

Ludlow Heritage News

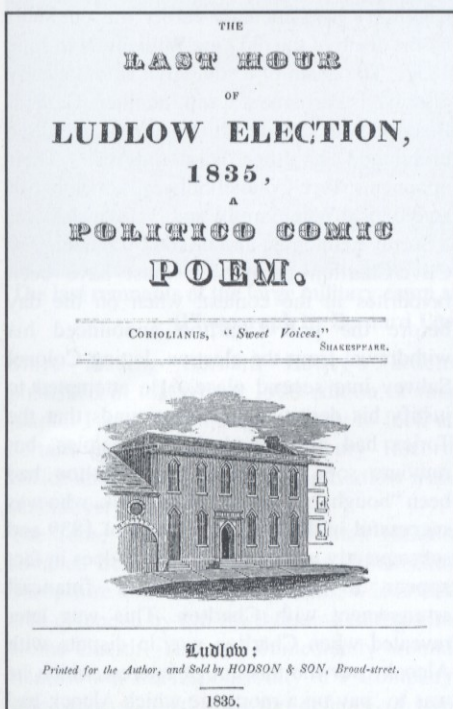
No. 31 WINTER 1999

THE CHEQUERED POLITICAL CAREER OF E.L. CHARLTON, MP: Martin Speight

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Title page of Edmund Lechmere
Charlton's 1835 election pamphlet

Since Ludlow sent its first Members to Parliament in 1464, a variety of characters, often dull and worthy, sat for the two seats which the borough possessed until 1867. Few were more colourful than Edmund Lechmere Charlton, squire of Ludford, whose two year stint at Westminster ended in prison in 1837. Like many other early nineteenth century towns, Ludlow had become a "pocket borough", its two seats in Parliament effectively controlled by the Clive family. The Clives and their allies represented Ludlow, without having to resort to the expense and bother of elections, the last of which had been held in 1727. Vacancies to the Borough Corporation, a self-electing body like virtually every other in the country before 1835, were increasingly being filled by members of the landed gentry from surrounding counties, many of whom did not even reside in the borough. It was this issue of non-resident councillors which began Charlton's rise to political notoriety. Charlton had been elected to the Corporation in 1810, and followed an uncontroversial career on that body until 1823, when he began to challenge the right of non-resident burgesses to sit on the Corporation. The method employed was the writ of Quo Warranto, by which the member was challenged to prove to the Court of King's Bench that he was entitled in law to hold his

These actions were partially successful,

and Charlton fought off a counter claim against his own membership of the Corporation, establishing in a dubious verdict that Ludford was part of the liberties of Ludlow.

The publicity gained from these actions led Charlton to challenge the Clives to an election when Parliament was dissolved in 1826. Charlton's platform was opposition to the Clives and their influence, and he claimed, quite erroneously, that all resident householders, not just burgesses, had the right to vote. This was not allowed by the Returning Officer, with the result that fourteen burgesses voted for the sitting Members, Lord Clive and the Hon. R. H. Clive, and only two for Charlton. While Charlton's first attempt to get to Westminster ended ignominiously, he was established as the darling of the anti-Clive faction in the town who subscribed to a handsome piece of plate in gratitude for his services. This tureen was purchased for Ludlow Museum in 1984 by the Friends of the Museum and the Civic Society, but was stolen in 1987 and never recovered.

Charlton's career took a turn for the better in 1830, when he was surprisingly reconciled to the Clives, who had compensated him with £1175 when he agreed not to stand against them. This was not the last time that Charlton was to be bought. The Reform Act which was passed in 1832 gave the vote to the resident householders whose cause Charlton had recently championed. The Clives suffered the ignominy of losing one of their two Ludlow seats to a moderate Reformer, Edmund Romilly, in 1832. In 1835 the Clives evidently decided to let Charlton have a crack at unseating Romilly.

