

Ludlow Heritage News

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STOKESAY COURT - A SLEEPING BEAUTY: Julia Ionides



Stokesay Court - one of South Shropshire's hidden gems

Driving north along the A49 it is just possible to catch a glimpse of Stokesay Court, splendidly situated on the hillside to the west of Onibury. Turn the corner towards the level crossing and the house disappears amidst the trees. Although Stokesay Court is one of the hidden gems of South Shropshire, it came to world prominence in 1994 when a four-day sale of the contents was held following the death of Lady Magnus-Allcroft. A treasure trove of artifacts from around the world was discovered, some not even unpacked, which had been accumulated during the travels of Lady Magnus-Allcroft's father, Herbert John Allcroft.

Nearly all the original furnishings have now gone from the house, but this helps to emphasise the fine proportions of the rooms of this very interesting Neo-Jacobean building.

The house was built by John Derby Allcroft, a self-made and very rich glove manufacturer from Worcester who, with J. & W. Dent, established Dent and Allcroft. Allcroft first bought the medieval Stokesay Castle in 1869 from the Earl of Craven. Over the next twenty years he went on to purchase the rest of the Stokesay estate and other smaller properties, making him owner

of over 6,000 acres. The Stokesay estate cost Allcroft £215,000, 'roughly £400 an acre', a high price for the time, as John Martin Robinson has pointed out.¹

In 1874, J. D. Allcroft bought the Stonehouse estate from Colonel Clive and moved into the handsome early 18th century house there. However, he wanted a larger house in a more elevated position to take advantage of the views and when he was able to buy the neighbouring Aldon estate from Lord Rowton he had found the perfect site for his new home.

Allcroft chose as his architect Thomas Harris who was known for his vigorous Gothic designs but, in this instance, Harris went forward in time to draw inspiration from the Renaissance and the early 17th century. Harris also worked on Bedstone Court (now Bedstone College), not far from Stokesay Court. John Martin Robinson considers that, at Stokesay, Harris drew 'inspiration from early 17th century houses like Charlecote' and points to the 'carefully planned layout' in which the wings off the central main block each served a different function, for example, the Ladies' Wing and the Bachelors' Wing.

The rather austere northern front entrance, with its enclosed courtyard, contrasts with

the exuberant ornamentation of the garden front. These south facing rooms, with their canted bay windows, take advantage of the splendid views and are flooded with light which enhances the elaborate patterns of the plasterwork.

John Martin Robinson points to the practicality of Harris's work in the provision of a 'bound set of plans on linen of the drains', but the installation of electric light during the building stage - one of the first country houses to have this - was Allcroft's idea. The ducting, fuse-board and fittings are still visible throughout the house.

The whole effect of Stokesay Court is one of solidity and high quality; all the building stone was quarried on the estate and, despite its slightly exposed position, the house has endured wind and weather very well over the past hundred years. The carving of the stone, the moulding of the plasterwork and the fine wood for the panelling indicate the highest standards of late 19th century craftsmanship, for which Allcroft paid well. John Martin Robinson gives the price as £99,900 for the house, 'lodge, drive, bridge and stables'. Other sumptuous interior fittings, such as chimney pieces and wall brackets, all have the same high quality which set off the Allcrofts' fine mid-Victorian furniture.

The hall was, and still is, dominated by a large marble relief sculpture of the four Allcroft boys, with their pet dog and rabbit, by John Adams-Acton. Mrs. Adams-Acton recalls in her unpublished memoirs that the sculpture was so heavy that 'it eventually led to the building of a new mansion where it was successfully let into the wall and looked splendid'. Whether the first part of the statement is true or not, the second part certainly is!

The Allcroft family moved into the house (still not completed inside) in March, 1892 but, sadly, J. D. Allcroft died the next year, shortly after being appointed High Sheriff of Shropshire. His eldest son, Herbert John, took over the office, as well as the unfinished house.

