

Ludlow Heritage News

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COMMONS - particularly WHITCLIFFE COMMON



Photo: Gareth Thomas

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

About one and a half million acres of land in England and Wales are designated as common land. These commons are possibly the most underrated, probably the most misunderstood, but certainly the most greatly appreciated areas of land, by many, many people.

Common land is generally thought to be either owned by the Queen or the State, but neither is true. All common land has a particular, private owner. Commons are a remnant of the Manorial system, which was central to our ancient economy. The Manor, being the basic unit, was supposed to be self-sufficient. Crops were grown on the better soil, but the poorer soil, the wasteland, was used for gathering fuel and litter for livestock. The Lords of the Manor owned all the land, but 'commoners' had rights which were recognised by the courts. This meant that the Manor could not 'enclose' the land without parliamentary authority, hence the open and unfenced nature of 'commons' as we know them today. Common land was used for grazing cutting wood, fodder, etc. and was, as such, an essential part of the local economy. Many assume that they have

a right to walk over common land, but this is not so with eighty percent of our commons. Many well-intentioned legislators have attempted to rationalise the law but have rapidly retreated when met with the legal complexities.

The obligations to provide land on which commoners may exercise their rights are derived from the Statute of Merton 1235. Crop rotation was demanded by law and also determined the times for grazing. However there was an obvious incentive for owners to enclose common land and attempts to do so were numerous. Such attempts inevitably generated resistance from the commoners, whose livelihoods depended on their use of the land.

The *commons* system remained virtually unchanged until the agrarian revolution in the latter part of the 18th century. At this time the prospects of profitable agriculture had become very attractive to the landowners, enclosure acts for individual commons were very quickly activated and commenced by the owners. Although the Parliamentary system was involved in the hearing of counter petitions, the system was heavily loaded in the landowners favour. A common could

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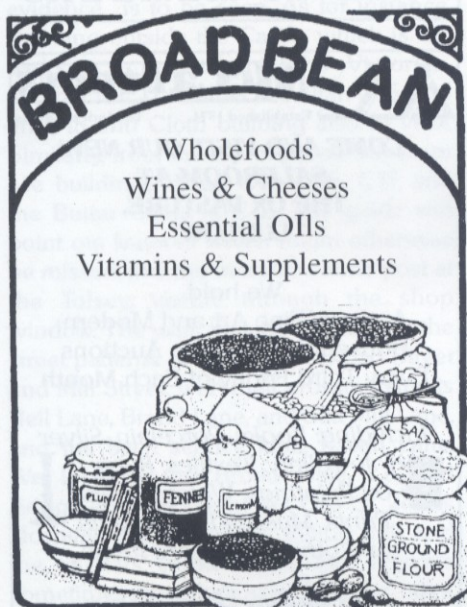
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very quickly become 'enclosed' without the commoners being aware. It was only towards the end of the C18 that it became obligatory to post notices on church doors, to inform the public of the intention. A forerunner of our present system of planning applications?

The applications to enclose land during Victorian times waned, influenced by the intervention of articulate figures such as, John Stuart Mill, Lord Eversley, Thomas Huxley and Charles Dilk. In addition the development of the great cornfields in America dampened the enthusiasm of the landowners in England.

In 1876 the Commons Act and the Metropolitan Act made great progress in the management of commons. In 1958 a Royal Commission produced a report, *'Commons. The last uncommitted land in England and Wales'*, and this proposed that all commons be registered.

WHITCLIFFE COMMON

As stated previously, all commons belong to a particular owner; in Whitcliffe's case this is the Earl of Plymouth. Whitcliffe's history is typical of many commons, commoners' rights were given to the burgesses of Ludlow by Jordon of Ludford and the Abbot of Gloucester. The area then was much greater than it is now, possibly about seventy per cent or more. Since then, seventy per cent has been enclosed. In 1793, 70 acres of land were enclosed by an act of parliament. It is assumed that this followed a request from the landowner wishing to obtain sole use of the prime farmland. The proceeds from this were used to pay for the lighting and paving of Ludlow, together with 'watching'. In 1821 a Bill was brought before Parliament to enclose the remaining acres, but a petition by 600 inhabitants of the town was set before the House, and in recognition of this defence, Parliament decreed that of the remaining 52 acres should not be 'enclosed'.