Charlton's political position was equivocal. He was not a committed Conservative like Lord Clive, and admitted that he held some views in common with Romilly. Despite the hostility of his former supporters and the probable reservations of the Clives, Charlton succeeded in gaining second place in the last hour of the poll, and unseating Romilly. His brief parliamentary career had finally commenced. Charlton did not ease himself gently into life at Westminster, but established himself as a controversialist from the start. Curiously, considering his earlier disputes with the Ludlow Corporation, he became an implacable opponent of the government's proposals for municipal reform. His justification was that the Corporation had reformed itself, which was true to a certain extent. The staid pages of Hansard show Charlton's fiery temper in action on numerous occasions. In June 1835 he had a bitter clash with Joseph Hume, one of the most senior and respected Radical members,



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during which Hume was challenged to a duel for allegedly calling Charlton an "impudent fellow". The ensuing debate, on a privilege issue, saw many of the big guns of the Left including Daniel O'Connell trained on Charlton, and eventually both parties apologised. Charlton was by now completely divorced from his former connection with the reformers.

It was the Ludlow Charities which indirectly led to Charlton's imprisonment and subsequent notoriety. Having reformed the Corporations, the Liberal government turned its attentions to the municipal charities, which in many cases had been woefully abused. The initial cause of hostilities was a lawsuit undertaken by the old Trustees of the Ludlow Charities, represented by Charlton, which questioned the legality of the newly elected Council's decision to replace them with its own partisans. Charlton took exception to some preliminary remarks by a Master in Chancery, Henry Brougham, a noted Radical politician. In a vituperative letter to Brougham, Charlton accused the latter of attempting to divert charity money to support party political ends. It concluded with the splendidly insulting lines that "such conduct, Sir, may be becoming enough in Master Brummagem, but in Master Brougham it is as unexpected as it is inexcusable."

This outburst prompted the Lord Chancellor, Lord Cottenham, to commence proceedings against Charlton for contempt, and a writ of summons was issued. The problem was that Charlton had gone to ground, and attempts to deliver the writ to his London hotel and to Ludford had failed. Charlton compounded his offence by writing defiantly to the Lord Chancellor ("I glory in what I have done, and I will willingly brave your Lordship's authority before I will retract or apologise for a syllable"), and by claiming (erroneously) that Parliamentary privilege gave him immunity from contempt proceedings. On 25th November 1836 an order was issued committing Charlton to the Fleet Prison - but he was nowhere to be found. For ten weeks he was in hiding. Local tradition alleged that he was concealed in Whitcliff woods, but the truth was rather more mundane. He was finally tracked down to No.12, York Road, Lambeth.

Various accounts of Charlton's arrest appeared in the press. One version states that his solicitor was followed by a tipstaff to York Road, the home of a Mrs Purslow and her daughter Elizabeth. The tipstaff had then waited for the old lady to go out, and had slipped in behind her on her return. Another version stated that the house was Charlton's own, and that on gaining admission the tipstaff had been attacked by a ferocious dog, which he had kicked down stairs. Upon being apprehended, Charlton had gone quietly, laughing at the efforts which had been made to catch him, which had included watches on foreign vessels.

Charlton attempted to prove that his arrest had infringed his privilege as a Member of Parliament, but it was pointed out that as recently as 1831 it had been ruled that privilege did not cover contempt of court. Charlton then wrote to the Lord Chancellor

requesting release, but as the letter contained no evidence of remorse he was forced to remain in gaol for a further three weeks. In the course of the adventure he had gained a great deal of publicity, and had become a hero to the Tories. The Clives and their allies had presented petitions demanding his release, and upon his return to Ludlow in March 1837 he was treated to a banquet in the Market Hall at which he was able to give an account of his sufferings to his supporters.

Charlton's parliamentary career was cut short by the death of the old king William IV in June 1837. The death of a sovereign automatically dissolved Parliament, and another General Election was called, with Charlton and Clive nominated in the Tory interest. Their opponents were Colonel Salwey, a member of an old local Whig family, and Thomas Alcock, a Surrey gentleman and oriental traveller. The Clive/Charlton partnership must have been favourites in the contest, when on the day before the poll Charlton announced his withdrawal from the election, letting Colonel Salwey into second place. He attempted to justify his desertion on the grounds that the Tories had abandoned their principles, but rumours soon circulated that Charlton had been "bought off" by Alcock. Alcock, who was successful in the corrupt election of 1839 and subsequently unseated for bribery, does in fact appear to have come to a financial arrangement with Charlton. This was later revealed when Charlton was in dispute with Alcock over the amount of interest which he was to pay on a mortgage which Alcock had granted him in 1837. Characteristically, this quarrel led Charlton to place such influence as he still possessed behind the Conservative candidate in 1840.

