

Ludlow Heritage News

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FREE



The Sheet Road North.

Photo: Gareth Thomas F.R.P.S

A SORRY STORY - the tale of the Eco Park

- Sixteen acres of the green fields on the edge of Ludlow shown above are to be sacrificed for an ecological business park.
- In spite of the existence of adequate alternative sites within the natural boundary of the A49, the plan is to breach that boundary and so open the way for even more serial development to the east of the town.
- The proposal was not included in the current Local Plan and is outside the area designated in that plan for development. It has appeared in the Revised Deposit Replacement Plan 2006 - 2011, but this has not yet been fully debated, approved or accepted even at the Public Inquiry.
- At the time when the planning application was submitted it was vehemently opposed in nearly 240 letters of objection. There were only 4 letters of support. By the time of the meeting of full Council the letters from those against the scheme hugely outnumbered those in favour (by about 50 to 1). One of those in favour was from Advantage West Midlands which proposed to donate £910,000 of public money to the scheme; two others were from firms wishing to move to the park.
- The plan was opposed at the outset by the Ludlow Town Council, the Ludford Parish Council, Ludlow Civic Society, the Ludlow Chamber of Commerce, several other parish councils, by an Action Group of local residents and by national bodies such as English Heritage, and The Campaign to Protect Rural England. It was also rejected by the Council's own Development Control Committee.
- When the Development Control Committee voted by 7 votes to 4 to reject the proposal, its decision was somehow transmuted into only a recommendation which was then put to a 'special' meeting of the full Council. The meeting voted 15 for and 15 against. The Chairman then used his casting vote to reverse the decision of the Development Control Committee and to push through the scheme.

There may be no more we can do to prevent this plan from going ahead, but the Civic Society feels that we should record the events for posterity before they are distorted or blurred by time.

An Eco Business Park appears to be a site for industrial or business premises which is set in landscaped surroundings, which is environmentally friendly and which meets up-to-date ecological standards. It would provide plenty of parking for employees and visitors. Those in the Council who support such a scheme argue that there is a real need for a new business park to provide employment for South Shropshire and that Ludlow is the most attractive site for inward investment. They also argue that there is sufficient space on the Sheet North site for a Park and Ride facility for the town as well.

The Civic Society, many of whose members have made their individual objections, supports the provision of real jobs but has argued against the choice of site for the following reasons:

1. To expand the town across the natural boundary of the A49 would create a precedent for further development eastward, creating urban sprawl into the countryside. Ludlow has already increased in population by nearly 50% in the last ten years as a result of indiscriminate development. If it is not to lose its character or its sustainability, a line should be drawn, as hitherto, at the A49.
2. Only two firms have so far been named as being interested in moving to the new park and they are already in Ludlow. Only two of the sixteen acres will be used for buildings, but it is not certain that even these premises will be filled. Business parks in Ludlow itself, Craven Arms, Bishop's Castle and Burford all run at a loss, and the new industrial area in Leominster can only make things worse. If the Sheet North park also runs at a loss, the Council Tax payers will have to pick up the bill for running costs in addition to what is already committed to capital costs.
3. It is ironic that building an Eco Park on a

greenfield site should be so ecologically insensitive. It also encourages the use of the car. Offices and businesses within the town give life to the place and allow people the great luxury of being able to walk to work without having to cross busy, dangerous roads. It is obvious to us all that there are still brownfield sites left within the bypass, and that the present Sheet Road Business Park is by no means full. However, it is also clear to us all that such sites are worth much more when they are developed for housing. The Council has already allowed too many factory or business sites, such as the Walter's factory site, to be developed for housing. No doubt when the Sheet Road Park businesses have been persuaded to move to the Eco Park, the land there will also be used to add to the mass of houses to the east of the town.

4. The Park and Ride area might well be needed one day, but at present a temporary site works well at peak periods. For the rest of the year a bus service would need to be heavily subsidised, again at the tax-payer's expense.

Apart from the arguments for and against the scheme, though, an even more serious issue is the way in which the processes of local government were used in this case. By the time the scheme reached the planning application stage, the Council had spent at least £200,000 which included the non-returnable deposit of £50,000 to the farmer who owned the land (a deposit based on the assumption that the Council would grant itself planning permission). It was said that grants which might be forthcoming from Advantage West Midlands and from European funding would no longer be available after December 2003, so the scheme had to be put through as quickly as possible. Thus, although it appeared in the new Draft Replacement Local Plan, it was pushed ahead of the Public Inquiry which would consider that plan.