Nowadays Whitcliffe's main function is as an amenity to be enjoyed by local people and visitors alike. There they can walk, relax and enjoy the magnificent views over Ludlow and the surrounding countryside. In addition to public recreation and the amenity value of the woodland areas, part of the common, together with the River Teme

with its river plants and invertebrate communities have recently been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

However such an amenity can not exist without cost. For the Common to be a safe place for the public to visit and for the trees to realise their full potential the site needs to be properly managed. In 1996 a management proposal for the future of Whitcliffe Common was produced and an action plan initiated. The management proposals included improving the Common, especially public access, and undertaking silvicultural measures for the benefit of the trees. Silviculture is defined as the growing and tending of trees as a branch of forestry. The main objectives were to enhance the conservation value of the area and to improve interpretation opportunities for the public.

Silviculture has been the predominant activity since November 1997, with very apparent benefits to the Common. The current plan includes more thinning of the sycamore during the winter months. This will improve the crowns of all the other hardwoods and will also improve the views, of Ludlow from Whitcliffe and of Whitcliffe from Ludlow. The horse logging which was operating on Whitcliffe last winter, dragging out felled timber, was a great environmental success minimising the damage to the soil that would have resulted from the use of modern mechanical methods. It also created a great deal of interest for visitors to the common. Horse logging demonstrations were given on a very successful open day, held in January, in very unseasonably warm and sunny weather. Interpretation boards and a toposcope have been introduced so that visitors will have some sense of the history, flora and fauna of the Common. In recent years Whitcliffe has been maintained by a committed and hard-working group of designated 'Commoners'. However, as the numbers of these Commoners dwindled and the years took their toll, it became apparent that without a longer term plan and a sound financial base, this effort could not be sustained. It was agreed that this dedicated group should be enlarged by the formation of The Friends of Whitcliffe, with membership open to all on payment of a small subscription. The first public meeting of the new grouping took place in the autumn of

1998. A full committee was elected and I was honoured to be asked to chair the group. The meeting also endorsed the plan to apply for Charity status for 'the Friends'. A key benefit of the change in organisation and in charitable status will be the improved ability to raise funds from a wide variety of sources. It is hoped that charitable status will be achieved by the end of 1998.

The efforts to improve the common are continuing. The stone-faced steps are being repaired and footpaths upgraded. In the autumn, the steps at the Dinham end of the Mortimer Trail will be completely renewed, with financial support from Severn Trent. Part of the Bread Walk will be improved as some steps leading down to the river will also be built.

The regime of grass-cutting and removing the hay to promote the re-growth of wild flowers and grasses, which produced some criticism last year has shown some benefit already. This year the hay was baled and removed but not before there had been an unauthorised and amateur attempt at removal by rolling two of the bales down the bank to the river.

The seats scattered about the Common at various vantage points are slowly being renovated. We also have a scheme for individuals to pay for the renovation, or donation of a totally new seat, perhaps in celebration or remembrance of someone? Other work planned includes the proposed picnic area at Dinham and resurfacing of the large car park. There is, and always will be, the need for an ongoing management programme, and it is hoped that funds from membership will help to achieve this. This year the Civic Society sent out leaflets to all its members to recruit Friends of Whitcliffe Common. We need new members to help finance the management of the Common in the future. The estimated capital cost of the initial project was £50,000., and to date £40,000 has been spent. Grants for the renovation project have been received from Ludford Parish Council; South Shropshire District Council; Ludlow Town Council; the Mayor's Charity Fund, the Forestry Authority; and the European 5b Commons Fund through the Shropshire Wild Life Trust. The Rotary Club and Ludlow Civic Society gave donations towards the Toposcope. The South Shropshire Hills

Conservation Unit has also been most supportive, as has The Earl of Plymouth. During the whole of this project the Commoners and latterly the Friends have been most ably and professionally advised and supported by our agent Andrew Bronwin, M.Sc., Forester and Surveyor, whose efforts have been above and beyond the call of duty. Currently The Friends of Whitcliffe are in negotiation with the Powys Estate regarding the Castle Walks and the possibility of taking them under their wing, from a management rather than a financial resource viewpoint.