Herbert John was a keen traveller and, on a round-the-world trip in 1894-5, collected

artifacts from most of the countries he visited. He was also interested in old buildings and the work of S.P.A.B.² and was responsible for the restoration of Onibury Church and Stokesay Castle, so we owe our thanks for the preservation of this unique fortified medieval manor house to him.

In 1900, Herbert married Margaret Russell. They had two children, John Russell and Jewell. Herbert died young and Margaret remarried. She continued to run the estate for nearly fifty years, at the same time adding to the collections. Her acquisitions included a number of items from the sale at Oakly Park in 1944, following the death of the Earl of Plymouth.

During the First World War, Stokesay Court became an Auxiliary Military Hospital; during the Second World War, Lancing College took up residence for a year, after which it was taken over by the Western Command Junior Leaders School.

Margaret died in 1946 and John Russell Allcroft in 1950. Jewell, who had been assisting her mother with the running of the house, inherited the estate. She and her historian husband, Sir Philip Magnus, joined names and they became Magnus-Allcroft.

As has already been mentioned, after Lady Magnus-Allcroft died this amazing 'Sleeping Beauty' of a building and its contents became known to the world. It is

now in the capable hands of Caroline Magnus, niece of Sir Philip, who is currently restoring the fabric of the building, whilst considering options for its future.

1 Much of the information and all quotations about Stokesay Court have come from 'Stokesay Court and the Allcroft Family', John Martin Robinson, Sotheby's Sale Catalogue, 1994, pp.12-26

2 Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings

READERS' LETTERS

It has been suggested by members that we include a Readers' Letters section in *Heritage News* to enable readers to offer their own opinions and suggestions. We would like this to become a regular feature and we look forward to receiving your letters. Please address them to: The Editors, Ludlow Heritage News, Ludford Mill, Ludlow, SY8 1PP.

Like many others, my major concern at the moment is the damage which is being done to the town by excessive traffic. Rather than spend money on some useless millennium Dome, would it not be better to create Park and Ride schemes on both the north and south approaches to the town? These work most successfully in other towns such as Shrewsbury and Oxford.

Also, all commercial vehicles over a set size and weight should be banned from the centre of the town. At the Park and Ride centres there could be a warehouse where such enormous vehicles could unload their wares and then the local tradespeople could arrange for their goods to be collected by smaller vehicles. Otherwise, the town will

continue to suffer danger to pedestrians in the old narrow streets, potential damage to the historic buildings of which we are so rightly proud and increasing air pollution.

Mrs. M. Ackroyd
Lower Broad Street

Dear Editors,

In various places (such as York and Shrewsbury) I've noticed plaques on interesting old buildings saying that they have been acquired by the local civic society, carefully renovated then sold or let to appropriate tenants. Has the Ludlow Civic Society ever considered such an enterprising scheme? Presumably Heritage

and Lottery grants would be available for well thought out projects and, despite high initial overheads, such a policy could, with astute management, become self-funding.

Christopher Finch
Ludlow

Dear Editors,

Has anybody else noticed that, when seen from Gravel Hill, how neatly the ski-jump roof of the new Tesco building follows the curve of the hills beyond? Is this a happy accident or inspired design I wonder!

Doreen Mason
Gravel Hill

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MEMORIES OF LUDLOW IN WARTIME: Bryan Heatley

This concluding section of a feature on the Teme Valley during WWII includes prisoners of war, children's war efforts, the Home Guard and espionage.