In November 2001, Ludford Parish Council was invited to attend a meeting to discuss the emerging South Shropshire Local Plan. The Eco Park was not part of that plan. But on 1st

March 2002, South Shropshire District Council published the Draft Replacement Plan which included the proposal for an Eco Park and Park and Ride on the outskirts of Ludlow. Four sites were suggested: Foldgate Lane, Overton Road, the Sheet North and the Sheet South. All these sites were located in Ludford Parish. All were sensitive sites and two were grade 2 agricultural land on the far side of the busy A49 bypass.

On 18th March 2002 Ludford Parish Council held a public meeting at Bishop Mascall Centre. SSDC officers argued their case before over 200 angry local residents. Not one resident spoke in favour of the proposal. The major concerns expressed were that the need for such a large development had not been demonstrated, especially when there were vacant places in the present business park; that the destruction of greenfield sites, whichever site was chosen, was not justified; breaching the A49 boundary would create a precedent for urban sprawl; the need for a Park and Ride was questionable. On 24th April the Council set up a Joint Policy Panel to investigate proposals for developing land for employment in South Shropshire. This Panel duly reported that there was underemployment in South Shropshire and particularly a shortage of office space in Ludlow itself.

Press coverage of the Ludford Parish Council meeting led to protests from residents in other parts of Ludlow and outlying villages. 1600 objections to the Draft Replacement Plan were logged, most of which centred on the Eco Park. The plan was revised but it still included the Eco Park and a decision was made to site it at Sheet Road North.

This revised plan was due to be considered at the Public Inquiry scheduled for January/February 2004, but on May 21st 2003 an Executive Committee was held which allowed the Chief Executive by 4 votes to 3 to take the Eco Park proposal out of the Public Inquiry, and to give him permission to purchase the land and make a planning application. The intention was to secure the funding which, it was said, might otherwise disappear.

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As a result of this decision, a non-political Action Group of concerned local residents, including members of the Civic Society, was formed to ensure that local people had a voice and were kept informed of developments. When the period for objection to the planning application arrived, there were nearly 240 letters opposing the application, with petitions from 134 names, and, at this stage, only 4 letters in support. Those objecting included Ludford Parish Council, Ludlow Town Council, Ludlow Civic Society, the Ludlow Chamber of Commerce, and national bodies such as English Heritage and the CPRE.

The Development Control Committee met to consider the application on August 20th. They rejected it by 7 votes to 4. The Committee is normally authorised to make a final and legally binding decision on most planning applications. On this occasion, however, the Chairman was persuaded to take the unusual action of announcing that the decision was a 'recommendation' only. This was later justified by the assertion that a refusal of permission conflicted with a hitherto unmentioned 'Policy Framework'. This turns out to be a collection of plans and strategies including the Local Plan/Development Framework, that is to say the Local Plan in force at the time and not the unadopted Replacement Plan.

Before the meeting of the full Council took place, many people expressed annoyance at press articles threatening a Council Tax rise to recoup the Council's expenses should the development not go ahead. Councillor Mrs H.M.Kidd suggested that this would mean a 20% increase. When challenged by our Chairman, James McFarlane, she reduced this to 8%, but the threat remained. There was also indignation that a leaflet was circulated from three Councillors to all households in the area, justifying the need for such a development and accusing protestors of not telling the truth.

Meanwhile, Council members were prepared for the Special Meeting by a long paper compiled by the Chief Executive. The paper did not mention the 'framework' or the

part it had played in bringing about the special meeting. It also failed to give much attention to the enormous volume of protest generated when the proposal was first made, and again when it appeared in the Draft Replacement Local Plan. It did mention that one of the reasons for rejecting the alternative site at Lower Barns Road was local protest, but gave only cursory reference to the far greater number of objections against the Sheet Road North site. No mention at all was made of the fact that only a very few letters were received in support of the scheme, one from Advantage West Midlands, others from two firms who hoped to benefit from the site. These last, from Premier Medical and Occam Systems, were published in full as Appendices B and C to the report. The national bodies who objected to the scheme were not mentioned. The account of the debate on August 20th was highly biased, (as were the Minutes of that meeting in which 33 lines are given to the arguments in favour of the proposal and hardly any to those against). The size of the majority in the Development Control Committee against the scheme was not given. This bias may well have caused those Councillors less familiar with the case than others to vote in favour of the proposal, when a fairer account would have led them to vote against it.