THE WAY AHEAD

However it is possible that problems may arise in the future. For example: Currently Ludlow is supporting a an ever growing number of environmental projects, each of which competes for support and funding.

In addition to the Friends of Whitcliffe Common there are

- **The Teme Weirs Trust** dedicated to restoring the Horseshoe and Casemill weirs.
- **Guild '98** working to preserve as an open space, the old swimming pool site Dinham Weir. (See next article ed.)
- **Gallows Bank Action Group** which has just succeeded in achieving Millennium Green status for another important area of open land in the town.

Hopefully, in the future, **Castle Walks** management will be added to this list. There is a pressing need for integration of all these groups at some level, to enable support, information and advice to be shared. They all embrace a common objective, viz. to improve the amenity value of the town's open spaces for the benefit of all.

The renovation of Whitcliffe Common has been very successful. To see the shape coming back into such a beautiful area has given me personally and also a great many other people much pleasure and enjoyment. There have, almost inevitably, been detractors but they have been very few. Acknowledgments to Paul Claydon, M.A. for information gleaned from his book 'Our Common Land'.

Alan Poulton,

Chairman, The Friends of Whitcliffe

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What future for the Swimming Pool Site?

It seems, at first sight, to be an unlikely cause. To provide green open space in an area of town where such space is already plentiful. And into the bargain, to prevent residential redevelopment of a brownfield site when national government is advocating the opposite. The irony is compounded by the site's history of industrial activity since at least the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the aim of the Ludlow Guild '98 has in a short time received a large measure of popular backing as well as substantial pledges of financial support. Why?

The answer must lie in the site's unique location. Ignoring the existing buildings for a moment, the rich visual setting of wooded slopes, the nearby stone structures of Dinham bridge and Ludlow Castle, and the powerful river Teme combine to give huge potential. Take a walk down to the river and you can see for yourself the immense possibilities of the site.

Although the Teme is one of the strongest landscape features of the town, there are few points at which it is possible to view the river from water level, to feel yourself at the deepest point of the river valley and to see close-up the exciting swirls of the river's currents and eddies. From the vantage point of the old pool site, the water can be seen cascading and, at times, crashing over the weir in either serene or dramatic fashion depending on the season. The visual experience is heightened by the wide spanning arches of Dinham Bridge, which frame in stone views up- and down-stream of broad glimpses of lush river banks and rising trees.

Particular features further enhance the site's value as a local amenity. The shingle bank of the river at this point provides a shallow paddling area for children - a natural recreation area shaded by the alder trees on the bank. The worn out path along the river bank is a well trodden witness to the popularity of the site with both locals and visitors.

The narrow tongue of land to the south of the bridge, also part of the property, has evolved into a glade of semi-natural woodland, with a haphazard charm of its own. The trees and shrubs are home

to a variety of wild birds, including treecreepers, long-tailed tits and goldcrests. The surprising number of currant bushes presumably hark back to the land's previous use as a market garden. Although small in area, more than one hundred plant species have been identified there in a recent ecological survey, among them the botanical puzzle of wood speedwell, usually regarded as an indicator of ancient woodland and not commonly found in such a young wood. The whole of the River Teme is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and at Dinham, the swimming pool site could play its part as a piece of the ecological jigsaw, providing both a wildlife haven and a stepping stone between Whitcliffe and the wooded Castle Walks.