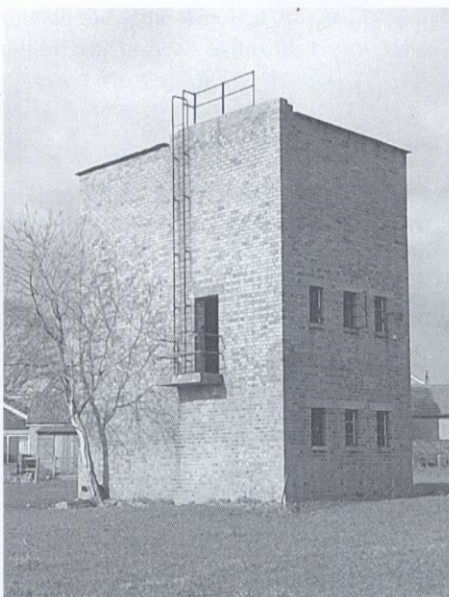
Many residents of the area remember German and Italian prisoners of war working on local farms. The main camp was at the Sheet, where the water tower remains. The British guards appear to have lived well, perhaps because servants were in plentiful supply. An ornamental fish pond constructed by the prisoners was in situ long after the war ended. Some of the Italians were skilled in making shoes, while local workers at the munitions factory at Peaton, near Diddlebury, became expert in the illicit manufacture of cigarette lighters!

Ludlow children played their part in the war effort. Some threaded scrim onto camouflage nets in what is now the Job Shop in Castle Square (used for this task because of its high ceiling); others scoured the fields and hedges for hips, haws, elderberries and foxgloves which went to Boots for processing. Then there was the job of collecting the family's orange juice from the Food Office in Corve Street. The junior population of South Shropshire was increased by large numbers of evacuees including youngsters from Lancing College (billeted at Stokesay), and Birmingham's St. Phillip's Oratory School (who resided in Ludlow).

People recall the green railway carriages of the Southern Railway, which formed the hospital trains heading through Ludlow station for the Canadian Hospital at Shrewsbury. The railway line was extremely busy, particularly during the build up to the invasion of France. The Royal Trains were moved to Craven Arms for storage in the carriage shed, which still stands. Blind war casualties were looked

after at Church Stretton where the new and unopened by-pass formed a storage area for hundreds of army vehicles

The Home Guard has received a bad press but it had a serious role in the early part of the War. Stokesay Court was one of their major training centres and at least one of their exercises went very wrong when a carelessly thrown thunderflash caused five horses to bolt at nearby Onibury Farm.



The water tower at The Sheet

It is interesting to note that the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), the predecessors of the Home Guard, were told to hold to the last man Ludlow Telephone Exchange. They were implored to defend each village and hamlet as 'even defence by one shotgun will delay the enemy'. An official warning was issued asking that

bomb storage be made small boy proof!

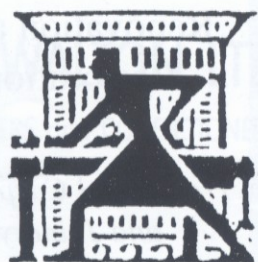
Surviving members of the Ashford and Caynham platoon of the Home Guard remember guarding the aqueduct over the Teme near Ashford Bridge.

Lights in Ludlow were extinguished on one occasion when a Shobdon based aircraft brought down overhead cables. Another aviation accident occurred on 25th March, 1944 near the Woofferton BBC station when a Beaufighter from Defford crashed into some trees. The pilot survived but, sadly, his navigator was not so fortunate. BBC Woofferton appears to have been involved in what the military would today call 'psychological operations'; its power having been greatly increased in 1940 to allow broadcasting to foreign parts. Some of the transmitters were removed to the south of England later in the war, as they were required in efforts to frustrate the navigation systems of the terrible V2 rockets. It later emerged, however, that the V2 guidance system was not radio controlled.

Clandestine operation touched the area too. Sutton Court is believed to have been used as some kind of safe house for the Special Operations Executive, which controlled the infiltration of agents into enemy occupied territory.

The writer is anxious to hear more about Ludlow and surrounding areas in wartime. If you have a story to tell, please contact Bryan Heatley at St. Julians, Ludford. Tel/Fax: 01584-877424.

