villas
Ludford
Ludlow
SY8 1PL

Ludlow Market Hall

A majority in Ludlow applauds the demolition of the Market Hall and wishes to retain the resulting substantially increased open area. Its thinking may be thus summarised:

1. It appreciates the additional space—per the *Ludlow Advertiser*: ‘Ludlovians have discovered space. They are reluctant to see it go. It is the most exciting event in Ludlow for many years, and we should enjoy it’.
2. A fine view of the Castle has been opened up.
3. Good buildings which were previously obscured have been revealed.
4. Amenities such as cheerful flower beds, lawns, seating and fountains may now be provided.
5. The original dimensions of the twelfth century town plan of the de Lacy lords of Ludlow can now be seen and properly appreciated for the first time in centuries.
6. The new outdoor market with its stalls and colourful awnings contributes to the hustle and bustle of life in Ludlow.

A concerned, heretical minority to which the writer belongs disagrees; and its thinking is as follows:

1. Space equals thin air, cheapest and most plentiful of commodities; in itself it gives no pleasure. The containment and disciplining of space does give pleasure, the pleasure of what townscape aficionados call ‘enclosure’. The delight of Broad Street and Mill Street lies not so much in their width as in the unbroken lines of well-scaled buildings which enclose them. The buildings which front the new square are too small and the space dominates them, whereas in an urban context the buildings should control the space.
2. The Castle is, or ought to be, the visual climax of Ludlow. Seen across a huge windy square it loses its dominance; its lofty keep is at the far end of the complex; its outer bailey wall and gatehouse are relatively low and insignificant. The larger the space, the less the apparent significance of the buildings. Until recently the Castle was the great surprise at the end of the town; one picked one’s way through the streets, past the bulk of the Market Hall and was confronted by the immense Castle and the unexpected greensward of the Bailey. One may still enjoy the same sense of delayed surprise with the Church; per Pevsner, the tower, ‘an arrogantly high tower ... is of a height to dominate the town ... and to serve as a beacon for miles around’. Yet once in Ludlow, one stalks the Church through the streets and comes across its overwhelming mass at last through a narrow passage between the chemist and the off-licence. This is the way to make the most of a major monument in an urban context; but every destroyer of the fabric of a historic town will plead in his defence that he is opening up views of its greatest monuments.

3. The buildings on the north side of the square revealed by demolition are (in townscape terms) amongst the most rubbishy in central Ludlow; a clumsy facade adaptation at the School; an excruciatingly proportioned doorcase at No. 16; a good house, No. 14, set back behind a large concrete paved patio; the opening to the municipal car-park; and two of the ugliest shop-fronts in town, the Jobcentre and Broadhursts, all in a row. Better to cover them up as much as one can!
4. Ludlow is a fine town in a fine countryside and its exceptional quality (on the south and west sides anyway) is the absence of suburbia; hard town meets hard countryside. Lawns, colourful flowerbeds of geraniums and lobelias and fountains in which cigarette ends drift around hopelessly, belong in the depths of suburbia and in the middles of roundabouts, but not in the middle of the forum of Ludlow.
5. The original twelfth century market street is thought to have extended, as wide as the new market place at present, from the Castle keep to the Bull Ring. How ugly it must have been! Per Pevsner; ‘aesthetically speaking it was a blessing that the old High Street was filled in by later medieval building. The town ... has now a narrow and a spacious part. ... Both are needed in a town. ...’ The destruction of the Market Hall has spoiled the balance. Instead of the spacious part in which the Market Hall stood, we are left with an ill-defined prairie.
6. It is good to have open stalls back in the centre of the town, but could not plastic awnings and tubular steel be replaced by wooden frames and plain canvas? The continued existence of an open market need not be inconsistent with the building of a new covered market, for the forum of Ludlow is big enough to accommodate them both with ease.