It is precisely the scenic qualities of the site, of course, which have made it so desirable for residential development. But its recent, turbulent, planning history points to some of the stumbling blocks for any prospective developers. Not only do local people feel concerned and sensitive about a spot bought by public subscription in the 1950s, but the Environment Agency has declared its open hostility to any residential development in the flood plain, or indeed to any reduction in the flood plain's storage capacity at this point. The existence of a right of way across the site, and the long-term maintenance of Dinham Weir, add to the complexity of the site for any developer.

The topography of the site is deceptive. The dominant presence of the swimming pool building suggests a flat, rectangular space north of the bridge. In fact, however, the outline on a map shows more of a square than a rectangle, and there are considerable differences in height between the town-side corner before the start of the bridge, and either the riverbank to the west or the northern edge of the site. If the Guild is to succeed in raising the money for the site's purchase, and it has a long way yet to go - what does it hope for the site? The intention is to demolish the pool building and create an open space between Dinham and the river. Landscaping would be a mixture of grass, shrubs and existing trees, aiming for an

informal, low-maintenance area. The woodland to the south would be managed so as to maintain its present character, diversity and charm. The old tail race of the mill, in whose original course the pool sits, would be re-established, though probably flowing underground across part of the site for reasons of public safety. The mill race below the pool building has filled up with silt and leaf mould over the years, but it is still possible to trace its line on foot, from under the small arch in the bridge, designed by Thomas Telford, downstream to the spot where the water would have returned to the river. The overall effect would be to create an informally laid out resting place at which to appreciate the riverside setting.

These are the principal elements behind the first phase of the Guild's plans. There is still much work to be done in developing ideas and consulting the public to ensure the best outcome for the local community. However, a second phase is also being explored at this stage. Taking the re-establishment of the mill race as a starting point, the Guild is currently exploring the possibility of installing hydro-electric generating equipment on site. Such a generator, which could comfortably be housed within a space equivalent to two portaloos, might be able to generate clean, renewable electricity sufficient for the needs of around 50 households.

It is a fact often overlooked in historical accounts of Ludlow that electricity was generated at Dinham mill for around 20 years up to 1927. Operated by the Ludlow Electric Light Company, the generating station was eventually supplanted by the Shropshire, Worcestershire & Staffordshire Power Company, a bigger player in the field of electricity generation, who connected the town to its own grid by overland power cables in 1927. This episode of history is a reminder of the immense power resource represented by the Teme. The possibility of making use of such power again as a non-polluting source of electricity for local consumption is an exciting one, although the idea is at present very much at a feasibility stage. The installation of turbines would form part of a second phase for the site, based around the retention and renovation of the former mill building, which was used as the plant room and changing

rooms during the swimming pool's operation. Old photographs of the building show it with an apex roof an industrial scale structure which over time housed a corn mill and saw mill as well as an electric dynamo. Again, plans are still at an early stage, but it is envisaged that the turbines could form part of a display about water power, and about the wider history and natural history of the River Teme. A small, sympathetically designed tea room would round off the development, providing an interesting attraction for the many visitors to the town. Ludlow Guild is therefore not pursuing a conservation project for its own sake, but is attempting to provide a worthwhile and sympathetic amenity that makes the most of the riverside location and rediscovers an established historic use of the site. The price tag for the overall project is large, and the Guild has a huge fund-raising mountain still to climb. The present owners of the site, South Shropshire District Council, will not part with the land for less than an open market valuation (although with the offer of a £15,000 grant upon completion). The costs of demolition, landscaping and renovation of the mill building are also substantial. On the other hand, potential grant-making bodies have been positive in their initial responses to the Guild. In particular, the Countryside Commission is eager to grant the site "Millennium Green" status, which brings with it significant funding. However, the Guild is still a long way from its target and is now engaged in a race against time to raise the money by 31st July 1999 - a deadline imposed by the District Council. The project will only come to fruition if the Guild can raise sufficient funds and donations locally to match against external grants. The initial response from local people has been very encouraging, and it is hoped that the continuing enthusiasm of local supporters will enable the vision to become reality.