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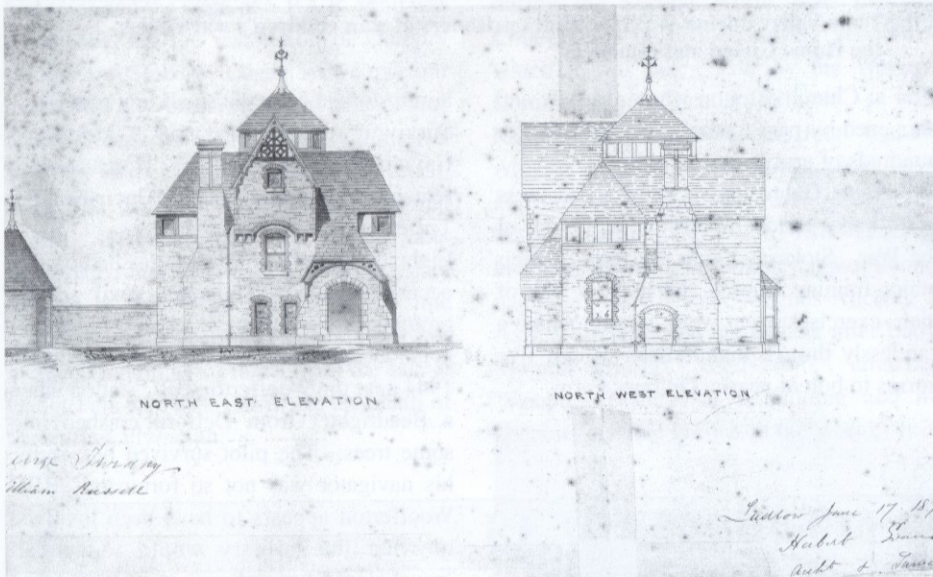
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HERBERT EVANS: Megan Dawson based on research by Colin Sheward



Herbert Evans' signed drawings of the North and West elevations of Kennet House

Since the demise of Ludlow's Town Hall (reviled by some, its loss deeply regretted by others) the town has not been notable for nineteenth century buildings of ambition or distinction. However, two houses of this period do stand out as significant - No. 1 Dinham and Kennet House, Sheet Road. Recent research by Colin Sheward suggests they both may be by the same hand - that of HERBERT EVANS, who was born in the town, probably in 1823, and practiced here in the second half of the century. Herbert's father was a Land Surveyor formerly of Corve Street. In 1823 the family was living in Old Street where his mother, Mary, had a small school. By 1850, and widowed, she was running a boarding school for girls, together with Herbert's sisters, Caroline, Ellen, Harriet and Emma, at Castle Lodge. Herbert is recorded as living with them at times.

Where and with whom Herbert trained as an architect is unknown but in 1869 he married Margaret Armstrong in Tottenham Parish Church, North London. Does his presence there mean he had spent some time in the capital and learnt his trade in one of the large London practices? G.E. Street, George Gilbert Scott and Charles Barry, for instance, all employed large staffs of young men anxious to learn the business of architecture in preparation for setting up their own offices. Before the days of academic courses and qualifications this was the accepted route into the profession.

By 1871 though, the couple and their first child, Christine, were living at No. 20/22 Castle Square (now the Careers Office). Later they moved to Old and then Corve Street presumably so as to accommodate further children - Ferdinand, Herbert, Caroline and Margaret. There was evidently

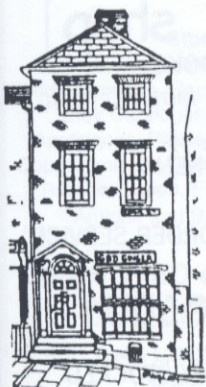
enough work locally to support this growing family.

In 1872, a Mr. George Twiddy of the Dun Cow Dairy & Farm at Rock Green commissioned Evans to build a house on the then relatively rural and undeveloped Sheet Road. Mr. Twiddy originally came from Kennett in Suffolk and thus the building became Kennet Villa (later Kennet House). His reason for building remains unclear - he certainly didn't live there himself (census returns show him as still at the farm in 1881) and his son who did eventually occupy it was only ten at the time of the drawings. Perhaps it was just a case of longsighted planning? Whatever his motives, the house that Evans designed for him was distinctive with an undoubted presence.

