

Ludlow Heritage News

Published twice a year by LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY

LUDLOW
CIVIC
SOCIETY
CELEBRATING
50 YEARS

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FREE



Photograph: Gareth Thomas FRPS

LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY - CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The Society was inaugurated on 14th October 1954. The object of the Society was to preserve the unique character of Ludlow by:

- a) personal care and forethought
- b) promoting as wide a public interest as possible in the deliberations of the appropriate authorities in matters concerning the Ludlow townscape
- c) drawing their special attention, if need be, to any fears or suggested plans which it is felt might be prejudicial to the Society's object, and giving them any help we can in the formulation and carrying out of plans which will advance it
- d) arousing and maintaining interest in the historical significance of many parts of Ludlow
- e) advertising as widely as possible the need for constant vigilance and the joint responsibility of all Ludlovians for helping in this task.

The Ludlow Society, as it was originally called, met at first in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall (the Mayor and two Borough Councillors were members of the Committee), then at members' houses or at hostels in the town or at the Grammar School. The Society has never had a permanent home and Secretaries still have to pass on boxes of archives to their successors. To begin with, Committee meetings were few and far between (from April 1960 to February 1962 there were no meetings at all). Later, they were every other month and then, with the increasing pressure of business, every month. Members of the Committee have studied and commented on planning applications and on Development and Local Plans over the years, and there has always been a programme of talks, outings and social events for the members of the Society (who in 1955 numbered 100) and the general public. The Society now has over 400 members.

The Ludlow Society was the first of its kind in Shropshire and it sprang not from any particular crisis as in other towns, but from an uneasy sense that the Ludlow which had miraculously survived the first half of the twentieth century might not survive the second. After the Second World War many of the

Photo: Ludlow Museum



The Tolsey in the early 1950s

buildings in Ludlow were in a poor state, especially the smaller timber-frame houses. They might well have been swept away in the post-war enthusiasm for slum clearance, had not some people realised the value of their contribution to the townscape as a whole and their intrinsic worth as buildings.

Ludlow was soon under pressure to

expand. It also suffered badly from its continued use as the main through route for the A49, although a new bypass was first mentioned in 1955. In 1957 the County Council came up with a scheme to ease traffic problems by widening the Bull Ring. This would have meant demolishing the Tolsey and the Corve Gate. One alternative was to re-erect the Tolsey ten feet to the west, and another to remove the large chimney-stack on the east side and to restore the rest of the building. The Ludlow Society regarded this as a most important issue in the future development of the town and became deeply involved in the scheme to restore the Tolsey which continued for many years.

In 1958 the Society agreed to undertake a survey of buildings needing preservation for the Council, and very soon formed its own 'Housing Association' for the restoration of buildings of architectural and historic interest. During the next few decades the following buildings owed their survival partly or wholly to the work of the Society:

The Tolsey - restored by the Society with funds from the Historic Buildings Trust and

Photo: Sutton Publishing Ltd.



Photo: Sutton Publishing Ltd.



*Left: The Star and Garter
Above: Tamberlaine House - both pictures
taken in the 60s*

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Clifton Cinema

Photo: Sutton Publishing Ltd.

routes for the Bypass were announced, the Civic Society Committee supported the one through Whitcliffe, possibly because it was to have gone through a tunnel or deep cutting. When this proved unfeasible, they changed their minds. They thought at first that a new road from Ludford Bridge along the river bank to Lower Mill Street was 'essential', but later opposed it on environmental grounds. The Society supported the Sports Hall on the river bank, though some members were strongly against it. The Committee did not oppose the obtrusive shop roof at the Castle, nor at first the proposed development for housing on the swimming-pool site at Dinham; and the original plans for the new Library and Museum Resource building were received with enthusiasm. In 2001, the Committee and members in general were deeply split by the plans for a modern building to replace 18 Castle Street.

In the early days relations with the Borough Council and later the Rural District Council were generally good. As yet the town had no Conservation Officer and no Conservation Area Advisory Committee, so the Society was allowed a good deal of influence on planning

decisions and was often asked to give advice on restoration and repainting of buildings. But as early as 1963 one member, Richard Beesly, reported in the press that he sensed a lack of good will towards the Society from residents in the town - probably because it was thought to represent a vociferous minority who were trying to stop people doing whatever they wanted with their own property. He said that members of the Society were thought of as 'a gang of interfering cranks'. However, during the 60s, 70s and 80s there was a great deal of useful detailed comment on planning applications and a vigilant watch was kept on the condition of buildings in the town and the work that was done on them. A scholarly architectural and historical background was needed to see that buildings were restored properly and that bricks, doors and windows were as authentic as possible. Stephen Dornan and David Lloyd, in particular, achieved the listing of many more buildings in Ludlow and worked hard to extend the Conservation Area beyond the core of the town.

Apart from guarding the built heritage in Ludlow, the Society was involved with many other issues which appear with depressing regularity in the Minutes. Traffic and parking were issues much earlier than one might suppose. There were calls for Residents' Parking in the 80s. The cobbles in Broad Street were a constant headache, particularly when Shropshire County Council attempted to take them up and replace them with tarmac to give more space for parking. The Mayor at the time justified the County Council's action by saying that you could not stop progress, but even so, the cobbles were reinstated. The problem of lorries in the town, particularly those arriving over Ludford Bridge, never went away in spite of the arrival of the Bypass. Part of the bridge had been widened to allow heavy traffic to turn the corner more easily and we have in the archives a letter from the Department of the Environment promising its reinstatement once the Bypass was built. This promise has not yet been honoured. Even litter



The 'Ballroom' in Broad Street, before re-fronting

Photo: P.S. Stokes

the Borough Council.

The Star and Garter (138 Corve Street) which was converted to flats by LCS.

Tamberlaine House, next to the Butter Cross, now an estate agent.

Hockey's Mill in Temeside, now residential accommodation.