And therein lay the rub. Charlton had changed sides too frequently to carry much credibility by 1840. He had become marginalised, and devoted his spleen and his energies in his later years to pursuing his feud with the new Borough Council over the Charities. The story of this "Great Lawsuit" has been well told by David Lloyd in *Country Grammar School*, and does not need repeating here. On 17th April 1845, unmarried and childless, Edmund Lechmere Charlton died and was laid to rest in the Foxe Aisle of Ludford Church. He was, even then, becoming an anachronism. His type of rumbustious independence in politics belonged also to an era which was disappearing. There would soon be little room left for mavericks like Charlton at the Palace of Westminster.

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MEMORIES OF LUDLOW IN WARTIME: Bryan Heatley

The first of two features on the Teme Valley during WWII, this article focuses on defence, stationing of troops and air attacks. The concluding article will include children's war efforts, prisoners of war, the Home Guard and espionage.



The last remnants of the large military camp at Ludford Park, 1999
(Photograph by Bernard Lowry)

Since reading Bernard Lowry's article published in the Winter 1998 edition of this journal I have had the opportunity to look at certain papers in the Shrewsbury Record Office and to discuss wartime in Ludlow with several very helpful residents.

The Teme stopline, designed to halt Hitler's advance from the south coast of Britain into Shropshire and the West Midlands, was in this area defended by the 7th Battalion Shropshire Home Guard. The area immediately around Ludlow was the responsibility of F Company who were charged with the defence of two bridges at Bromfield, Dinham and Ludford bridges, the Great Western Railway's Ludlow tunnel and Little Hereford Bridge. On F Company's right flank was I Company who looked after Lingen Bridge and on the left was H Company, defending Little Hereford road bridge, the Birmingham aqueduct and both the road and rail bridges at Ashford.

Fortifications at Dinham Bridge included the converting of the first cottage on the north bank into a blockhouse and the provision of a Spigot Mortar in the nursery on the opposite side of the road. The Spigot, or as it was also known, the Blacker Bombard, was usually located in a weapon pit and was mounted on a concrete thimble (a number of which can still be seen about the countryside). It was an anti-tank mortar designed to attack a stationary vehicle from the flank. Camouflage was essential as the smoke produced by the black powder used to fire the anti-tank or high explosive round gave the game away. The first round fired had to score! A similar weapon was in place at Bromfield and probably at other local bridges.

Several bridges over the Teme were scheduled for removal in December 1941, although not all may have been demolished. They included the foot bridges at Bromfield, Woofferton, Easton Court, Bucknell and another on the Plymouth Estate to the east of Bringewood Forge. A remaining example of a blown bridge is the Leominster Canal aqueduct at Little Hereford.

Ludford Bridge was equipped with cables and numerous cylindrical concrete blocks designed to slow the advance of tanks. Later

in the war the refuges on the bridge housed stacks of railway sleepers used to temporarily increase the height of the road to allow tank transporters and RAF 'Queen Mary' trailers to pass without damaging their loads by overlapping the parapet. The transport of aircraft by road was a regular sight as Shropshire's major contribution to the war effort was the training of pilots at the many airfields in the northern part of the county.

The Elan Valley pipeline was seen as a likely target and was guarded along its length by both regular troops and the Home Guard. The inspection hatches were sealed.

Troops returning from Dunkirk found their way to the town, the Glosters were among those accommodated at Dinham House and Castle Lodge. The latter property seems to have been a local HQ and often boasted an armed guard. Overton Grange became a military hospital.

Ludford Park was a major camp site, first tenanted by 532 Searchlight Battery, later by the RAF Regiment and subsequently occupied by the Americans, who had to be discouraged from building a river crossing to the camp from the bottom of Old Street! A few ruinous huts from the old camp remain behind the new cattle market.

The Royal Pioneer Corps were in the mill at the foot of Lower Broad Street and on the Race Course which, in World War I, had been a German prisoner of war camp. Nearby, there was a field bakery at Bromfield and a rifle range at Whitbach.

Bombs fell in the area and Ludlow's main air raid shelter was beneath what is now the Cancer Research shop, next to Woolworths. Several people have vivid memories of a Junkers Ju88 bomber flying very low in broad daylight in a southerly direction down the railway line in the Onibury area; it is said to have been destroyed after crossing the Bristol Channel. The race-course was at one point covered in stacks of rubber tyres, perhaps as a discouragement to the landing of enemy aircraft. An RAF Anson did come down on the Culmington side of the course and there are rumours of a German bomber crashing at Steventon.