At the Special Meeting of the full Council on September 17th the vote was 15 for, 15 against. Many, though not all of the Councillors voted according to party lines, but it was clear that at least half of those present did not support the proposal. At this point the Chairman, Neville Stephens, a Craven Arms Councillor, who in this position should have supported the status quo as was proper, used his second casting vote to reverse the decision of the Development Control Committee.

Many members of the public were outraged at the way in which the Council overrode the decision of its own Committee, relying on the Chairman's casting vote and the vote of a Council Member awaiting sentence for defrauding the Council. Another Councillor was advised not to vote on the

grounds that he had an interest in that his wife's sister worked for one of the interested firms. (Details of the way Councillors voted may be found below.)

Since the Draft Local Plan was subject to Public Inquiry and South Shropshire District Council had now approved the application for the Eco Park prior to the Inquiry, the Government Office of the West Midlands (which answers to John Prescott) had to approve the application or call it in. In spite of 100 letters sent to GOWM, and the very unsatisfactory circumstances leading up to this point, they refused to call it in. It was decided that the application did not 'raise matters of more than local importance'.

This is surely not so. The case of the Eco Park shows that there is something seriously wrong with the way Local Government operates. It must consult public opinion, but then is allowed to ignore it - as we have seen in many other cases. This undermines our faith in the democratic process and removes our confidence in those whose decisions affect us most nearly. We are not suggesting that the Council acted illegally, but that it acted in clear contravention of the wishes of most people in the town, ignoring a call for a referendum.

The Recorded Votes at the full Special Meeting on September 17th:

For the Eco Park	Against	Abstain
N.W.B.Bews	C.L.Bodenham	M.E.E.Morris
L.Chapman	M.A.B.Cramp	Mrs E.V.Parry
P.J.Corston	Mrs B. Davies	
N.J.Hartin	P.M.Dunne	
R.M.Huffer	S.J.Evans	
Ms J.B.Jarvis	J.Lloyd	
Mrs H.M.Kidd	M.E.G.Merrick	
Z.G.Kronbergs	Mrs C.M.A.Motley	
Mrs S.E.J.	Dr St.John Penney	
McCormack	G.Perks	
J.H.Meredith	R.Priest	
C.L.Pendry	K.R.Reynolds	
P.F.Phillips	M.H.Reynolds	
Ms L.S.Seymour	J.V. Wheeler	
W.A.Shaw	Mrs J.Williams	
N.P. Stephens (Chairman)		

**16 For (on Chairman's casting vote),
15 against, 2 abstentions.**



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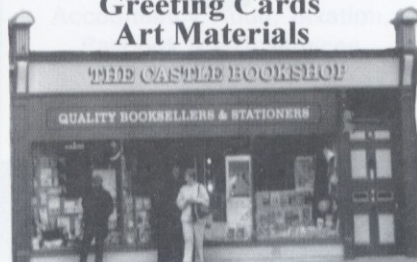
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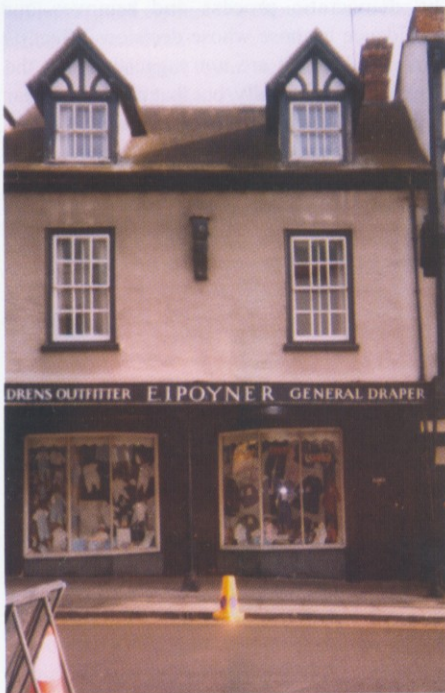
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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A
VICTORIAN LUDLOW GROCER:

Jean Brown

The last of the papers given by the Historical Research Group at a recent Civic Society meeting.

This story, although a family history, has no personal connections with anyone I know in Ludlow, and it began quite accidentally from an entry in the Poor Law Outdoor Relief Book for 1840. Phoebe Evans and her five children were given relief by the Relieving Officer for several weeks, instead of having to go into the workhouse. She lived in Frog Lane, now St John's Road, on which I was doing some historical research and where we happened to be living at the time. It became a detective story in Victorian sources, and enabled me to discover a great deal, from Phoebe's birth in Kingsland in 1798 to her son Charles's death in Gravel Hill, Ludlow in 1918.