Sited at the crest of the hill leading out of the town and commanding a wide view of the Teme valley from the garden front, the house was obviously intended to impress. The exterior, with its unrelieved areas of masonry, the asymmetrical roof lines and unusual crowning lantern/tower makes what is a relatively modest sized house appear altogether more substantial. A small detached room (for the maid?) to one side at basement level is hidden from view by a retaining wall and delightful gazebo-like corner feature with a conical roof. Stairs in the 'turret' lead down to a small enclosed yard, the maid's room, and the basement kitchens. A rather grand service entrance and a neat solution to the problem posed by the steeply sloping site.

The combination of stone with brick and timber framing above echoes many buildings in the town - Castle Lodge for instance - and the most distinctive and unusual corner windows that appear on the upper floor as

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well as the lantern can possibly be attributed to Evans's familiarity with the unusual angle window at the 'Reader's House'. There is even, on the central N.E. gable, the hint of a jettied overhang, its supporting joists suggested in brick. Like many architects in the second half of the nineteenth century, Evans was taking elements and motifs from local vernacular buildings and freely re-interpreting them.

Whilst the striking silhouette of Kennet House remains much as Evans left it the interior has, not surprisingly, changed and been adapted by its subsequent owners. Even so, the heavy 'gothic' door, the Minton tiles of the entrance hall, the pine staircase ascending through three floors with its chamfered posts and quatrefoil motifs and an arched opening with a triangular head all speak of Evans the stylist.

Are there other identifiable works by him in the town? Colin Sheward convincingly suggests there is at least one.

Various described as 'bad taste' and a 'High Victorian shocker' by commentators of another era, No. 1 Dinham is ingenious in its use of a very limited site (previously that of a coach house) and dramatically distinctive in its employment of high quality polychrome brick.

The upper storey is timber framed and jettied whilst string courses and a first floor jetty are entirely executed in brick - elegant and somewhat frivolous echoes of its near neighbours! This is Ludlow vernacular in high fashion material.

The stylish, quality theme is carried on inside with distinct parallels to Kennet House. Minton tiles in the entrance hall; a staircase, using similar decorative motifs, rising through the three floors, executed here in Oak changing to Elm in the higher reaches and alcoves and arches with triangular heads. There are distinctive features too - 'gothic'

windows with cast iron sashes (did they come from Hodges Foundry just down the road?); concealed blinds which rise vertically from beneath the sills and the horizontal sliding windows of the upper floor.

This certainly isn't a routine developers' building but is it by our man?

The plans for Kennet House are signed by Evans but no direct documentation is known to link him to the Dinham house which was built in 1865. That is seven years earlier, at a time when the Evans sisters were running their school at Castle Lodge (they sold it in 1870). Was it, perhaps, commissioned by them as a retirement home and a showcase for their soon-to-be-married brother's work in much the same way that Abraham Darby built his iron bridge? Is this the house that so impressed Mr. Twiddy six years later?

But here our trail goes cold.

Evans died at Temeside Villas, a short and

apparently unexceptional late Victorian terrace. Unexceptional except for the wildly eccentric window surrounds (probably of yellow brick beneath modern white paint) and some unusual interior planning. These, together with the almost obsessive gothic-cum-moorish style lead one to speculate that here, too, we may detect Evans's hand. There must surely be other buildings of his around the locality - Cliff Villas at Ludford spring to mind as charmingly idiosyncratic, even using triangular openings similar to the ones he favoured. However, when the cottages were built - sometime in the 1840s - he would have been a very young man. His death from, heart failure in 1891 merited only one brief line in the Ludlow Advertiser. No details of his work were given.

Our thanks to the owners of No. 1 Dinham and Kennet House.



No. 1 Dinham - post modern before its time?

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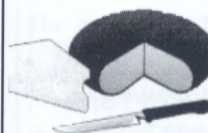
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This is the latest in a series of articles about life in Ludlow 100 years before each issue of *Heritage News*. Most of the material is drawn from newspaper records held in the Ludlow library.

The new century began badly for Ludlow. The Council seemed unable or unwilling to deal decisively with the problems of the town, and in March it emerged that Ludlow had become one of the unhealthiest towns in England.