The 'Ballroom' at 40A Broad Street which was refronted and converted into flats by LCS.

Lane's Asylum, at Old Gate in Old Street.

St. Thomas's Chapel, Dinham - restored by the Rural District Council.

Ludford Mill, restored and turned into a private residence. Also:

64-65 Corve Street, 14 Castle Street, The Horseshoe Weir, The Angel, 11-16 Lower Broad Street, the doorway at the Guildhall, The Reader's House, 62-3 Corve Street, 112 Corve Street.

Of course, there were battles lost or never even fought. Ludlow lost 100 Corve Street, the old Clifton Cinema, the original Station, the Town Hall, Orchard House in Lower Mill Street, 18 Castle Street and many other houses and shops outside the Conservation Area. And it has to be recorded that the Committee itself recommended the demolition of 17 Tower Street to improve traffic flow in 1963 - which fortunately did not happen. It did not oppose the demolition of the Copper Kettle and 23-5 Corve Street which became Castle Garage, because they were in too bad a state to save. There were some other decisions of the Committee at the time that we might be surprised at now. When the final two possible



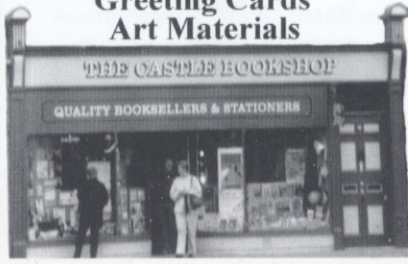
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14 Castle Street

bins appear more than once.

By the early 1990s the Committee was beginning to feel that it had no power to affect major planning decisions. There was increasing density of development on the edge and in the centre of the town, and many more contentious issues to confront such as the removal of the Cattle Market to the Overton Road, the arrival of Tesco, the selling off of the school playing fields for housing and more recently, the Eco Park, the Foldgate Lane retail park and over-development of sites in the town centre. There has also been a constant struggle to prevent developers and restorers from ruining the appearance of buildings. It was Shropshire County Council workmen who demolished one of the old

Photo: Michael Evans

library's bow windows before anyone could stop them, but it is generally builders and owners who should know better who install modern shop fronts, plastic windows or the wrong sort of roof light. There is legislation in place to protect listed buildings and buildings in a Conservation Area, but it is not always easy to apply. It is increasingly difficult for amenity societies to resist the pressure from large institutions, national chains or powerful developers to exploit the town, particularly when developers have a right of appeal and plenty of money to fund it.

However, in the last fifty years the Civic Society has achieved a great deal through the generosity of its members. It assisted in the purchase of the Charlton Tureen (alas, later stolen). It set up a scheme for fixing blue plaques to buildings of historic interest, which was criticised by some at the time but has been much admired and copied by other civic societies. The coats of arms at Hosyer's and Foxe's Almshouses have been regilded, and seats and new litterbins have been provided. Financial help has been given to the Weirs Trust, the Whitcliffe Commoners, the War Memorial, the Millennium Green at Dinham, the CittaSlow movement, the Assembly Rooms, the Church Fabric Trust and the Station Garden among others. It also works in co-operation with the Ludlow Town Centre Residents' Association. The Society funds a History Prize at Ludlow College and an architectural lecture at the Festival. It has provided gates for the Assembly Rooms and support for Ludlow in Bloom. Recently, it has sponsored videos made by the Conservation Officer, Colin Richards, to record and pass on building skills to future generations. Above all, it provides for its members every year a programme of fascinating lectures and outings which are open to all members of the public, residents or visitors to the town. The present ambition of the Society is to protect not only the character of the town but what remains of its uniquely beautiful setting, the southern approaches to the town beyond Ludford, and

Photo: Ludlow Museum



The Town Hall, built 1887, demolished 1986

the river bank itself. We also hope to support a new initiative to form a trust to restore the Town Walls.

It is sobering to think that if those who believe that 'you cannot stop progress' and that 'Ludlow must move with the times' had had their way in the twentieth century, there would now be no Butter Cross, probably no Broad Gate, and certainly no Tolsey. The entrance of the Guildhall would have been demolished, and scores of old houses would have been replaced with 60s or 70s architecture. Lorries might be roaring over Whitcliffe and traffic hurtling along the river bank. That so much of this beautiful town remains unspoilt is due in no small part to the Ludlow Civic Society.

Key dates in the history of the Society

February 1955 Meeting addressed by Mr Bennett, County Planning Officer on the Ludlow Development Plan. The first mention of a bypass.

October 1955 Scheme to demolish the Tolsey. The Ludlow Society sent a letter protesting in the strongest terms to the authorities.

June 1958 The Ludlow Society agreed to undertake a survey of buildings needing preservation for the Council.

April 1959 The Society gave support for the re-formation of the Whitcliffe Commoners' Association.

March 1960 Shropshire County Council tried to remove the cobbles from Broad Street, but was persuaded to restore them.

March 1962 The Society became involved in the restoration of the Tolsey.

September 1962 Members of the Committee were first allowed to see and comment on planning applications.

November 1963 The Society was registered as a Charity.

October 1968 The Town and Country Planning Act, allowing for the creation of Conservation Areas.

April 1969 Ludlow Conservation Area created within the Town Walls.

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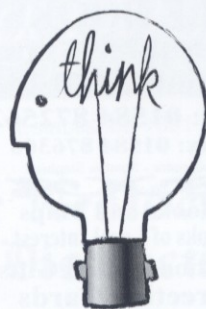
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October 1969 Public Meeting to discuss the route for the Bypass. County Council considering a double tunnel through Whitcliffe.

October 1970 The Society set up a scheme for renovating buildings of historic or architectural interest, later called the 'Housing Association'.

May 1971 The Society bought the Star and Garter for £5,000, which it renovated and converted into flats.

October 1971 The Housing Association officially launched.

January 1972 The idea of some pedestrianisation of the town welcomed.