No.8 Broad Street where Charles Evans had his grocer's shop



Julian Terrace, now backing on to Sandpits Road.

Phoebe Evans had five children living at home in 1840, the youngest only eighteen months old. Her husband, William, had died the previous year, at the age of 40. He had been a 'post boy', presumably working at one of the Ludlow coaching inns, and his wife was a laundress. The two oldest boys, William aged twelve years and Charles aged nine years, were working as labourers in a woollen mill, which might have been the one then at the bottom of Lower Broad Street. In the 1851 Census, Charles was still living at home, but described as a grocer's assistant, yet within six years he had purchased 8, Broad Street and had set up as a grocer. The top of Broad Street was a prestigious shopping area, and he bought the premises from Emma Whatmore, the widow of a baker. His neighbours included a haberdasher also selling Berlin wool for embroidery, a confectioner, a butcher, a shoemaker, a glass and china shop, and Valentine's, the grocers, who had been established there for many years. Next door to Charles's shop was the Angel Hotel. The premises gave him accommodation on the upper floors, where he lived with his mother and his young niece, Ellen, who had come to live with the family following the death of her mother.

We do not know how Charles managed to save £400 to purchase the premises, but he

must have worked hard to do so, and also gained experience in the grocery business. He owned and ran the shop for seventeen years and in that time saw some dramatic changes to Ludlow, including the work on the new railway which reached Ludlow in 1852. In 1863, Bodenham's moved to their present premises on the corner of King Street and Broad Street. The Ludlow Advertiser noted the celebrations for the Prince of Wales that year, and listed those who had conspicuous banners and flags out in Broad Street. Charles Evans is not among them! He was fifty-one when he retired in 1873, selling the shop as a grocery business to William Richardson Tillett. He moved with his mother and niece to the newly developing suburbs, living first in Castle View Terrace, where Phoebe died in 1879.

Neither Charles nor Ellen ever married, and they moved again in the 1880s to the top of Julian Road, to a house which would have overlooked the fields on the opposite side of Sandpits Road. From the front of the house there would have been striking views of Ludlow and Whitcliffe. The house may have been rented rather than purchased and it served as home to them both until, sadly, Ellen died in Blackpool, aged fifty-three, of a cerebral haemorrhage. We cannot tell whether they were on holiday, but Charles was present to register the death. So he

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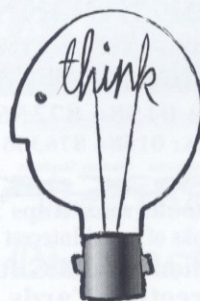
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was left alone at the age of seventy-eight and obviously decided that another move must be made. He put all his possessions from the house in Julian Terrace up for auction, and the transactions are recorded in the sale catalogue. This is a sad and illuminating document on the possessions of a Victorian shop owner of modest means. We do not know whether the many books and pictures owned had been his purchases or those of his niece. There were over three hundred items in the sale and the total amount raised was £68.12s.3d. He moved as a lodger into a house in Gravel Hill where he died in 1918, leaving a net estate of £1,200. Ellen had left all her possessions to her uncle Charles, but in his will proved by his nephew, another Charles, it seems that his brother William was still alive, and a nephew, also called William, was farming in Staffordshire.

All this evidence comes from sources that are readily available to both the local and family historian, and one item of information would lead me on to another. There are still clues to be followed up, such as any facts concerning Ellen's education in Ludlow. We know that her mother Elizabeth died when Ellen was five, but not why she went to her mother's family and did not stay with her father in Birmingham. As yet I have found no evidence for Charles's involvement in public life, although he advertised in the trade directories and continued to be recorded as a local resident after his retirement. In summary, it has proved a fascinating insight into the life of a Victorian family, showing how a young man could come from very humble beginnings and establish himself in the town where he had been born and bred.

The Friends of Shropshire Archives and the Ludlow Historical Research Group are organising a day conference on Victorian Ludlow on Saturday 16th October 2004 at the Assembly Rooms. There will be talks by David Lloyd, Christopher Train, Derek Williams and Jean Brown. In the afternoon there will be guided walks in Ludlow relating to nineteenth century buildings. We are able to invite members of Ludlow Civic Society to

attend at a cost of £5 for the day (£7.50 for the general public). Advance booking is essential and programmes will be available after Easter. Please send a stamped addressed envelope to Jean Brown, 27 Friars Field, Weeping Cross Lane, Ludlow SY8 1JJ.