It is suggested:

- a) That Ludlow would gain aesthetically from the rebuilding of a market hall (probably considerably smaller than its predecessor, and not necessarily of more than one storey) in the Square, provided that the highest quality of design were obtained and the best (ie local) materials used. Although writers upon Ludlow in the past (Pevsner, Clifton-Taylor) found fault with the design of the old Market Hall because of its poor design and boiled lobster materials, they did not find fault with the principle of a market hall in the Square. In towns in which market halls have been removed from squares (Bishop’s Castle, Church Stretton, Leominster) one still regrets the loss; and no-one is campaigning for the removal of those at Bridgnorth, Ledbury and Shrewsbury which happily still exist in the middles of their squares and add to their pleasures enormously.

A Visit to Woodstock

The Visit to Woodstock on the 12th July, arranged by Ran Ogston, proved to be one of the most enjoyable events of the summer.

The first of that day’s pleasures was the drive through the beautiful Cotswold countryside, passing through Evesham, Broadway and Chipping Norton.

On our arrival at Woodstock we were greeted by members of the Woodstock Civic Society who presented each of us with a souvenir booklet.

Several of us opted to begin our visit with a picnic lunch in the museum garden, followed by a tour of the museum’s exhibits which were most effectively displayed.

Assembling at the Town Hall we were shown a fascinating collection of documents from the archives of the town. Woodstock is fortunate in having a large collection of historic documents in excellent condition, and a controlled environment in which to keep them.

An expertly-guided tour of the town showed us similarities to Ludlow. Woodstock is a planned medieval town with a triangular market place partly filled by later building, fine Georgian facades masking older buildings, and the outlines of the early burgrave plots. Much of its visual charm lies in the use of beautifully-coloured local stone, together with wrought iron.

An excellent tea in the town hall and a short period of free time completed the visit. We thanked and took leave of our hosts and returned home via Burford and Ledbury.

Our most grateful thanks to Ran Ogston for his work in arranging the excursion, and making it such a memorable day.

Dorothy and Bill Arrowsmith

- b) That central Ludlow would gain commercially from the rebuilding of a market hall as well. It is essential, for the well-being of retailing in the town centre, that there should be a counterbalance to the supermarkets in Galdeford. A new covered market would provide such a counterbalance. If there is no such counterbalance, the future of the centre of Ludlow is as a Disneyland for tourists. It is all very well shopping in the open in summer but what Ludlow will need in the winter is, per Leland, ‘a place where poor market folks may stand dry when rain cometh’.

Stephen Dornan

Bearing in mind that the overwhelming opinion among members of the Civic Society is that Castle Square should remain an urban open space, one member has been brave enough to contribute his strongly-held view to the contrary. Stephen Dornan has lived in Ludlow since joining a local law practice four years ago, but he has known the town for many years.

THE CARMELITE GARDEN

During the spring and summer of 1984 and again in 1985, Jeanne and I joined a small intrepid band of volunteers who took turns at standing on a viewing platform at the bottom of Corve Street and attempted, for the benefit of interested observers, to throw some light on what was happening below us.

I refer, of course, to the Carmelite Friary excavation, better known as 'the Dig'.

One of the questions almost invariably asked was 'What will happen to the site when the dig is finished?' I would answer, truthfully as I thought, that the site would be levelled and built on and that would be that. The reaction was always 'Oh dear, what a pity it couldn't be preserved: can't something be done about it?' A sentiment with which I agreed wholeheartedly, but could see little prospect of being satisfied.

Well, I should have had more faith in human nature. To the everlasting credit of the owners, Messrs Treasures Estates, the site has not been built on, but has been very attractively laid out, and the dominant features revealed during the excavations have been preserved for posterity.

These features, shown in the accompanying photographs, include uncovered sections of the outer Friary wall together with reconstructions of the bell-pit, the pulpit, a section of the tiled floor, and part of a burial ground.



View of the Graveyard

Mentioning the burial ground reminds me that one sure way of arousing the interest of small boys visiting the platform was to refer to the skeletons that had been found. I still wonder if we should have had one actually on the platform to really satisfy the gruesome inclinations of the younger elements.