March 1972 The Society became the Ludlow Civic Society.

May 1972 LCS commented on the organization of the new Rural District Council.

December 1972 LCS asked for a demarcated industrial area and a traffic-restricted area in the town. It supported the idea of a road between Ludford Bridge and Mill Street.

January 1973 A meeting of the whole Society approved the eastern route for the Bypass by 43 votes to 38, with 3 abstentions.

January 1975 Written assurance given by the Department of the Environment that Ludford Bridge would be restored to its original design when the Bypass was completed. This was never done.

July 1976 Formation of the Local History Group, started by Dr Martin Speight.

September 1977 The Ballroom at 40 Broad Street restored by the Housing Association, to be turned into flats.

July 1978 LCS opposed the link road from Ludford Bridge to Mill Street on environmental grounds, but supported the road from Station Drive to Gravel Hill with the possibility of a bus terminal in that area rather than in Castle Square.

November 1978 Concern about the condition of St Leonard's Chapel and the Reader's House.

January 1979 Boyne House (the Ballroom

Photo: Michael Evans



The doorway at the Guildhall, once at risk

in Broad Street) completed and sold.

July 1981 Assets of the Housing Association, now wound up, handed over to LCS.

September 1981 Suggestion that a weight limit should be put on lorries entering the town, and that overhead cables should be put underground. BT later agreed to do the latter when they had the money. It has still not been done in e.g. Lower Broad Street or Lower Corve Street.

March 1982 Scheme for placing blue plaques on suitable buildings.

July 1982 Concern over condition of houses in Lower Broad Street, including the Barley Mow.

New listing of historic buildings in Shropshire.

January 1983 Involvement in the future of the Assembly Rooms.

May 1984 First issue of Ludlow Heritage News.

November 1984 Suggestion of pedestrianisation of the town centre. The Committee could not agree.

March 1985 Fine Fare supermarket (now Somerfields) approved by the Council.

March 1986 Demolition of the Town Hall.

April 1986 LCS questionnaire on the future

Photo: Michael Evans



The Reader's House

use of the Town Hall space. A large majority were in favour of an open space.

January 1987 The Committee supported the proposal for a Sports Hall on the river bank at Lower Mill Street for Ludlow College.

October 1987 LCS represented on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

Opposed the proposed closure of Ludlow Hospital.

October 1988 LCS involved in finding a new home for the Adrian Jones horse from the old Town Hall. It eventually went to the Army Museum in Yorkshire.

Opposed a scheme for car parking in the inner bailey of the Castle.



Lower Broad Street in the 1950s



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April 1989 Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss the Sports Hall for Ludlow College. Approved by 30 votes to 22 with 5 abstentions.

August 1989 Supported residents in Raven Lane in their demand for Residents' Parking for the whole of the town centre.

February/March 1990 Sports Hall Public Inquiry - approved August 1990.

March 1991 Proposal by Ludlow School to sell playing fields to build a Sports Hall/Leisure Centre, a breach of the Local Plan.

September 1991 Committee opposed to the moving of the cattle market, and opposed in principle to a supermarket on the Corve Street site, but the membership was unwilling to fight the proposals.

August 1992 Concern at the pressure to develop town centre sites with high density housing.

September 1992 Public Inquiry into non-conforming industrial uses on land to rear of east side of Lower Broad Street.

November 1992 LCS interested in the future of Gallows Bank.

May/June 1994 Conservation Area increased by 60% to include Steventon and Lower Galdeford.



Photo: English Heritage NMR

St Thomas's Chapel, Dinham

June 1994 Public Inquiry on a proposal for a supermarket at Foldgate Lane. Refused, recognizing the potential damage to the town centre. A Local Planning Inquiry on Gallows Bank decided that it should be 'an eastern Whitcliffe for the town'.

March 1995 Proposal for a supermarket on the Lloyds site, off Corve Street.

April 1995 18 Castle Street in a dangerous condition.

July 1995 LCS position on the supermarket: best if it were an expansion of Somerfields; if it had to be on a lower site, better on the Lloyds site than on the Cattle Market site as it would be less aesthetically damaging to Corve Street.

December 1995 18 Castle Street demolished.

January 1996 Public Inquiry on Tesco's proposal for the Cattle Market site, later turned down by the Minister.

Plans for the new Library and Museum Resource building unveiled to a mostly enthusiastic reception, later revised.

June 1998 Guild 1998 achieved Millennium Green Status for the Dinham Swimming Pool site.

Proposal for LCS to sponsor a lecture on architecture at the Festival.

May 1999 New MacCormac design for Tesco greeted enthusiastically by the Committee - 'a striking and unique piece of architecture'.

May/June 2000 The Dinham swimming-pool site became a Millennium Green and Gallows Bank an Urban Green.

February 2001 Plans for 18 Castle Street unveiled - committee divided.

May 2001 An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society rejected the idea of a modern building for 18 Castle Street.

New, more acceptable plans appeared in November.

January 2002 LCS objected to plans for a lavatory block attached to the exterior of St Laurence's.



Photo: Ludlow Museum

18 Castle Street...



Photo: Ludlow Museum

...demolished in 1995



Photo: Michael Evans

...new development completed in 2003



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MEMORIES

April 2002 LCS provided new litter bins for the town centre.

Resisted the plans of Ludlow College for a car park on the river bank.

April 2003 LCS objected to a scheme to build houses next to the Reader's House, and to plans to demolish the Raven public house.

June/September 2003 LCS supported the campaign against the Eco Park.

September 2003 LCS objected to proposals for a retail park at Foldgate Lane.

November 2003 Plans for a glass block on the Palmers Hall site for Ludlow College regarded as too intrusive.

LCS gave financial and practical support to the proposed Town Design Statement.