Most of the bombs which fell in the area were of the incendiary variety but a high explosive fell in the Rectory garden and there are reports of another on the horse-shoe weir below Ludford Bridge. A land mine exploded in forestry at Sunny Gutter, almost opposite Moor Park School. There is also a dubious story of another unexploded mine landing at Onibury and being taken in a horse and trap by a farm worker to Ludlow police station!!

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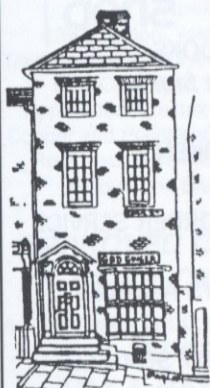
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LUDLOW - JULY TO DECEMBER, 1899: Derek Williams

This is the second in a series of articles about life in Ludlow 100 years before each issue of Heritage News. Most of the material is drawn from newspaper records held in the Ludlow Library.

THE PIPE TRACK

It was noisy on Whitcliffe in the summer of 1899. The great pipeline being laid to carry water from the Elan Valley to Birmingham was approaching Ludlow. Enormous traction engines were rumbling through the town, damaging the roads so much that the contractors for the pipeline agreed to pay the Ludlow Corporation 1½d per ton per mile of this 'extraordinary traffic'. The Council was not very satisfied with the arrangement. At its September meeting it was reported that a cheque for £49 had been received to cover the previous six months, but some councillors felt that much more pipeline traffic had passed through the town in that period. The mayor

sanction to borrow £8,500 to fund the project. The Board appointed one of its Inspectors to hold a formal Inquiry into the application. The Advertiser fretted about the time being lost but admitted that "after dallying with the question for so long" the Sanitary Committee of the Council could not be blamed for the latest delay. At the same meeting, the Mayor said that once the sewerage scheme was in order the Council would proceed with **electric lighting** for the town. An almost immediate consequence of this announcement was a reduction in the price the Gas Company charged the Corporation! The Advertiser suggested that, if public lighting was to be reviewed, the Council might also look at "why



Workmen installing the electricity cable in Gravel Hill
(Photograph courtesy of David Lloyd)

said that were the charges to be doubled for the coming year it would not pay for the damage done.

The Commoners of Whitcliffe were negotiating a separate deal with the contractors, who wanted to pipe water from the Teme across Whitcliffe to support their main pipe-laying activities. Their first offer was to pay the Commoners £20 for three years and £5 per annum thereafter.

Some of the workers on what was generally known as 'The Pipetrack' were unable to resist the temptations of Ludlow. When one of them, Robert Morris, was found at midday on 22nd July lying on his face at the bottom of Old Gate Fee "in a helpless state of drunkenness" he was remanded in custody until 6.00 pm, and then fined 3d, including costs: 'a farcical penalty' said the Advertiser.

CIVIC PRIORITIES

For the Town Council, the Pipetrack was a passing problem. **Public health** continued to be its main concern. The sewerage scheme mentioned in the previous article was still being pursued and in October the Council applied to the Local Government Board for

Broad Street should be so brilliantly lighted at the expense of the business parts of the Borough".

Another long-standing public health problem was the insanitary state of many Ludlow houses. In December the Mayor visited a number of dwellings in Galdeford (At last! said the Advertiser) and reported to the Council that some were occupied by human beings in conditions in which he would be sorry to keep a pig.

EDUCATION

In September, the Bishop of Hereford was in Ludlow for the Annual Prizegiving for technical education in the town (evening classes, mainly in drawing and shorthand). After presenting the prizes he gave an extraordinarily prescient address on English attitudes to education. We were, said the Bishop, losing ground in commerce to our European competitors because of our failures in education; Germany, in particular, was 50 years ahead of us. In Leipzig, he said, 90% of youngsters between 14 and 17 attended the Continuation School: only 20 students went to evening classes in Ludlow.

The problem, said the Bishop, was that English people were not very enthusiastic about education. Artisans, he said, "are a fairly thoughtful group of people and are generally supposed to be alive to their own interests. At least their employers think so!" So why could they not see the benefits of sending their children to evening classes? Ludlow, thought the Bishop, could do better.