As if to confirm its reputation for inconsistency, the Ludlow Town Council at its meeting in January 1900 spent most of its time revoking the decisions that it had taken the month before. Members had then decided, unanimously, to make the Town Hall available in the evenings as a reading room for local workmen. But a later meeting of the Market and Fairs Committee had rejected the scheme, and in January the Council accepted their decision with only one councillor still supporting the original proposal. Council members also changed their minds about trying to force the pipeline contractors to pay more for the damage being done to the town's roads by their 'extraordinary traffic'. (See earlier articles in this series.) The Advertiser suggested that the Council was allowing itself to be bullied by the contractors.

The Council meeting in March 1900 must have been one of the most remarkable in the history of Ludlow. Dr. C.B. Cranstoun, Ludlow's Medical Officer of Health, presented to the Council his Annual Report on the health of the town. It was a deeply disturbing document. The death rate in Ludlow had risen sharply from 16.1 (per thousand population) in 1898 to 25.5 in 1899, against an average death rate in Ludlow of 18.08 for the previous 20 years. Death of infants under one year had risen from the 20 year average of 143.05 (per thousand births) to 183.5 in 1899. (Nearly a century later, in 1997, the comparable infant

mortality figures for England and Wales were 5.2 deaths per thousand births inside marriage, and 6.9 deaths outside marriage.) There were 8 deaths from tuberculosis in Ludlow in 1899, compared with 3 in 1898. Dr. Cranstoun referred in his report to the damp and overcrowded state of much of the



Ludlow Town Hall c.1900
The proposed scheme for its use as an evening reading room for local workmen never came to fruition

working class housing in the town as a factor contributing to the spread of tuberculosis. These figures would have been bad for any grossly polluted and overcrowded industrial city in late Victorian England. Only 11 of our 33 biggest industrial towns and cities had a death rate worse than Ludlow in 1899. For a small market town they were appalling. The Council had for several years been considering, and postponing a decision on, a new sewerage scheme for Ludlow. Some councillors were unconvinced that there was a close relationship between the health of the town and the state of its sewers. In presenting Dr. Cranstoun's report to the March Council meeting Alderman Rickards,

the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, said that "of course such diseases as bronchitis, pneumonia, phthisis and pleurisy could not be prevented by anything the Sanitary Committee could do." As he was nearing the end of his remarks Alderman Rickards was interrupted by the Mayor, who said that he had just had put into his hands a telegram stating that Ladysmith had been relieved. The news was greeted with cheers and applause. He would, said the Mayor, set the bells ringing as soon as possible. There was renewed applause. Perhaps it was not only Ladysmith that was relieved at this dramatic intervention, as the Council turned from debating urban dereliction to celebrating an imperial triumph. The Advertiser hoped that the government would address the question of housing the working classes "when the affairs of Empire permit of attention being given to domestic legislation."

Two months later, in May 1900, the Council was told that the new sewerage scheme would now cost £11,000. "Had the members of the Town Council been alive to their responsibilities 7 or 8 years ago", said the Advertiser, "they would have saved the ratepayers thousands of pounds . . . their notorious policy of procrastination has been a thief of money as well as time." It might have cost a few lives too. Faced with the need to find such a huge sum the Council postponed a decision until June. In June they postponed it again. The Advertiser hoped that "in due time the general body of ratepayers will cry 'enough' of this wretched half-hearted matter of dealing with matters of moment."

(to be continued)

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CURRENT PLANNING ISSUES: James Harris

Issues relating to the £1m enhancement of Ludlow town centre have been the focus of public attention in recent months. The County Council's 'final' proposals were subjected to critical questioning at the February meeting of the District Council's Conservation Area Advisory Committee - proposals made available only nine days before the expiry date for objections; moreover, as the detailed implications of the scheme became apparent, the Advisory Committee's reservations were matched by strong opposition from local traders and others concerned that the impact of Tesco, the removal from Castle Square of buses and coaches, plus the loss of short-term parking spaces at several points, would lead to the decline of trading around Castle Square and the ultimate extinction, after 900 years, of the open market.