Ludlow owes a great deal to those who have chaired the Civic Society over the past fifty years. It is a task which requires diplomacy, doggedness, the ability to write a good letter and much expenditure of time and effort. Few last as long in office now as Fred Reeves (1965-75) or Martin Speight (1975-85), but they all deserve our thanks:

1954 Mr J.D. Eastwood
1957 Mr Vashon Twiddy
1959 Councillor E. Sheldon
1960 Mr Vashon Twiddy
1964 Mr B.K. Watts
1965 Mr F.G. Reeves
1975 Dr Martin Speight
1985 Mrs Joan Nash
1990 Mr Stephen Dornan
1996 Mr David Lloyd MBE
1997 Mr Brian Attwood
1998 Mr Neil Aikens
2000 Mrs Megan Dawson
2001 Mr Patrick Beaument
2002 Dr James McFarlane CBE

Valerie Thomas

READERS' LETTERS

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.**

The Winter of 1947

Snow, snow and more snow. More snow than a child at primary school had ever seen before.

The problems this brought did not exist for me - just added delight - extra days off school when the heating system failed at the British School (Old Street).

- A new sledge (a proper one) bought for me from Rickards Ironmongers. So much fun with it, not only down Whitcliffe Double Dingle but down the bottom of Old Street (where I lived). Traffic, of course, in '47 was limited and the weather made it non-existent.

- A new pair of trousers made by my mother for extra warmth. Girls did not wear trousers in '47.

Then came the very quick thaw and we watched the river rise until it poured over the top of the wall at Temeside. Eventually Temeside became completely cut off except by boat.

I excitedly waited for the water to reach my house - sandbags stood at the ready.

It never happened. The water receded quickly to the relief of my parents, and my great disappointment.

A return to normality, and for the whole event to become a childhood memory.

Daphne Jones

Pig Monday

Leaving the Grammar School in the early 50s to begin work on the Ludlow Advertiser initiated me into 'open all hours' at the pubs for Pig Monday - market day when the farmers and agricultural workers converged on the cattle market (now Tesco's store).

The business of the day done, fortified by the odd drink taken at the (now closed) Nag's Head, Eagle and Child or Star and Garter - or all three, it was time to head into town to end the day.

The Exchange Vaults (now the Church Inn) was the drovers' meeting place for their pints of 'stunum' cider, while the Bull and the Feathers (all insides quite different from

today) was the domain of the farmers.

One farmer from Corvedale came to market regularly in his pony and trap which was left in the Feathers' yard while he ended his day inside catching up on the week's activities and his Monday ration of good ale.

A regular sight was the pony taking him home while he happily slept in the cart.

Stan Jones

Daphne Jones was born and educated in Ludlow, Stan Jones came to Ludlow at the age of three. They retired to the town in 1986.

A Farmer buys a Car

My father and I used to run the Ludlow Motor Company, one of the earliest garages in Ludlow at 139-141 Corve Street. I remember that in the early years after the War it was almost impossible to buy a new car - they were like gold-dust; there were waiting lists and anyone lucky enough to get one could easily sell it on at a premium to the list price.

The turn of one of our customers, a farmer from over Clee Hill way, eventually came up. He examined it thoughtfully, sucked his teeth and prodded its tyres with his stick as though it were cattle or sheep. Asked what he thought of it - it was a spanking new Austin A70 - he said it was nice, but he wasn't sure if he wanted it because 'it canna take six sheep in the back like the old one'.

Bill Watkins

Bill was born and brought up in Ludlow. His family has lived in the town for generations, and he and his father ran one of the earliest garages here, in Corve Street.

Photo: Ludlow Museum



Old Gate fee at the bottom of Old Street, now demolished

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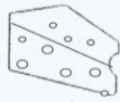
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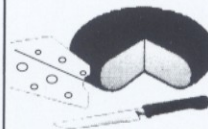
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Ludlow 2003
Photo: Rick Alexander

Poverty in Ludlow

It must have been in the mid-1950s. We were in Ross's in Church Street buying our groceries and noticed Manny Marsh, then in his sixties, coming out of the Rose and Crown next door. He was a keen cider drinker and must have drunk more than he should have that day as he was looking the worse for it. We helped him back home. He lived at 18 Castle Street - the house the District Council demolished in the 1990s - which was then a lodging-house, or, more accurately, a doss-house. We took him up to his room. He lived on the second floor in just one tiny room. It was all rather sad really, but that was how many people lived before and after the War. Incidentally, if you ever wondered why Castle Square was often so tidy in those days, it was because the likes of Manny would pick up fag-ends to get a free smoke.

Doris and Eddie Hotchkiss

Eddie Hotchkiss was born in Ludlow and has spent all his life in and around the town. He and Doris have lived at Hopton Gate for the past forty-three years.

The birth of Ludlow Festival

I was born, and spent my entire childhood at 6 King Street, a large 17th century house which backed on to St. Laurence Church Walk. (Sadly, the house has undergone many changes since.) The bells became part of our life, and we even liked the curfew at eight o'clock on a winter's night!

A little girl lived in the thatched cottage beyond the Reader's House, and we spent many happy hours playing on the church paths and grass.

Occasionally, Mr Stokes, who tended the boilers in the Church, would scythe the grass, and we took great delight in 'helping' him to tidy up. He was very patient.

In the 1950s disaster struck when extensive and costly damage by death watch beetle was discovered in the Church. Bishop Sara decided to help raise funds by presenting plays in the Church and the Castle. Professional actors

were engaged, with local 'extras'.

With several other people, I volunteered to help, and we machined yards of material for the banners for Marlowe's 'Edward II'. This was the only occasion when, if wet, the Town Hall was used instead of the Castle. (Not a success!)

One of my tasks was to carry Edward's 'severed head' on a long pole from the Castle to the Town Hall. This never failed to arouse amusement among the visitors to the Square.

When the fund was complete, it was decided to continue the plays by creating the Ludlow Festival Society, which I joined shortly after and still help today.

Barbara Jones

Barbara Jones has lived in Ludlow all her life.