The Town Council, which in the past had been deaf to the Advertiser's arguments in favour of further education, quickly responded to the Bishop's challenge. In December it decided unanimously to allow the Market Hall to be used for two or three hours each night as a public reading room. This was welcomed by the Advertiser as evidence that some members of the Council who in the past had "recorded their votes in favour of darkness and ignorance" had now seen the error of their ways. But the paper was not satisfied with such a makeshift arrangement, and would continue to press for a free municipal public library (which would only add 1d to the rates) and a Ludlow School of Art.

SPORT

The Bishop may have been right to question the keenness of Englishmen for education: he could have had no doubts about their enthusiasm for sport.

It was the golden age of **cricket**. W.G. Grace was captain of England in the first Test Match of the season against Australia. (He then retired from Test cricket, aged 51.) Other immortals in the England team were C.B. Fry, Ranjitsinghi and Wilfred Rhodes, but the Australians still won the series. Ludlow Cricket Club employed two professionals, Turley and Giles: both bowlers of course. Batting was for gentlemen. Top of the Ludlow batting averages was the Rev. H.F. Hastings (665 runs in the season at an average of 34.13). Ludlow had three **football** teams in 1899 - the Ludlow Half Holiday, St George's and Athletic Football Clubs. In July - football intruded on the cricket season even then - a public meeting was called to consider the advisability of some



Ludlow Athletic Football Club, c.1899
(Photo: Ludlow Museum)

kind of merger, partly because many of the gentry in the town had said that they would only support one club, and partly to create a team strong enough to play in the Herefordshire League. None of the clubs was willing to give up its independence, however, and the meeting ended inconclusively. In September the Half Holiday Club pre-empted its rivals by suddenly changing its name to Ludlow Town Football Club and inviting the others to join and help to create "one rattling good club".

There was no evidence of **rugby** in the Ludlow district in 1899, but the Advertiser carried a very full account of the international match at Swansea. "No international team put in the field by the English Rugby Union was ever more utterly routed than at Swansea, when Wales ran up 4 goals and 2 tries to 1 try . . . The Welshmen triumphed at every turn".

INNS

Some Ludlovians regretted the closure of so many inns in Ludlow: others regretted that so many were still open. In September an anonymous correspondent, "one of the oldest tradesmen in the town", provided the Advertiser with the names of 31 inns that had closed in Ludlow within his memory. But even the solicitor to the Ludlow Victuallers' Association was prepared to admit that "there may be too many licences in some parts of the town". The Advertiser thought this was putting it too mildly, with one licence to every 99 people in Ludlow. It called on the Victuallers' Association and the Licensing Bench to agree some kind of planned reduction in licences, as had apparently recently been done with some success in Birmingham.

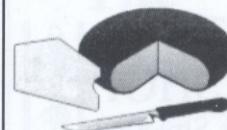
On 12th September, the Borough Magistrates objected to the renewal of the licence of the Blue Boar Inn in Mill Street on the grounds that the licensee did not live on the premises and that the Inn was not required for the wants of the neighbourhood. After a long hearing, with complex comparisons between the stabling facilities of the Blue Boar and the George, and much evidence on the importance of the Blue Boar to the farming community, the magistrates withdrew their objection.

THE WAR

Events in Ludlow towards the end of 1899 were overshadowed by the outbreak of war in South Africa. In the early days of the war its impact on the town was limited. Only six reservists from Ludlow were called up, and they were all single men. The 2nd battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry left for South Africa on 7th November and arrived in Cape Town on 3rd December. In December the NCOs and men of C (Ludlow) Squadron of the Shropshire Yeomanry were invited to volunteer for South Africa and 48 did so within two days. The Mayor held a reception for the Squadron in the Town Hall on 28th December, when it was announced that 46 of their number and a score of civilian volunteers has been accepted for service.

A number of bazaars, concerts and other events were organised in the town in aid of the local fund for the relief of the wives and families of those on active service. The Ludlow Choral Society presented Gounod's *Messe Solennelle* (admission 7/6d or £1.1.0 for the three concerts of the season). The Advertiser noted that, with less male voices than the previous year, the weakness of the tenors was apparent, but on the whole "the combined efforts of the chorus were very creditable, the singing being crisp and well balanced".