Faced with a public outcry at the obvious flaws in the scheme, the County Council's traffic planners were forced to hurriedly produce a second set of proposals, which effectively scrapped the results of their two years' work! The Bullring crossing was left 'for further study', and the top ends of both Broad Street and Mill Street were re-designed; in Castle Square, the delivery arrangements were made workable and the market stalls replanned; the 141 timber bollards (Yes, really!) and 20 stone balls were eliminated, and the telephone kiosks and a Town Service bus stand reinstated. At last, the scheme began to look relatively sensible.

The Civic Society continued to make a critical but constructive contribution. At the crucial meeting of the County Council's Planning and Traffic Committee on March

17th, the society's Chairman, Neil Aikens, had three minutes to outline the Society's position. This is that:-

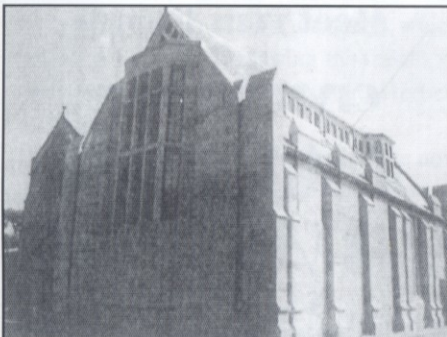
- the return of the one-way Broad Street system to a two-way flow is a mistake, resulting from misinformed nostalgia and
- a spurious petition;
- the overall, integrated pedestrian/vehicular/parking concept is being eroded by being broken up into a series of disconnected sub-issues which are being looked at independently;
- the Society supports the introduction of traffic wardens and an acceptable scheme for residents' parking;
- it is essential that the flow of pedestrians from Tower Street and across Old Street towards King Street should be made as easy as possible
- the continued use of King Street by modern, high-sided tourist coaches is inappropriate and dangerous; coaches should set down and pick up on either side of the Bullring and park in the Smithfield car park, from which lorries should be banned during the day;
- whilst the arrangements proposed for Castle Square are more acceptable, the bleak, windswept area at the west end should be relieved by tree planting and seating;
- moves should be made to discourage all-day parking in the town centre, possibly by using the Town Service buses as part of a park-and-ride system;
- the construction of an access to the by-pass, north of the town, to enable HGVs to travel south along the by-pass, is an essential, long-term objective in our determination to have a weight limit

imposed on Ludford Bridge.

If these proposals are accepted, the Society will continue to give them qualified support, whilst monitoring the standards of design and construction aimed at during their implementation.

However, because one is involved with future human behaviour, some questions, currently unanswerable, still remain: for example:-

- will allowing delivery vehicles to cross the apparently pedestrian 'domain' outside Ludlow Larder lead to uncertainty about who has priority? Will the curved line of bollards be sufficient to define a 'route' or should a tarmac or sett-defined path be introduced?
- will enough people use, pass through, or visit Castle Square to ensure that its open market and surrounding shops continue to be viable?
- will the 185 or so car spaces at Tesco free up a number of long term spaces behind Somerfields sufficient to balance the 90 spaces to be lost to a new library and (in my view inappropriately sited) Museum Resource Centre?
- will we be true to ourselves? In the historic core we have the best Herefordshire beef and Welsh lamb, local breads, cheeses and sausages, almost every variety of game from pheasants to wild duck, and a huge variety of green-grocery from limes to lemon grass. Tesco simply cannot approach the quality resources of 'The Great Larder of Ludlow', the subject of a major feature in The Telegraph of Saturday, March 18th this year. But it will be a case of 'Use the historic core or lose it'. It is up to us!