A row over the Tolsey

In the mid-1950s Ludlow Borough Council was keen to demolish the Tolsey in the Bull Ring to ease traffic flow into the heart of the town. My father, Councillor Clifford Grimmett, was very keen for it to go, but I was determined it would stay.

One day, we were having a good old argument about it all. My mother was getting fed up and told us to get out of the house if we were going to carry on arguing - so we went into the garden to continue our battle. It was the dilemma of the Tolsey and the preservation of the cobbles in Broad Street that exercised the Civic Society so much in the very early days.

Norman Grimmett

Norman Grimmett was born in Knighton and has lived in Ludlow since 1937. In 1946 he was apprenticed to Rickards, the ironmongers.

The Great Ludlow Hailstorm of Saturday 26th June 1982

I was in the Charlton Arms and had heard a bit of thunder but thought nothing of it. The storm worsened, and I noticed water coming in by the front door and into the bar. In all, I reckon the rain lasted about three quarters of an hour. I was having a laugh with my



mates in the bar and remember my nephew saying, 'You won't be laughing when you get home.' When the storm had stopped I made my way home and couldn't believe what I saw from Ludford Bridge - the whole of Lower Broad Street had turned white. I had to get my neighbour, Michael Blakeway, to dig me a path through the hail to get to my front door. There was two feet of water throughout the house; luckily we don't have a cellar. It took four of us three hours to bale out.

There's a sewer from the Butter Cross to the river and the hail must have blocked it, so it all came down Broad Street and came to rest at the bottom with us. It didn't fully melt for a whole week.

Nobby Clarke

I was up at the Whitefriars bungalows off Sandpits Road. I noticed the sky was black and heard a bit of thunder, but there was only the lightest of showers. Then my nephew's boy came up with Billy Blakeway and said I'd better come home because the house was flooded. I didn't really believe them but I cycled back. I noticed nothing out of the ordinary until I reached the Wheatsheaf, then all I could see was a vast blanket of white. The rain had washed all the hail down to Lower Broad Street. I couldn't believe you could get such extremes of weather over such a small distance.

Mary Clarke

Nobby Clarke was born at 34 Lower Broad Street in 1926, and has lived there all his life. Nobby and Mary have been together for more than fifty years.

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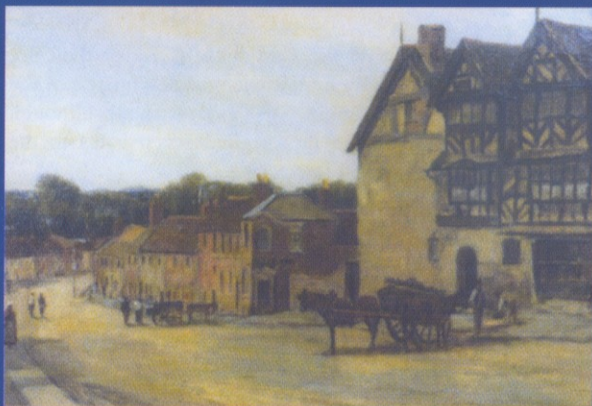
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Lane's Asylum, Old Street, from a painting by Henry Rollet



The old library in Old Street with its demolished window, later replaced

Photo: Ludlow Museum



Coat of Arms at Foxe's Almshouses



Coat of Arms at Hosyer's Almshouses

Photo: Michael Evans



The Raven, to be demolished



Chairman, James McFarlane, with one of the new litterbins

Photo: The Advertiser



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LUDLOW HISTORICAL RESEARCH GROUP

Jean Brown, Chairman

The beginnings of the Ludlow Historical Research Group rest very much within the story of the Ludlow Civic Society and we are pleased that the relationship between the two groups has remained a very positive one. The Civic Society Committee in the mid 1970s was concerned that properties in the central area of Ludlow should be recorded fully. So a group was started in 1976 which took on this task and became the LHRG. Out of their original research several definitive books emerged, including the studies of Broad Street, the Feathers, the Great House in Corve Street, and Bodenham's. These monographs remain essential resources for our knowledge of those buildings and areas of the town. From this beginning the LHRG began to interest its members in other areas of research, but the flow of publications in this format was not continued.

Over the years since the LHRG was formed there have been other publications in the name of the Group, and it is now our intention to ensure that all the research work done by members will be available for a wider audience in a suitable format. The first of these is the publication of 'Aspects of Victorian Ludlow', an anthology of topics relating to the town in the nineteenth century and available

from this October. The book has involved ten members of the Group and has proved an interesting, if challenging, exercise to the Editorial Sub-Committee. David Lloyd, our Research Adviser, is hoping that more modest publications will emerge from the work that has been done on such diverse subjects as post-Reformation clergy, clay pipes and names in Victorian Ludlow.

The LHRG continues to meet regularly on Thursday evenings and has just completed its first year in the Library and Museum Resource Centre where we hold our meetings and also provide a public advice service each Tuesday on local and family history. Thanks to our grant from the Local Heritage Initiative, we are able to contribute to the community in providing more research facilities in Ludlow. One element of that grant will be the new Information Boards in Castle Square. We also enjoy our contact with both residents and visitors in acting as Town guides during the summer months.

We were pleased to celebrate our twenty-fifth birthday and we convey our congratulations to the Civic Society on their anniversary.

LUDLOW TOWN WALLS

John Farley

The Ludlow Town Walls date from the thirteenth century and originally extended approximately 1450 metres, excluding the

section of the Castle itself. Today they are still visibly in existence for nearly 70% of the length, almost 1000 metres in all, although only one of the original seven gates to the town is still intact.