**LUDLOW HISTORY ACCESS PROJECT -
THE STORY: Jean Brown, Chairman
Ludlow Historical Research Group.**

After celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary as a group in 2001, our main aim was the publication of our research on a systematic basis. However, our focus soon widened when it was suggested that we might discuss a joint venture with the new Ludlow Library and Museum Resource Centre. We could see that with grant aid from the Local Heritage Initiative, a partnership project might prove an advantage both to us and to the new Library complex. At the same time, Mary McKenzie of Shropshire Archives (then the Shropshire Records and Research Centre) was keen to see communities having local access to their historical records, and she felt that Ludlow might be the pioneer in such a scheme.

At our first meeting with the Library and Museum Service we discussed the possibility of the Group's having a specific role within the new complex, including a regular meeting place, storage of archives and an advice service for the general public. Throughout 2002 these ideas became identified more clearly and were developed into practical proposals. At the same time, we were exploring funding the project from the Local Heritage Initiative. Our application was primarily directed to the copying of Ludlow archives available only in Shrewsbury. But we also wished for a wider application of our skills in providing help to the public and in making our research available through computer technology. The process of application was considerably helped by the expertise of Shropshire Archives in assessing what was practical and realistic. The Group had appointed a sub-committee to oversee the project application, but we were constantly aware of the

support given through our discussions with the Group committee and members.

A Local Heritage Grant was approved in October 2003. During that year we had also negotiated our move from the Bishop Mascall Centre to the Museum Resource Centre. From September 2003 we have met there as a group each Thursday evening to continue our research programme. The facilities of the Resource Centre include five computers and the storage of our records. To these will be added copies of documents from Shropshire Archives and our research publications. We had discussed a possible Public Advice Service with the Library and Shropshire Archives staff and we began this weekly service in February 2004. Each Tuesday afternoon two volunteers from the Group are available in the Library to assist anyone who wishes to do research on family or local history. We are there to provide guidance, not to do the actual research, and so far the response has been positive. We are planning a major exhibition for October 2004 when we will hold a day conference on Victorian Ludlow (see above) and promote the publication of a new book 'Aspects of Victorian Ludlow'.

We were very pleased to be able to involve the Civic Society in this project and eventually the grant will provide two information boards for Castle Square. This reflects our concern to inform and involve as wide a section of the Ludlow community as possible. We hope to arrange workshops in conjunction with the Library and Museum Resource Centre, with a particular emphasis on local educational institutions at all levels. A major strand in the project is the requirement that volunteer participation acts as 'matched funding' to the grant. The research carried out by Group members, the Public Advice Service, and the work of our volunteer Town Guides all contribute to a major commitment. This has been a partnership venture with the Library and Museum Resource Centre, Shropshire Archives and our funding partners the Local heritage Initiative, and will continue to be so as the project is monitored in its first few years.



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FUNDING. The Ludlow History Access project is funded by a grant to the Ludlow Historical Research Group from the Local Heritage Initiative. The Local Heritage Initiative is a partnership between the Heritage Lottery fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency. MLA West Midlands has also provided funding for this project to Shropshire Archives.

THE TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT

Town Design Statements arose from an initiative of the Countryside Agency, which was alarmed at excessive and unsuitable development of villages. The Village Design Statements which it fostered were part of its 'Design in the Countryside' work which focuses on regional diversity, local distinctiveness and the harmony between buildings, settlements and the landscape. The Village Design Statements were so successful that the Countryside Agency decided to encourage country towns to produce them as well.

It first sponsored a pilot scheme with three towns: Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, Selby in Yorkshire and Maldon in Essex. Now that these have been successfully completed, it is offering the fruits of its experience, and encouragement to other towns to produce their own statements.

The aim is to provide a detailed guide to the essential character of a town, setting out what makes the buildings and the setting of the town distinctive, with recommendations on how to discourage unsuitable development, and encourage new development that enhances and complements what is already there. With the co-operation of the Local Authority, this can then be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance which must be taken into account when planning applications are considered.

Of course, the character of a town is much more difficult to define than that of a village. The scale is so much larger that it has to be divided into smaller areas. There are much

more likely to be conflicts of interest caused by the diverse needs of different groups within the town and outside it. And the organisation is much more complex.