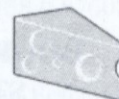
There seem to have been no public events to mark the dawn of a new century.



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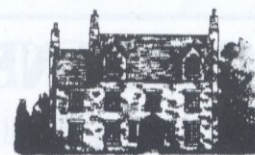
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IN PRAISE OF THE PICTURESQUE

Many years ago I took a Dutch acquaintance to see the much admired remains of the Augustinian Priory at Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire. These are the ruins painted by Turner, lyrically described by Ruskin and visited and loved by generations of Yorkshire folk. Her reaction surprised me. "In my country we would either have pulled this down or rebuilt it all properly." Why did I find her attitude - thorough and in its way logical - so alien?

Is it because the principles of the Picturesque movement, first set out at the end of the eighteenth century by, amongst others, Richard Payne Knight of Downton, have entered our common aesthetic? Vanburgh, whilst engaged at Blenheim, made the link between painting and landscape even earlier - he argued that the suitably repaired Old Manor of Woodstock should not be demolished because it would make "one of the most agreeable objects that the best of Landskip painters can invent".

This is how I would describe Ludlow's Horseshoe weir. Stand along Temeside and absorb the composition of bridge, pub, church, willows and the tumbling broken water cascading here, flowing smoothly elsewhere, creating a busy and varied picture, alive with incident.

Replace it with the new structure proposed by the Teme Weirs Trust. The willows and alder will disappear along presumably with the rich wildlife that shelters and nests there. The concrete replacement (faced with stone to give a ripple effect) will curve in a formal unbroken arc ave for a fish ladder - at Pitlochry in Perthshire this consists of a series of rectangular concrete basins - as well as a chute for the canoeists who now brave the rapids. The iris, comfrey, meadowsweet and yarrow will all disappear. Will the 'twitchers' on the bridge still be able to spot dippers and wagtails? Will the moorhens still breed here when their cover of reeds and grasses disappears? Where will the elusive otter hide?

Of course it needs some attention. Unless remedial work is put in hand fairly soon it may well deteriorate further (although the main breach occurred some fifty years ago) and the trees do need thinning out (abundant vegetation appears on the weir in nineteenth century photographs) but is a change of such major aesthetic and environmental significance desirable?

The restored weir on the Lugg at Mortimer's Cross enables the Mill there to function; the horseshoe one at Bath is part of its flood

prevention scheme; but here there is, as far as I know, no such justification. It seems that the proposal is to rebuild a once necessary industrial feature complete with sluice gates (who will regulate and operate these?) in a way that would never have been contemplated had it been, say, an Abbey. Will it be, as Payne Knight put it:

*One even round that ever gently flows,
Nor forms abrupt, nor broken colours*

knows;

*But, wrapt all o'er in everlasting green,
Makes one dull, vapid, smooth and tranquil
scene.*

My Dutch friend would have approved.

THE NEED FOR RESTORATION

Why repair Ludford and Casemill weirs? To start with they are as integral a part of the Ludlow townscape as the Castle, having been first built soon after the castle was founded in the 11th century to provide water power to service the needs of the castle inhabitants. The first documentary evidence of a mill at the bottom of Old Street is found in 1241 (*Ludlow: a Social Economic and Political History*, by Michael Faraday). The mills and weirs in Ludlow have been part of the town's history for over 800 years. During that 800 years all the riverside development and bridge building has been completed. The loss of the weirs will bring increased scouring of banks and foundations, and who knows what damage the fall in the water table will cause. Why don't we just preserve the weirs as they are? Unfortunately this just won't work. Most of the present damage is due to tree roots breaking up the structures. If the trees remain the weirs will disappear leaving, at summer flows, dry or stagnant stinking mill races and a trickle of water down the middle. What about the effect on wildlife? As part of our feasibility study we undertook a full Environmental Impact Assessment, carried out by professional and independent experts from Hertfordshire University. Summarising their findings: *'The restoration of the weirs would not appear to have a significant impact on important individual species, and restoration of the weirs will benefit the cultural heritage of the area'*. Their only concern is that it might be necessary to *'re-house a colony of water voles'*.