Tim Andrewes

Tim Andrewes is a member of the Guild's organising committee.

All offers of help would be much appreciated; please contact Tim on 01584 874018 or write to: **Ludlow Guild '98**, c/o 19 Broad Street, Ludlow SY8 1NG

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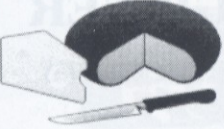
Almost sixty years after the calamitous events in France in the summer of 1940 it is difficult to imagine that the peaceful River Teme, flowing through a landscape of great beauty, might have witnessed a conflict as bloody as that seen in France and the Low Countries.

The fall of France in June 1940 led to the inevitable conclusion that Germany would immediately turn its victorious army and air force into an invasion armada to assault the British Isles. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 it is clear that Local Defence Volunteer and, subsequently, Home Guard commanders in Shropshire were prepared for imminent invasion and instructions were received by them on such topics as the destruction of petrol stocks and the handling of refugees. The British Army, having lost men and much equipment following the Dunkirk withdrawal, tried to re-equip and retrain with urgency and to devise tactics to deal with the anticipated invasion.

Whilst the response to the call to form a citizens' army was magnificent, the Government was faced with two fundamental issues: how would the men be armed and what would be its role in the event of invasion? The first issue was only resolved when adequate supplies of surplus weapons eventually arrived from the United States: in the meantime, shotguns, where available, and Molotov Cocktails would have to do. The role of the Home Guard was the subject of much discussion. Its men could not fight as regular troops because of the lack of weapons, and so their initial role would be to defend their home areas by whatever means, seek out suspected

saboteurs and parachutists, and help to guide the Regular Army in a country now lacking all direction signs. The regular troops would man the country's hastily prepared defences. On the adequate arming of the Home Guard, it would take over much of the responsibility for defending the countryside, especially following the departure of regular divisions on overseas postings. By September 1943 the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, could state that the Home Guard had been turned into an effective fighting force, able to undertake with confidence the tasks allotted to it by operational commanders.

However, in the summer of 1940 the situation was parlous and what was not known was the likely direction of the invasion: might it come via Ireland and through Wales and the western side of England; from German bases in northern Europe against the eastern coasts of Britain or, most likely, from northern France against the south coast of England? A policy had to be devised to delay the German Army, once it had landed, so that Home Forces could group and tackle the aggressor. General Ironside, in charge of the defence of the British Isles, promoted a system of defended belts and towns which would present the invader with a series of delaying stop lines and anti-tank islands. Ironside's successor, Brooke, favoured a more mobile form of defence and work on the earlier defences subsided. Nevertheless, the defences established by Ironside remained as potential defence lines throughout most of the war. The eventual removal of much of the country's invasion defences took place in the autumn of 1944.



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The work carried out in 1940 consisted of the building of pillboxes, laying of mines and barbed wire, erection of roadblocks, and, where a natural or existing manmade feature was not available, the digging of anti-tank ditches. Whilst Shropshire was not in a potential invasion area, the county was close to the strategically vital Midlands. Of a number of stop lines constructed by Western Command, three ran through the county, using the rivers Severn and Teme and the Shropshire Union Canal. A number of pillboxes were built and towns were provided with defences and obstacles to impede the invader.

On the Worcestershire Teme, pillboxes and road blocks were constructed, some evidence of these still remaining. On the Shropshire side, our knowledge of the river's defences is more sketchy. Ludlow, and especially its bridges, were obstructed and there is evidence of gun posts in the town- and even flamethrowers! At Ashford Carbonell a blockhouse is said to have been built and it is known that the A49 Bromfield bridge was defended by a Spigot Mortar, a rather primitive piece of Home Guard 'artillery' which, nevertheless, packed a punch. Other defences are likely to have been built in addition to the road blocks situated on the river crossings and on their approaches. That the Teme was to be a serious defence line is testified to by the still remaining ruin of the old Leominster canal aqueduct

crossing the river at Gosford, its central span blown out in 1940. Were other bridges similarly destroyed?