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LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY - COMMITTEE NEWS

1999-2000 Officers & Committee Members

President: Sir Keith Thomas
 Vice Presidents: Dr. Martin Speight
 Dick Stephens
 Chairman: Neil Aikens *Meg and Dave*
 Vice Chairman: Dr. James Harris *D.B.*
 Treasurer: Brian Atwood OBE
 Secretary: Prue Bellak *Val & Tim*
 Committee: Dorothy Arrowsmith,
 Michael Coleman-Smith, Megan Dawson,
 Barbara Holcombe, Jon Lansdell, Bill Lloyd-
 Kitchen, David Milner, Tim Pimblett,
 Val Thomas, Graham Willson-Lloyd

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

At our AGM in May we will be proposing some changes to the Society's constitution. One will be to introduce the requirement for one third of the committee to resign each year (but also be eligible for re-election). The purpose of this is to ensure that there is continuity of expertise within the committee for some of the longer running issues that we have to deal with, such as the Local Plan, while at the same time encouraging new talents onto the committee. Another amendment will be to limit the tenure of office of the Chairman to a maximum of four years. This will hopefully encourage more people to consider taking on this responsibility and at the same time make sure that the Society continues to develop and move with the times. I hope that the membership will support both these amendments.

Two of your committee's prominent members

have decided to stand down this year. Dorothy Arrowsmith, one of the longest serving, will be known to many of you. Dorothy has managed to provide a unique combination of intellectual input combined with the willingness to work hard at the necessary but less glamorous tasks in committee. Her perceptive analyses of issues together with the courage of her convictions and the gift of lucid critique have been a most valuable asset to the committee for many years. She has also managed to combine these with efficiently organising, and assisting in the organisation of many successful and enjoyable excursions. Notwithstanding these valuable abilities Dorothy has always been willing to take on the less attractive tasks such as stuffing envelopes and delivering letters or copies of *Heritage News* to a large part of the town.

James Harris has also decided to stand down as Vice-Chairman and our representative on the Ludlow Conservation Area Advisory Committee. James has been involved on the committee for the past seven years in various capacities and in particular created a formidable partnership with the late Stephen Dornan. James' meticulously hand scribed report on the events in the Advisory Committee every four weeks provided a fund of facts, informed opinion and amusement. The care with which these appraisals were produced often meant that much of the necessary background work on an issue had already been completed before presentation to the committee for their decision and action. James has also been a regular contributor to *Heritage News* with detailed updates about current planning issues.

Successive chairmen have regretted the loss of such talent. However I believe that there must be untapped, not necessarily identical, but complementary abilities out there in the membership. If you feel that you have the interest, and time to become involved you are urged to stand for the committee on 24th May.

All you need is a member to propose you and one to second the proposal and confirmation of your willingness to stand. This can be sent to our Secretary, Prue Bellak at 19 Broad Street, or submitted on the night.

MEMBERSHIP

In support of our membership drive we have produced a new leaflet which concentrates on the Society's positive role in the town. It is also planned to produce a separate sheet summarising next year's events - to tempt non-members. Supplies of the new leaflet and the summary will be available at the Tourist Information centre, the Assembly Rooms, the Library and St. Laurence's Church. When you have read your copy of *Heritage News*, please pass it on to anyone you know who might be interested in the Society's work.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

To overcome bad weather and post-Christmas fatigue, this year's Christmas Soirée has metamorphosed into a **Summer Garden Party**. This will be held in the gardens of Ludford Mill, Ludlow on 22nd July, 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm. Members will be able to meet and greet, wander in the gardens and listen to music. Large flowery hats are not obligatory but will add to the gaiety of the occasion! Tickets are available from Brian Atwood, 36 Lower Broad Street, Ludlow, SY8 1PH (Tel: 01584-876607). The cost will be £5 per person and will include summer refreshments and a glass of wine.

There is still time to book for the **Spring Visit** to Plas Newydd, Llangollen and Chirk Castle, with its award-winning gardens. The cost for this visit is £20 per person and includes entry charges, morning coffee, lunch and Welsh cream tea. For bookings, please contact Mrs. Dorothy Arrowsmith, 1 Ludford Almshouses, Ludlow, SY8 1PW (Tel: 01584-875623).

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