Do we have any support? So far, financial support has been received from, or is pledged by, the Heritage Lottery, Town Council, District Council, Environment Agency, Ludlow Civic Society, Shell Better Britain Campaign, the Countryside Commission and the public. At a meeting of around 40 Temeside residents

1999-2000 Officers & Committee Members

President: Sir Keith Thomas
Vice Presidents: Dr. Martin Speight
 Dick Stephens
Chairman: Neil Aikens
Vice Chairman: Dr. James Harris
Treasurer: Brian Atwood OBE
Secretary: Prue Bellak

Committee: Dorothy Arrowsmith,
 Michael Coleman-Smith, Megan Dawson,
 Barbara Holcombe, Jon Lansdell, Bill
 Lloyd-Kitchen, David Milner, Tim Pimblett,
 Graham Willson-Lloyd

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CHAIRMAN

At our AGM in May retiring members of the committee, Tim Andrewes, Susan Crooks, Brian Heatley and Stan Jones were thanked for their contributions over the last year.

We welcomed three new members to the committee, Michael Coleman-Smith, Megan Dawson and Graham Willson-Lloyd who are already making their presence felt. Michael has taken over the responsibilities of Membership Secretary, Megan has joined the editorial team of *Ludlow Heritage News* and Graham produced the mock-up of the war memorial proposed by the British Legion which assisted the Planning Committee in reaching their decision. Latterly, Val Thomas has been co-opted onto the Committee bringing it up to full strength. At the AGM I also announced our intention to propose changes to the Constitution which would limit the tenure of the office of the Chairman to 3 or 4 years. A second proposal to require the resignation of one third of the committee each year is designed to provide continuity of committee members whilst still encouraging limited turnover.

One of the less visible assets of the Society is those members who offer their time and effort in assisting behind the scenes. One such back-room resource has decided it is now time to hang up his floppy discs. Phil Ross has for many years provided invaluable help in a variety of ways, editing *Heritage News*, holding and updating membership lists, producing mailing lists and labels, developing publicity posters and membership cards and always being ready to provide ideas and advice. The Society and I personally are most grateful for all these efforts and are pleased that we will continue to benefit from Phil's advice and innovative ideas into the future. Without such unstinting assistance from individual members the committee and Chairman would find life much more arduous.

CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

One of the major items on the committee's agenda is the report of the latest monthly meeting of the Ludlow Conservation Area Advisory Committee, our main source of information about matters which will affect the architecture and townscape of the town.

This District Council sub-committee comprises seven councillors drawn from the three levels of local government, five representatives of organisations and groups concerned with aspects of building and architecture, plus James Caird, the Head of Planning and Building Control, and Colin Richards, the town's Conservation Officer. Members have the benefit of being sent the weekly list of all the applications for planning permission and listed building consent in South Shropshire, not just those in the conservation area.

The function of the Advisory Committee is to assess these various applications and to advise the District Council's Planning Committee whether to approve, impose conditions on, or refuse them. In addition, under 'Buildings at Risk', members can discuss any structures which give cause for concern, and are occasionally asked for 'an informal view' of an outline proposal ('outline' applications not being acceptable in a conservation area). Once a year, too, the committee recommends any projects thought to be worthy of a Ludlow Heritage Award from the District Council.

It should be remembered, however, that the Advisory Committee is at best still only advisory; in writing their formal Recommendations to Councillors the planning officers can accept or ignore the committee's advice (though not normally without giving a reason) and the planning committee itself can and does over-ride either or both recommendations on occasion.

The representative of the Ludlow Chamber of Trade and Commerce is Graham Willson-Lloyd, Dr. Martin Speight represents the Ludlow Historical Research Group and Dr. James Harris represents the Ludlow Civic Society. This, through coincidence, brings three members of the Society together on the Committee. His hand-written summary of the matters discussed is sent to all our own committee members before each Civic Society committee meeting. This helps members to have an early indication of what we might discuss, to determine the Society's attitude, and to decide what action to take.

This can include writing to the Birmingham regional office of the Department of the Environment, contacting the Planning Department locally, and involving other organisations, individuals and the press; all this can involve a great deal of effort, often at very short notice in the planning process. Our representative can also put the Society's views directly to the planning officers and the other Advisory Committee members.

The matters discussed can include complex South Shropshire, major projects such as the supermarket and the new Library and Museum Resource Centre, housing projects and shopfronts, down to hanging signs, bollards, satellite dishes and tree-felling proposals. Consequently, our committee's discussion of the Advisory Committee report is often lengthy, complex and quite difficult.