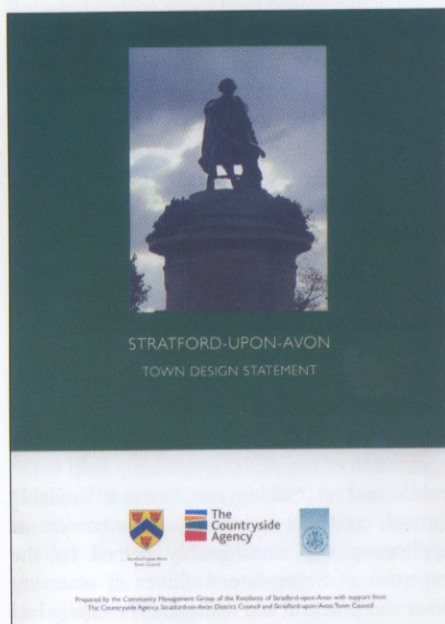
However, there are great advantages to be gained from the exercise. It involves the whole community and relates to the whole town. It aims to make people more aware of their surroundings, to help them protect what they most value and to have a real influence on any new development. What a pity we did not have such a document to help us fight the Eco-Park or the dreadful post-modern houses which may appear in Ludlow's beautiful churchyard, squashed in beside the Reader's House.

The Town Design Statement can improve new design by providing guidance to landowners, developers and architects before they prepare plans, and can reduce unsympathetic development by making it easier for planning authorities to seek improvements in planning applications and to reject those which are out of sympathy with what local people want. It strengthens their arm in demanding high

standards and it speeds up the planning process. Above all, it allows planners to give full weight to the aesthetic, visual aspects of the town. Local people can have opinions on the look of street furniture, building materials or roof tiles; they can show disapproval of plastic windows or other inappropriate fenestration; they can press for the preservation of green spaces and trees, and urge the protection of the precious views of countryside from the town. The statement can also be used to prevent overdevelopment. In Clun recently, permission was refused for the building of a new house which was not only quite unsuitable in design, but which went against the Clun Village Design Statement which opposes infill.

It must be emphasised that the Town Design Statement, especially in an extraordinarily beautiful, unspoilt town like Ludlow, is intended to give more power to the community to preserve the character of the town as it is, and not to change it. It will not help those who want the town to be more like Redditch or to have more 'cutting-edge' architecture in the historic centre (though this might make parts of the rest of the town more exciting). The old town is in theory safeguarded by its Conservation Area and the listed status of many of its buildings, but there is no reason why the rest of the town should not be protected, and in particular, the spectacular and unique setting in which the whole town lies. Like many market towns, Ludlow is under serious threat from parasitic outside developers. The Town Design Statement is one small but significant defence against the overdevelopment and destructive exploitation of the town. In this, it is completely compatible with the aims of the 'Slow city' movement (in which Ludlow hopes to lead the country) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The Civic Society supports both of these organisations, and it has already donated funding and volunteers to the Town Council and the Steering Group which is co-ordinating the Town Design Project for Ludlow and Ludford.

Before the design guidance can be formulated, a complete survey must be made of the town as it now is. A large number of



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volunteers is required for this, so anyone who can spare time to help should contact the Town Clerk, Paul Russell, at the Buttercross or by telephone: 01584 878437.

LUDLOW MUSIC SOCIETY PROGRAMME 2004-5

Ludlow Music Society's new season begins on October 2nd with a concert by the Dante String Quartet. This is followed by a concert on October 23rd featuring the Gould Piano Trio whose programme includes a Haydn piano trio and a trio by Wolfgang Korngold, a composer born in Czechoslovakia who died in California and was associated with film music. The programme ends with Schubert's Trio in E flat Op.100.

On November 13th the Young Artist's concert will be given by the pianist Alexis White, whose programme includes the three Klavierstück D.946 by Schubert, some Preludes by Debussy, and Five Bagatelles by the contemporary composer, Carl Vine. His programme ends with Schumann's 'Kreisleriana'.

Ludlow Music Society is indeed fortunate in arranging a concert on March 12th 2005, by the world-famous tenor, Ian Bostridge, accompanied by Julius Drake. This is most certainly a 'not to be missed' concert and is sure to be a sell-out.

The season ends on April 2nd with a concert by another pianist with a world-wide reputation. Freddy Kempf plays sonatas by Beethoven, including the 'Moonlight' and 'Appassionata', together with Chopin's Etudes, Op.25.

Season Tickets can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Rosalind Caird, The Glebe House, Caynham, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 3BN (01584 876141) as well as further details of individual concerts. Tickets are also available at the door on the night of each concert. All concerts take place at Moor Park School, near Ludlow, and begin at 7.30 p.m.

LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY COMMITTEE NEWS

LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY 2003-2004 Officers & Committee Members

President:	Sir Keith Thomas
Vice-Presidents:	Dr Martin Speight Dick Stephens Matthew Green MP
Chairman:	James McFarlane CBE
Vice Chairman:	John Farley
Hon. Treasurer:	Nick Holcombe
Hon. Secretary:	Valerie Thomas

Committee Members:

Prue Bellak, Andrew Byrne, Michael Coleman-Smith, Bill Eastwell, Michael Evans, Stephen Evans, Jim Gosling, Beatrice Hely-Hutchinson, Daniel McDowell, Maeve Murphy, Stanton Stephens.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Spring 2004

We live in a noisy world. It is full of so-called shake-ups, crackdowns and exciting initiatives. People say you must shout or you won't be heard and I'm afraid it's true. Trouble is, when everybody's shouting, nobody can hear anybody. Perhaps that's why our governmental bodies, at every level, seem so unresponsive. They may say they're listening but they aren't hearing. The loudest megaphone is rarely the truest.

We are not short of noisy initiatives hereabouts in South Shropshire, especially in Ludlow. The projected Eco-Business Park seems likely to go ahead, more's the pity. The proposed Retail Park at Foldgate Lane, though rejected by the District Council, remains a threat because the intending developer (Bennett) is likely to appeal. Meanwhile, there is a flood of planning applications to cram dwellings into the most unlikely corners of the town (the Reader's House - 5, Pepper Lane - 12, the Angel - another 4) seemingly in defiance of the overall housing numbers laid

down in the Structure Plan and the Local Plan. Of course, there is a great deal of money involved and while it is no part of the Civic Society's remit to hamper people's desire to turn an honest penny, we do feel entitled, even compelled, to protest when these activities appear to infringe existing guidelines and limits, let alone common sense and practicality. Win or lose, we are not willing to stand by silently while the unique qualities of Ludlow, the very qualities that make it so attractive as a building site, are steadily submerged or destroyed.

A recent initiative that should help to protect Ludlow against needless or insensitive development is the preparation of a Town Design Statement. The origins and purpose of this scheme are described earlier in this issue. Of all towns, surely Ludlow needs one. No town is more deserving of the effort involved. It is of the essence that such Statements should involve the resident population and not simply be prepared by experts and handed down to us common folk. The Civic Society has promised and provided both funds and volunteers to start the process, under the auspices of the Town Council and a Steering Group, and we hope that all who are interested in such a project will participate as opportunity offers.

For my final word in this commentary, I revert to the vexed subject of the Eco Park. All legal obstacles have been cleared, and if the district Council is determined to spend our money in this way, there is now nothing to stop it. I hope, however, that it will remember the widespread opposition and the wafer-thin majorities in the Council's votes at various stages of the enabling process - even on one occasion depending on the second vote allowed to the Chairman. It is a pity that the project escaped the scrutiny of the recently concluded Public Inquiry into the Local Plan. This should surely have taken place before the Council awarded itself planning permission to proceed. Nobody is suggesting that the authorisation to proceed was not legal. Whether it showed wisdom is quite



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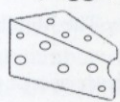
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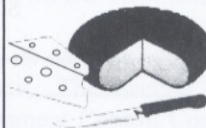
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another matter. That a plan with such far-reaching consequences for Ludlow is to go ahead on the second vote of one Councillor does not suggest the fair and reasonable attitude in our local government that we would like to see. Rather it seems the single-minded pursuit of an obsession, no matter what the opposition, no matter what the cost. Nought out of ten.

James McFarlane

MEMBERSHIP

Although supplies of Heritage News are being maintained at the usual three locations in Ludlow town, it has become evident that the Tourist Information Centre, with an average of 400 people visiting them per day during the season, and the Library, with even more, need more than the current quota of copies per month. The print run will therefore be increased so as to ensure that supplies are as far as possible always available at these key locations.

It is interesting to note that a high proportion of new members apply using the form to be found at the bottom of the back page of every copy of Heritage news, and so it is obviously important to maintain stocks. Would anyone who is unable to obtain an extra copy please contact the Membership Secretary.

Annual Membership numbers have climbed slightly to just over 265 and although this is a welcome improvement we should not relax our efforts until the immediate target of 300 has been reached.