It would be most satisfying if a fuller picture could be obtained of how Ludlow and the Teme were to be defended. It is likely that the outer approaches to bridges and towns were supplied with weapon pits and roadblocks: where were these? Were the bridges mined or prepared for demolition? What buildings were prepared for defence and were any walls loopholed! Did the Norman castle form part of the defence plan of Ludlow, over 800 years after its construction? Were any areas of the countryside obstructed against enemy airborne landings.

The national Defence of Britain project is seeking to record anti-invasion defences together with other military and civil defence structures in Britain. Backed by English Heritage, the Imperial War Museum and other national bodies, the information gathered is being incorporated onto a database which will be available to county and city authorities. The best examples of the recorded structures will, it is hoped, be preserved for posterity. Major Bryan Heatley of Ludlow is co-ordinating research into the Teme stopline and the wartime role of south Shropshire and north Herefordshire and would welcome any information, photographs or plans relating to this period.

Bernard Lowry

TOWN TOURS

Ludlow Historical Research Group, founded about 20 years ago, soon began to believe that the visitors to the town might enjoy having a guide to show them around the town, and that the group's members might be able to offer this service, at the same time providing income for the Group.

With help and encouragement from David Lloyd, the then chairman, notes were prepared, a route planned, and a beginning, small at first, was made on the project. It was decided to try regular tours, walks around the town, with a guide to talk about the buildings and the town's history.

Guides were sought, and found, amongst members. So, with little training, and much trepidation, the start was made.

Then, as now, the posters prepared by the Group, and also the notice board at the cannon, were the means of advertising this service. It has worked well ever since. The original route is still used though the notes are updated occasionally. Starting at the cannon, walking along the top of the town, via the Church yard and the

Bull yard, to the Bull Ring and the Butter Cross, then into the grid pattern of streets. We walk down Broad Street to the Broad Gate, and up Mill Street to finish. It takes about 1 hrs, the guide talking most of the way, or shouting above the traffic.

We have a team of 10 to 12 guides, some from outside the Research Group, requiring a rota system, well organised, and run by our secretary. The tours are offered every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday during the Summer, and every day during Ludlow Festival. There are also special group tours requested from time to time. The number of people on a tour varies greatly, 15 or 20 on a fine day sometimes, and 1 or 2 when cold and wet. The charge is £1 each, and the guide will explain that the money goes to the Group and that the guides are unpaid.

The Castle is the starting place, and here we give a brief talk on the early history of the town, before beginning the walk, which will include information about the early religious houses, Norman times, the wool trade, the town walls and gates, the War of the Roses,

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Town Tours continued

the Council of the Marches, the Civil War, the Reformation, Palmers Guild, the Princes in the Tower, Catherine of Aragon and Georgian Ludlow, all of which have left their mark on the town, and the evidence is to be seen. As for instance, standing outside the Castle, which is CII, we see a house which is Victorian, another is C17, another rebuilt in C16, and an C18 and Cloth building also in view. Similarly, from the top of Broad Street we see buildings dated C15, C16, C17 and the Butter Cross is C18. The guide will point out features which might otherwise be missed, like the massive corner post at the Tolsey, visible through the shop window. The walk includes looking at the street patterns of Old Street, Broad Street and Mill Street, with their crossing streets Bell Lane, Brand Lane, and Silk Mill Lane, and the back service lane, Raven Lane. We look at the Broad Gate, Ludford Bridge and the site of the C13 St. Johns Hospital, the site of the fulling mill and the teynters yards. Myths and legends sometimes find their way into the talks, along with facts and dates, and if acknowledged as such, are much enjoyed. The story of the "Robin Hood" arrow on the Fletcher's Chapel, for example, always raises a smile.