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LOCAL PLAN

In the Autumn of last year a report was circulated in *Heritage News*, showing the Society's input to the South Shropshire Local Plan, 1996-2000. At that time it was expected that the Public Enquiry to resolve the more contentious issues raised by the Plan would have taken place by the end of 1999. This is no longer the case and the lengthy procedure which must be followed before a revised Plan is adopted will this time be even more extended than usual.

Following the publication of the Deposit Draft Replacement Plan in July 1998 the South Shropshire District Council, through its Planning Committee, has had to consider its response to the many objections raised and to take account of the statement of non-conformity with the Structure Plan 1989 - 2006 issued by Shropshire County Council in respect of the number of new houses proposed. The SSDC Planning Committee has also noted that Planning Policy Guidance Notes reflecting revised Government thinking on Housing and Development Plans should be finalised in 6-9 months time.

It has therefore been decided that a comprehensive revision of the Plan should be undertaken leading to a second Deposit in the course of next year, a Public Enquiry in the Summer of 2001 and eventual adoption of the Revised Plan in the Summer of 2002. While the existing plan will have expired by then its policies should continue to remain operative until they are replaced.

Against this background, the Society's Local Plan Committee must await the Second Deposit Draft Plan before taking further action. It will aim to study this document with the same thoroughness as hitherto. Any changes to policies on housing will be followed with particular interest in the context of the Society's wish to prevent the over-expansion of Ludlow and to safeguard the countryside to the south of the town from encroaching danger.

MEMBERSHIP

This year sees the launch of a membership drive. By concentrating on our achievements and the positive role we try to play in the town we hope to not only attract new members but bring lapsed ones back into the fold.

Newspaper inserts, notice boards, poster advertising and press releases all have their part to play in the campaign but by far the most effective method of recruitment is through personal contact and recommendation. Please tell your friends or your new neighbours about our work and bring them along to one of our events.

EVENTS

The commitment of the Society to the care of the fabric of the town necessitates its involvement in serious matters. This aspect of the Society (sometimes misunderstood) can detract from the lighter side of our activities. Provision of social activities for members and friends has always been important.

Throughout the winter invited speakers give a series of talks followed by time for questions and an interval for refreshments. Last year, subjects ranged from 'John Ruskin' to 'Visions for Ludlow' and 'Towns of 16th & 17th Century Shropshire'.

Spring and Autumn is the time for coach excursions. The September '98 visit to the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings was made particularly interesting by the commentary of one of our committee members - an expert restorer of timber buildings.

The theme of our Spring tour was "Charles II's Flight to France" and this took us to Boscombe House (where Prince Charles famously hid in the oak tree) and Moseley Old Hall, where an exhibition tells the story.

Usually all runs smoothly but comic relief has been known to creep in. One well-remembered incident concerned a certain lady and her friend who arrived at the departure point in a police car escorted by two

handsome young policemen. The coach driver paled assuming a serious parking charge was to be his lot but all ended well. The ladies had asked for directions and had been misled by a citizen of Coventry who didn't know his almshouses from his alehouses!

Future events:

Last year we had teething troubles with our new venue at the Assembly Rooms - sound and vision weren't always up to expectations. However, Oscars now has a new, large pull-down screen and high level projector which enables everyone to see clearly. We have also rearranged the room and have every confidence that this, along with the assistance of a sound technician, has rectified the sound problems - including the refrigeration unit at the bar!

We have a varied programme planned for 1999/2000 which includes an historical look at garden design, a talk on the County Museum Service (followed by a tour of Ludlow Museum), and a contribution from Anthony Howard. Madge Moran will be giving this year's Fred Reeves Memorial Lecture.

The Spring excursion - in May - will be to Llangollen and Chirk. Our first port of call will be Plas Newydd, the fascinating home of the famous "Ladies of Llangollen" who, after eloping from Ireland, together converted a small, unpretentious cottage into an elaborate gothic residence surrounded by splendid gardens. From there we shall visit Thomas Telford's aqueducts before arriving at Chirk Castle, built by the ubiquitous Roger Mortimer and now boasting, behind a somewhat severe façade, a neo-classic staircase and state rooms, furniture designed by Adam and Pugin, formal gardens and 18th century parkland.

Don't forget our social evening on 19th January at St. Peter's Parish Centre!

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