Any member who knows of anyone who they think might like to join, please contact the Membership Secretary with details.

When you have finished with your copy of this edition please pass it on.

Michael Coleman-Smith

EVENTS

The Civic Society had a very successful lecture programme during 2002/3 and we are extremely grateful to all our lecturers. We started the season with David Lloyd, the well-known local historian, who spoke about the Ludlow property market, 1660-1848. Sadly, because of ill-health, David Howard was unable to give his lecture on Chinese armorial porcelain, but Colin Richards came to the rescue and produced his excellent talk on four months

early. We were very lucky to have an entertaining evening with Shaun Hill from the Merchant House. This was followed by the Christmas Party and Forum, then Peter Venables on unspoilt Eastern Europe, Morag Jones on three poets of the First World War, and Andrew Byrne (one of our Committee members) on the restoration of Georgian houses in Spitalfields, London, and 137 Corve Street, Ludlow. We are to finish in April with Sir Neil Cossons whose intriguing title is 'A Future for the Past'.

Next year we will try to do as well. We start the season with a talk on life and work in Ironbridge Gorge by Ken Jones, a local historian. Then follows a talk about St Laurence's by two speakers, Rod Robinson who is the architect for the church, and Elizabeth Bennett who will talk about the stained glass windows. The November lecture will be quite different, a talk called 'Silk from the Ancient Kingdoms' by Diane and Tim Gaffney from Bishop's Castle who travel extensively in the Far East and who will bring silks to be admired and handled, as well as beautiful articles to be purchased. We then have our usual Christmas Party, with wine and mince pies, and a general discussion of local topics. The New Year starts with a talk by Barbara Holcombe on not just William but also Richmal Crompton's other novels, followed by a talk on HMS Victory and the Battle of Trafalgar by Howard Goslyn, a wood expert. Then Michael Evans from Nock Deighton will follow David Lloyd's last year's lecture with one on the Ludlow Property Market 2004. For our final lecture we hope that Dame Margaret Anstey, diplomat and author, will talk to us about the United Nations.

Prue Bellak

THE LUDLOW FESTIVAL ARCHITECTURE LECTURE 2004: James Harris

Members of the Society will know of the series of celebrity lectures on current architectural topics, sponsored by the Civic Society in recent years as part of the Ludlow Festival.

This year, the organisers of the Festival have themselves invited Tim Smit to present a talk on the 'Eden Project' which has an architectural

element in its striking geodesic domes.

Partly for this reason, there will be no Civic Society Architectural Lecture in the Festival this year, but the Society hopes to sponsor its own architectural lectures in the future.

READERS' LETTERS

From John Robson

Sir,

I write with two points, one general and one specific, arising from Martin Speight's article in your last issue.

The article is full of pessimism. Its closing words are, '...Ludlow's future as a small town looks very bleak indeed.' So bleak, apparently, that Speight uses both 'very' and 'indeed' when one or the other was all he needed to convey his meaning. Now, it is certainly true that in recent times the Society has sustained more defeats than it has won victories. All the more reason to fight in future with the spirit of those who are not reconciled to losing, but expect to win.

Once again the issue of the lighting in the Square is raised. So a man may pick at a scab better left alone. Let us distinguish the height of the standards from the design of the lamps. With or without fear of vandalism the lamps should be high up, because that enables them to do what they are for, to light up the Square. At that task the old gas lamps were most inefficient. They had to be low, because they had to be lit, or rather turned up, at dusk, and because they needed frequent attention. Had our forebears possessed powerful and long-lasting illuminants, they would have put them high up. As regards the lamps themselves, it may be that a more modern design would have been better, but I for one rather like the present one.

Yours etc. JOHN ROBSON

West Winds,
Gravel Hill,
Ludlow SY8 1QS

Any queries, suggestions and responses to articles will be gratefully received.

Please address your letters to:

**The Editor, Ludlow Heritage News,
The Broad Gate, Ludlow, SY8 1NJ.**

BECOME A MEMBER - JOIN NOW

If you care about Ludlow and its surroundings please complete the application form (or a copy) below and send it in now.

To: The Membership Secretary, Ludlow Civic Society, 75 Old Street, Ludlow SY8 1NS

Please accept my application to join the society as an annual member.

Annual membership subscription is £10 per person - normally due on September 1st. I enclose £..... to cover.

Cheques payable to 'Ludlow Civic Society' please.

Please treat all my subscriptions and/or donations to the Ludlow Civic Society from 6 April and until further notice as GIFT AID.

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