The tour ends in Mill Street, at the Assembly Rooms, and we may question the visitors about our C20 building. When asked if they like the link building, the opinion, after some discussion, is one of approval. Afterwards, the visitors are full of thanks, and they are always impressed with the beauty of Ludlow, with it's variety, and, of course history. Ludlow is full of interest for the visitor. Brackets, carpenters' marks, door cases, carvings, dragon beams, a crown post roof a medieval aisled hall, all fascinate and charm the visitor. Guides enjoy pointing them all out. Would you like to join them? Please contact me on 872698

Maureen Sykes

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Tom Wall, Site Manager,

Marches National Nature Reserve

Wednesday 10th March 1999

**'LUDLOW - URBANITY AND THE URBAN
TRADITION'**

Stephen Dorman

**THE FRED REEVES MEMORIAL
LECTURE**

Wednesday 14th April 1999

**'TOWNS OF 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY
SHROPSHIRE'**

Dr Sylvia Watts, Shropshire Historian.

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The Ludlow Civic Society's input to the South Shropshire Local Plan

As might be expected the Civic Society's committee has given high priority to the scrutiny of the South Shropshire Local Plan 1996-2006 and has made detailed representations on the Society's behalf, the latest being in response to the Deposit Draft Replacement Plan made public in July. In making representations the committee has sought to ensure that the provisions of the plan adequately acknowledge the special character of Ludlow and protect the town from undesirable developments while at the same time accepting the need for the changes necessary to any vital community.

At the Consultation Draft stage a number of suggestions were made in regard to the districtwide policies with a view to strengthening the protection afforded to listed buildings and gaining recognition of the importance of landscape not only in its own right but also when it interacts with, and is part of the character of good townscape.

On the housing front the Society supported the policy aimed at exploiting the potential for new accommodation in existing properties and welcomed a new policy encouraging and promoting the use of vacant accommodation over shops for residential or other purposes. The need to make adequate housing provision for the single elderly and small families was clearly acknowledged.

A Society submission in relation to Ludlow urging that steps should be taken to promote road/rail integration in the provision of public transport within the town has led to a new policy in the Deposit Draft, LUD14A "Transport Interchange Provision". The idea that services might well be better coordinated has therefore at least received recognition on paper.

In responding to the Deposit Draft the Society has concentrated on policies specific to Ludlow, following up representations already made at the consultation stage. In line with its general view on the importance of the interface between town and country, particular emphasis has been given to the need to protect Ludlow's surroundings and the open spaces which the town currently enjoys.

At the consultation stage the Society proposed that the Ludlow Conservation Area should be extended to include the rural approach to Ludlow

from the south and submitted a detailed case to this effect. In response, the Director of Planning and Environmental Services stated that "the land in question is not proposed for any form of development and does not therefore, require the protection suggested by designating it a Conservation Area". He went on to state "There is no need to decide on the future of this land in this review of the Local Plan, and no need to designate it as a Conservation Area. The planning decisions which need to be taken in the future should be left until they are necessary and all relevant issues concerning all the possible alternatives can be properly evaluated".

The Society regards this response and the developments which have already taken place as far from reassuring and sees the fact that the area lies outside the presently proposed development boundary as no more than temporary protection. Indeed the permissions already given for McCartney's Ox Pasture Auction Yard and for offices at the Severn Trent site indicate how fragile such protection is and how great is the danger of in-filling.

The Society is therefore pressing its case for an extension of the Conservation Area and reinforcing this by seeking the inclusion of the area in question within policy LUD23 "Retention of Open Space". It has also attempted to address the threat of in-filling by suggesting a new policy LUD1A "Developments Outside the Limit to Development".