For each of the last few years, the Ludlow Town Walls have been cited on the annual English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk. It is estimated that it will cost circa £30,000 just to undertake a comprehensive survey of the sections of wall which still exist and to produce a feasibility report regarding repairs necessary just to stabilise the walls. Expert opinion is that a full, good-quality consolidation exercise would cost upwards of £2.5 million, and this recognises the very excellent work done by various owners of sections of the walls over recent years. It is becoming more and more difficult to get insurers to cover sections of the walls if properties change hands, and hence there are progressively more disputes arising regarding ownership. We do not know all the owners who are responsible for sections of the walls, but there could be up to 100 parties involved, including South Shropshire District Council.

The Ludlow Civic Society has been in discussion with numerous interested parties (including English Heritage, the various levels of local councils and several owners of prominent sections of the walls) over the past eighteen months and is now very hopeful that there is sufficient interest and momentum to try to establish a 'Town Walls Restoration Trust' within the foreseeable future. The Society will lend its full support to such an initiative and hopes that its members will endorse this major scheme to conserve one of the defining features of the town.

A MEDLEY OF WRITINGS ON LUDLOW SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

'Ludlow...is probably the loveliest town in England with its hill of Georgian houses ascending from the river Teme to the great

A view of the town walls from the panorama by Isaac Vogelsanck and Bernard Lens, 1722.



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tower of the cross-shaped church, rising behind a classic market building.'

John Betjeman, English Cities and Small Towns, 1943

'Children need to play as they need air, and Ludlow was the ideal town for an imaginative child....The streets, almost entirely free of cars, were open to us, as were the water meadows sloping to the Teme, the river and Whitcliffe above, the paths hewn into the rock which surrounds the castle and which, with an outcrop of rock and the occasional cave, provided the setting for imaginative play and the acting out of innumerable roles.'

P.D.James, Time to be in Earnest, 1999

'My ride bypassed the church of St Laurence, whose great tower dominates the landscape for miles around, and parts of whose grandeur date from the twelfth century; but it took me through the short High Street, which is in fact, and unusually, made up of four parallel lanes each with buildings on either side. I would ride past the old Town Hall that is no more, into Castle Square, with the elegant Georgian frontage of the High School on one side, the Castle Lodge and historic Mill Street down to the Grammar School on the other, and, ahead, the great Norman castle of Ludlow. It was, and of course remains, one-way streets, and pedestrianisation permitting, an extraordinary little journey through time, all in a few hundred yards. There is nowhere I have ever found, outside the Renaissance and ancient cities of Italy, to compare with it in concentrated living history...

'Like every prime heritage place there is doubtless a constant threat of predatory developers wishing to milk the honeypot. The Council planners and vigilant Conservation/Civic Society seem by and large to have done good work in preserving the history and loveliness of the place.'

Wynn Hugh-Jones, Diplomacy to Politics, 2002

'For sheer visual beauty, coloured by romantic history and substantiated in richness of architectural sequence, Ludlow stands high, perhaps first, among English towns. Others can surpass it on particular points, but few if any in this union of setting, quality and texture, each intrinsically first-rate. The whole place is a national monument, or rather ought to be.'

Christopher Hussey, Country Life, December 21st 1945

'Aesthetically speaking, it was a blessing that the old High Street was filled in by later medieval building. The town, as one wanders through it, has now a narrow and a spacious part, a part where the eye looks unimpeded along wide streets or from houses over extensive back gardens, or from the churchyard immediately into open countryside, and another part with lanes and arches and close backyards. Both are needed in a town, and may Ludlow never decide to pull down its tortuous centre to please the gentleman motorist or the charabanc tourist...

'All these streets abut on to Ludlow's bad luck, the market hall of 1887 by Harry A. Cheers of Twickenham. There is nothing that could be said in favour of its fiery brick or useless Elizabethan detail.'

Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Shropshire, 1958

'And so they came to Ludlow, which some say is the fairest country town in England. In the twelfth century its walls were pierced with seven gates of which only one now remains, but everything else about it today is overshadowed by its magnificent castle, a memorial to the days when its courtyards echoed to the ring of steel and armoured knights rode over the drawbridge to fight the marauding Welsh. Below the castle walls, at the foot of the cliffs, the lovely River Teme half circles the town before tumbling under two bridges on its way to add its clear waters to those of the muddy Severn.'

Malcolm Saville, The Secret of the Gorge, 1958



Broad Street in the 18th Century by Samuel Scott

'The only way to see a town properly is on foot. Ludlow is small enough to get to know intimately, just by walking about. There is a delightful mixture of building materials, all of local provenance. Stone from nearby quarries, and some of it from the very rock upon which the town stands; bricks baked from the local clays; oaks from the forests. No exposed concrete at all, because concrete, however useful structurally, belongs nowhere. Wherever these local materials are used, with a proper sense of scale, all is well...

[on 39 Broad Street] 'but whoever would have thought of having Venetian windows and nothing else? Eight of them. A prize example, to be sure, of over-egging the pudding.'

Alec Clifton-Taylor, Six English Towns, 1978

'As he drove over the bridge that spanned the Cleene, he seemed to have moved out of the twentieth century into an earlier age. The houses below the town gate were huddled together higgledy-piggledy and only their scrubbed doorsteps redeemed their squalid lack of uniformity. The gate, a great stuccoed tower with a dark narrow entrance, loomed up before him. He drove nervously through and emerged into a street lined with eighteenth century houses. Here he felt temporarily more at home, but his relief evaporated when he reached the town centre. Dark narrow alleyways, half-timbered medieval houses jutting over the pavement, cobbled streets and shopfronts which retained the format of an earlier age.'

Tom Sharpe, Blott on the Landscape, 1975



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Dinham Bridge and the Castle. By kind permission of Sir Keith Thomas

'Once 'the capital of Wales', Ludlow with its formidable ruined castle, its cathedral-like parish church and its planned streets, all encircled by the Rivers Corve and Teme, is a hill town every bit as attractive as any in Tuscany.'