No, the skeletons are not still there, they have presumably been decently re-buried in a suitable place.

Each of the features alluded to has its accompanying pedestal with an informative description of the feature. There is also an artist's impression of the medieval house belonging to Laurence de Ludlow which was demolished to make way for the Friary, and, overlooking the site, a pedestal giving a brief outline of the site's archaeological history. The archaeological findings will of course be contained in a comprehensive report to be published shortly by Birmingham University Archaeological Department.



Steps down to the 'Dig'

All the spoil heaps and other debris have been cleared away from the approach to the site and brick steps provided as shown to reach the 'dig level'. Gravel paths have been laid out for perambulation.



Description of Medieval House

The whole area is now a tribute to Birmingham University Archaeological Unit, and the owners Treasures Estates who, although having been granted planning permission to develop the site, have deliberately chosen to shelve their building plans and keep the site uncovered. It should be emphasised, however, that should the site become neglected and ignored, they could at some future date have a change of heart, so it behoves all interested parties to ensure that this does not happen.

I'm sure that, at present, most people pass by without any idea of what lies behind the wall at the bottom of Corve Street, but I understand that a sign visible from the road is to be erected.



General view showing tiled floor, pulpit and bell pit

If you haven't yet been, please go and have a look: you won't be disappointed, and, as a last word, don't forget to look at the 'finds' exhibited in the porch of St Leonard's Chapel.

Eric Rhodes— who also took the photographs

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS FROM CASTLE BOOKSHOP

The Feathers

David Lloyd, Peter Howell, and Margaret Richards

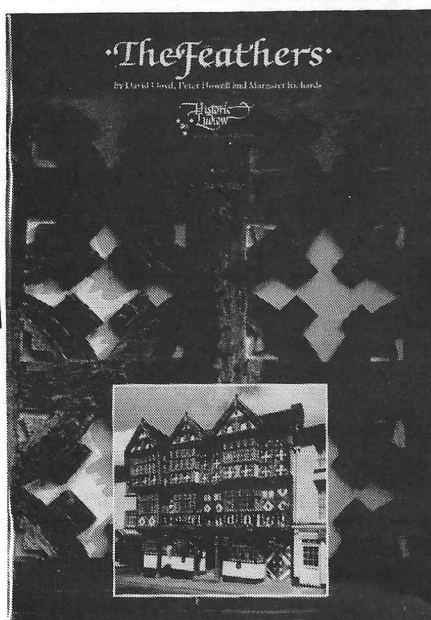
Ludlow Research Paper No. 5 — £4.95

As promised in our last issue, *The Feathers*, no. 5 of the Ludlow Research Papers, is now available.

This history of one of Ludlow's most famous landmarks maintains the high standard set by the earlier research papers. (We hope you have them all, and believe the cover is the best yet.)

The Feathers, regarded by some as the world's most handsome inn, is a great attraction for tourists, and this book, with its wealth of illustrations, plans and photographs will prove a valuable guide to all who wish to know the full history of the Feathers Inn from the 16th century to the present day.

People are not forgotten, not only is the family history of Rees Jones, the builder, recorded, but we are also told of the 20th century craftsmen involved in restoration work.



Ludlow in By-Gone Days

Henry Weyman — £3.95

This little gem has been reprinted by the Palmer's Press, a new local publishing company and subsidiary of Castle Bookshop. Taking its name from the original Palmer's Guild of Ludlow, this Press will be reproducing more books of local interest in the near future.

The author of *Ludlow in By-Gone Days*, Henry Weyman, was born in Ludlow in 1851, and apart from his student days, spent all his life in the town, taking a prominent part in its political and social activities.

Who, therefore, better equipped to present us with an authentic and interesting account of the many facets of the life of old Ludlow, where one may have been fined, not for a parking offence, but for merely keeping a ferret, or washing one's parsnips in the well. And they were called, The Good Old Days!

Lily Struthers/Peter Bell