The South Shropshire District Council, in words relating to the existing Ludlow Conservation Area, states that "the inter-relationship of town and country without intervening suburbia is delightful and a particularly rare survivor in late twentieth century England". In striving to ensure that this survival continues to the south of Ludlow and that the ready accessibility of the countryside to walkers from the town is retained, the Society is encouraged by the support it has received from the Town Council, Ludford Parish Council, private individuals, and very significantly, from English Heritage. In its submission to the SSDC, English Heritage argues that "An additional policy would be appropriate to make clear that the highest level of protection will be afforded to safe-guarding the setting of the historic town from the south, west

and north. In the case of Ludlow we consider it would be appropriate to designate an area of land to the south, west and north as a "green wedge". This would make clear to users of the plan the very special nature of this area of countryside". English Heritage goes on to point out that such an approach has been pursued in other local plans.

The preservation of Ludlow's immediate environment is clearly linked to the issue of new housing and the extent to which the town should expand. In its representations on the Consultative Draft the Society expressed the view that the current development boundary for the town represents the furthest desirable limit to the expansion of Ludlow. It therefore proposed that the Revised Local Plan should contain a clear commitment to restraining further expansion. As a response to this the Deposit Draft includes a note to the relevant policy in which it states that "The development boundary represents the furthest desirable limit to which Ludlow should be allowed to develop. Beyond that limit environmental capacity studies indicate that development would breach environmental thresholds and unacceptably damage the character of the town".

Despite this seeming acceptance of the Society's view, the pressure from developers for more land will undoubtedly continue and every effort will be needed to prevent over-expansion spoiling the character of the town. The fact that the number of houses which the Local Plan proposes should be built in the years 1996 - 2006 exceeds the Structure Plan requirement by 74% is not reassuring even though the proposed excess may not relate to Ludlow.

On the general issue of housing land supply, English Heritage comments that "The district is characterised by historic settlements of the highest quality and Ludlow is outstanding in a national context. We therefore consider it important that the capacity of the district to absorb development without damage to the historic environment should be a key consideration in determining the housing allocation in the district". The Society cannot but agree wholeheartedly.

Other policies in the Deposit Draft of the Local Plan to which the Society has raised objections relate to "Development in the vicinity of the Castle and the Riverside", Article 4 Directions" (in so far as this is not included among the Ludlow specific policies), "Ludlow Town Wall", "Inner Relief Road", and "Riverside Walk".

The Society has sought to ensure that views out of the Conservation Area are given as much attention as the views into it and has asked that the

Inset to the Proposals Map be amended to ensure that important views are adequately identified. In similar manner amendments have been requested to the presentation of the town wall to eliminate unjustifiable gaps in the line of the wall and to correct it where necessary.

In the absence of more specific information the society felt obliged to raise a formal objection to the policy on the inner relief road. While it shares the Council's concern over traffic in Ludlow and understands the intention of keeping options open as far as possible, it feels that the proposed section of the inner relief road raises a number of unanswered questions which tend to call into doubt the desirability and feasibility of the road as a whole.

The policy in the Plan aimed at creating a riverside walk between Ludford Bridge and Dinham Bridge has been the subject of conflicting representations. The society has taken the view that the river bank between Ludford Bridge and Lower Mill Street is of a totally different character from the rural river bank between Mill Street and Dinham Bridge. It would therefore like to see the policy instated for the former and deleted for the latter. As well as seeking this amendment to the policy as it appears in the Deposit Draft, the Society also proposes that the policy should be extended to cover the creation of a footpath on the south/west bank of the Teme from Ludford to Ashford Carbonell, a stretch of the river to which the public currently has no access. Such a path would link with the newly created footpath between Park Road and Lower Barnes Road, Ludford.

Faced with the numerous objections which the Deposit Plan has inevitably attracted, the South Shropshire District Council now has to decide to what extent these objections can be negotiated away by issuing 'proposed changes'. This process is likely to take place early in 1999. More contentious issues on which agreement cannot be reached in this manner will be brought to a Public Enquiry which is likely to be held in the autumn of 1999.

The Civic Society, through its Committee, will continue to keep a close watch on developments and will try to ensure that the interests of the Society are represented as effectively as possible. In this activity the views of members on any of the issues raised by the Local Plan will always be welcome.

David Milner
Autumn 1998