Julian Critchley, Country Life, March 10th 1994

'During the past few years, Ludlow, in Shropshire, has burst into life. Georgian houses have been renovated, it has become the gastronomic capital of the countryside, and eminent people from all spheres of life are moving in. Off the beaten track, with the nearest motorway one hour away and no direct rail service to London, Ludlow is no longer a run-down rural backwater. Instead, it has become a paradigm for a modern kind of civilised living.'

Anthony Everitt, Country Life, April 29th 1999

'Thereafter he [hotelier, Osmond Edwards] lived in Ludlow, in what Pevsner called 'one of the most memorable streets in England', in a grand Georgian house, every room the size of a ballroom, and he restored and ran (Pevsner again) 'that prodigy of timber-framed houses', the Feathers Hotel, the finest building in the finest town in the finest swathe of England, the only place in England other than London where I ever want to live. [Ludlow and surroundings] doesn't have the regular provincial chip about not being London, but

then it's not provincial - it feels autonomous, devolved, independent. It's like a de facto state, it's an English Andorra. And Ludlow is its capital.'

Jonathan Meades, Incest and Morris Dancing, 2002

'Past Upper Galdeford, the Tudor houses are a migraineur's nightmare of black-and-white busyness; I pass queasily through smells of fishmonger and bakery. In the market place, above the entrance to Quality Square stands a venerable brick-built house we thought of as pregnant: its middle bulges out, braced by a corset of iron girders and two elliptical black bolts. The structure holds itself together by sucking in its breath at the windows, to restrain its sagging belly.'

Steve Davies, The Web of Belonging, 1997

'The town was thriving, and she smiled to see it. Like a lot of country towns dependent on agriculture and tourism, it had suffered badly a few years ago from the foot-and-mouth crisis, and a lot of businesses had gone under as a result. But Ludlow was now happily resplendent again...As well as the predictable antique shops, there were many unusual emporiums selling things that were hardly essential to life, but were totally irresistible nevertheless.'

Veronica Henry, Wild Oats, 2004

SOME CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF THE TOWN

'I relish the sense of layers that one gets in Ludlow. It has had four quite different incarnations: medieval magnates, grid plan and wool merchants; Council of the Marches, capital of Wales, Milton writing 'Comus', etc.; polite Georgian society, county families, a genteel place to retire to; country-town-local-centre-cum-tourist-attraction; and all the different layers are still there and of top quality, sometimes visible and sometimes concealed.

Complete timber-framed houses lurk behind elegant Georgian façades; and what more extraordinary transformation could there be than that experienced by the grim fortified medieval Broad Gate, crazily and delightfully colonized and domesticated by successive generations of owners?

Such a wealth of history and resulting beauty might have swamped the town, but it hasn't. I love the sense of local life, of all kinds of activities, of busy shoppers recovering in De Grey's Tea Rooms. It is a real town, not a tourist trap.'

Mark Girouard, architectural historian.

'The secret of Ludlow resides in the fact that, like York, it was once a seat of government in Tudor and Stuart England. A sense of its own identity and importance has never quite left it. That accounts for its strength of character and the lingering sense of authority. This is a town which, although the tide of history has receded from it, still manages to preside magisterially over the countryside one glimpses at the end of every street.'

Sir Roy Strong

AND A MESSAGE FROM SIR NEIL COSSONS TO LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY

Warm good wishes for your fiftieth anniversary!

Reconciling the needs of the present with the voices of the past is the challenge facing Ludlow. Ludlow's unique appeal, as an incomparable English country town, has its roots in that past. Here lies Ludlow's distinctiveness and attraction, but also its vulnerability. How can Ludlow protect what it cherishes and make sure that everyone can share in its future success?

At first sight it might appear that Ludlow's face is its fortune, but its special qualities are much more than skin deep. So the key to ensuring that Ludlow continues to benefit from its distinctiveness is an understanding, in depth, of its character. Characterisation studies, now used increasingly throughout the country, can provide a foundation of understanding upon which change can be managed intelligently. Change can be desirable, or monstrously destructive. But without doubt, it is inevitable.

Over the last half century, civic societies, not least Ludlow's, have achieved great success. But the law of diminishing returns is beginning to set in. We must move out from debates about individual buildings, important as these are, to

LUDLOW MUSIC SOCIETY

On Saturday, November 13th the talented young pianist, Alexis White will appear in the Young Artist's Concert, sponsored by the Countess of Munster's Trust. Her programme will include Schubert's Drei Klavierstücke, the Five Bagatelles by a contemporary Australian composer, Carl Vine, a selection of Debussy Preludes and a performance of Schumann's 'Kreisleriana'.

In 2005, Ludlow Music Society presents two very special concerts. The world-famous tenor, Ian Bostridge, appears on Saturday March 12th accompanied by the pianist, Julius Drake. He will be singing Schubert lieder in a concert not to be missed. It is anticipated that very few tickets will be available on the door for this concert, so a subscription or ticket bought in advance will be an advantage.

The same might be said of the last concert in the season. On Saturday April 2nd, we welcome the world-famous concert pianist, Freddy Kempf. He will be playing two piano sonatas by Beethoven and Chopin's brilliant Etudes Op.25. An early approach should be made to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Rosalind Caird, Ludlow Music Society, Glebe House, Caynham, Ludlow SY8 3BN. (01584 876141), E-mail: lms@caynham.globalnet.co.uk, for tickets and further information.

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engage with - and perhaps lead - the strategic thinking within which intelligent change can take place. That means understanding the social and economic fabric of places and communities, for it is from here that the forces of change emanate. Civic societies must reclaim their right to speak with authority; that means engaging a wider section of the community.

People shape places and places shape people. A civic society that reflects wider interests stands every chance of success in protecting what the community loves, and of ensuring that change can be managed fruitfully for everybody.

Sir Neil Cossons is Chairman of English Heritage and has lived in Shropshire for over thirty years.

LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY

2004-2005 Officers & Committee Members

President:	Sir Keith Thomas
Vice-Presidents:	Dr Martin Speight Dick Stephens Matthew Green MP
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Vice Chairman:	John Farley
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Hon. Secretary:	Valerie Thomas

Committee Members:

Prue Bellak, Andrew Byrne, Michael Coleman-Smith, Bill Eastwell, Mike Evans, Jim Gosling, Daniel McDowell, Maeva Murphy, Stanton Stephens.

LUDLOW CIVIC SOCIETY COMMITTEE NEWS

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES WINTER 2004-5

This special edition of 'Heritage News' has involved much effort from the editorial committee set up to produce it: Valerie Thomas, Andrew Byrne and Stanton Stephens, and from Michael Evans who took some of the photographs. Great help has also been given from many others, both members and non-members of the Society, who have come forward with photographs and reminiscences of Ludlow through the years. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank them all for the excellent and memorable outcome of their work.

In this issue we are celebrating the fifty years during which the Ludlow Civic Society has been active in this remarkable town. Privileged to be the Society's present Chairman, I give more than a passing thought to my fourteen predecessors - all of whom have done their very best for the Society and (even more important) for Ludlow. One of the constant themes of the Society has been to try and safeguard, together with others, the best of Ludlow's heritage.

As 'Heritage News' has noted through the years, there have been many changes - some for the better, a few for the worse. Ludlow has survived, though, as a town of great character and charm. Surely we want to keep it that way. So as well as being, with others, the guardian and would-be protector of Ludlow's past, the Society must have an eye for the future too.

Who owns the future of Ludlow? Who should

have the biggest say? Whose vision of the future should prevail?

Those who have lived here all their lives?

Those who moved here (incomers) because they liked and valued the town?

Would-be developers & builders with bags of money?

Local and national politicians with their ambitions and interests?

Professional planners with expertise but perhaps lacking local loyalty?

All these have some claim to be considered and consulted. We all have our little patch of Ludlow and are not too keen on having others dictate to us what to do with it and how. At the same time we have to recognise (and most of us do) that what we do has an effect on our neighbours and we therefore accept some restraint and limitations on our own freedoms to do as we like.

There are conflicting interests. The way they are now resolved is through the planning system. In principle, it is hard to think of a better solution than the framework that exists, but to make it work, fairly and without rancour, the power it places in the hands of Council Members and Council Officers (which is very considerable) must be tempered with wisdom, not exercised wilfully. They must be willing to hear and to weigh the arguments of non-statutory bodies, like our own Society.

In its turn, our Society must develop the broadest possible base amongst the population of Ludlow, so that it has a valid claim to be representative and not merely the mouthpiece for some narrow faction.

As a matter of fact, the Society's membership is already very much wider and more varied than is usually appreciated. But of course we can only claim to represent those who join us. So this is an invitation to those who may not now be members but who care about Ludlow, to develop that interest

- not only as an individual
- not only as an elector
- but also as a member of Ludlow Civic Society.

In many towns, civic societies have been formed at the last moment as an emergency measure to rectify some neglect or resist some damaging development. We are lucky, through the foresight of our founders, to have had fifty years' practice of encouraging the good and fighting the bad. But we don't win all the battles and we need your help.

Please give it.

James McFarlane

MEMBERSHIP

The extra supplies of the Summer edition of Heritage News made available this year have gone well at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) who are dispensing them at the rate of at least fifty per month. TIC say that many of the people who take them are either moving to the area or thinking of doing so. Again, almost all the seventeen new members since April 1st have used the application form at the bottom of the back page.

The separate yellow slip summarising the Society's public meetings has now been reprinted for 2004/5 and the TIC have offered on a trial basis to staple one inside every copy of Heritage News that they handle. This should prove an added attraction for prospective new members (or non-members) as the A5 information leaflets, inside which this slip has hitherto been put, do move very slowly. Free of charge, supplies of this edition continue to be maintained at the Library and at St Laurence's. When you have finished with your copy, please pass it on to anyone you think may be interested in joining the Society.

Michael Coleman-Smith

EVENTS

The Civic Society started its Autumn series of lectures with an exceedingly interesting talk by Ken Jones on '*Life and work in the Ironbridge Gorge*'. Indeed, our members were so enthusiastic that it is hoped to follow it up with a visit to Ironbridge in the Spring.

The Fred Reeves Memorial Lecture in October was given by Rod Robinson, who has been architect for St Laurence's Church. It was entitled '*Twenty Years of Conservation*' and was held in association with the Fabric Trust for St Laurence's. In November our lecture is '*Silk from the Ancient Kingdoms*', given by Diane and Jim Gaffney who have a shop in Bishop's Castle stuffed with fascinating oriental ware. They travel widely in the Far East, and they will bring a collection of textiles with them, both to look at and to buy.

In December, the Christmas Party and discussion forum will be held at the Old Schoolroom, Ludlow College, Mill Street, NOT the Harley Centre. The Mayor of Ludlow, Mr Graeme Kidd will be attending and is happy to answer questions.

We start the New Year with the intriguingly-entitled talk, '*Not "Just William"*', given by Barbara Holcombe who will tell us all about Richmal Crompton's other novels. In February, Howard Goslyn will talk about '*The Plant Hunters*', and in March, Michael Evans, local estate agent, will tell us about '*The Property Market in Ludlow 2005*', following on from David Lloyd's talk last year. Finally, in April we hope that Dame Margaret Anstee, former diplomat, will give us a lecture called '*Is the United Nations Relevant?*', an interesting idea. The Civic Society AGM is on Wednesday 13th April, and we hope that as many members as possible will attend.

This year - 2004/5 - is the fiftieth birthday of Ludlow Civic Society. Besides this commemorative issue of Heritage News, there will be an exhibition in the town, and a party for members in the Summer (details to follow).

Prue Bellak

We would like to congratulate **James Rogers** of Ludlow College who has been awarded the **Ludlow Civic Society prize for history.**

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