

Ludlow Heritage News

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FREE



**South Shropshire's
place in aviation
history** page 4



The Rickards Story

Rickards of Ludlow, Ironmongers for 140 years

Ironmongers since the 1790s

Jean Brown explains how Ludlow store Rickards attracted the attention of the Ludlow Historical Research group – which led to a new book.



Rickards remains a major presence in Ludlow's busy Bull Ring shopping area.

When the Ludlow Historical Research Group published its anthology on Victorian Ludlow in 2004, many members of the Group had become more interested in the life of the town in the nineteenth century. We had become aware of the rich resources that are available, and that it was our responsibility to ensure that these were researched and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

The continuing presence of Rickards as a functioning ironmongers attracted our attention, and this interest was reinforced by Norman Grimmett who had been apprenticed in the shop in 1945 and who spent much of his working life there.

The challenge presented by Rickards was the sheer size of the premises, the records still extant, and the need to record some of the merchandise stored in the shop.

Norman was a major influence in getting us permission from Michael Lloyd, the owner, to do the research.

Researching the archives

I spent many hours in Shropshire Archives exploring the history of Heber Rickards who founded the firm in 1864, while Norman and I worked on census records, trade directories, family history, and the ledgers that we found on the premises.

Tony Brown became the photographer for the project. His work in photographing the premises and contents proved a physical challenge, as he explored dusty back rooms with merchandise and implements that often went back fifty years or more.

All the time, we were conscious of the fact that we were there by helpful acceptance of the staff of Rickards, who are running a shop that is serving the customers of the twenty-first century.

The result of our study is a book that has tried to present various aspects of the premises and the business.

Photo: Ben Stone

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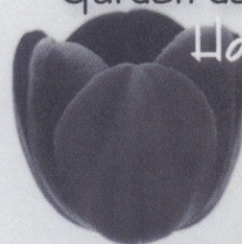
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The building, which comprises three main parts, is of architectural interest in itself. The very fine façade to Number 6 Bull Ring is difficult to see to its best advantage in the narrow confines of the Shambles.

The Egginton family preceded the Rickards, and they take its history as an ironmongers back to the 1790s. Their history is worthy of further research in itself.

Heber Rickards, entrepreneur

We discovered how Heber Rickards, the son of a Wistanstow farmer, completed his apprenticeship and gained early experience in the trade elsewhere, before returning to Ludlow and taking over the business with financial help from his father. He developed the company at a time when the economy of Ludlow as a market town was growing. Heber Rickards created a successful enterprise, carried on by his son Edward, that continues today when such specialist shops are disappearing all too rapidly.

The extant ledgers showed us the kind of stock that was bought and sold, taking us back to a world of great diversity in tools and appliances. The suppliers of these goods were largely from the West Midlands and London, but also represented the industrial areas of northern England.

The prevailing ethos of the First World War was repair rather than discard, and in this respect Rickards fulfilled the needs of its customers. Although our research did not extend beyond 1945, we were able to take advantage of Norman's working experience, and his memories showed how little had changed since before the Second World War when he began his apprenticeship in 1945.

As with many parts of our national economy the effect of war between 1939 and 1945 was to preserve the working practices of earlier generations.

We could not have completed the book without the help of many experts and advisers and these we acknowledge, but the



Photo: Graeme Kidd

No corner is too small for a stock display.



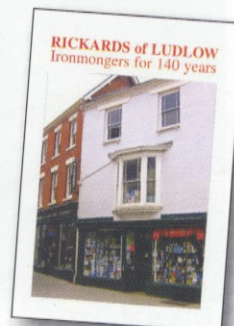
Photo: Mike Evans

A cornucopia of items greets shoppers when they enter the main store.

pleasure lay also in the finding of related facts and links that extended our understanding of the shop, its owners, and its relevance to the life of Ludlow. Only recently Norman met a man whose grandfather had been an apprentice at Rickards in the 1880s, so I am sure our research will continue.

We present the book not as a finished statement but as an attempt to create a preliminary record of the shop and to record the research resources available for future historians to use and develop.

"Rickards of Ludlow, Ironmongers for 140 years" by Jean Brown, Norman Grimmett and Tony Brown. Available for £5 from Ludlow bookshops.



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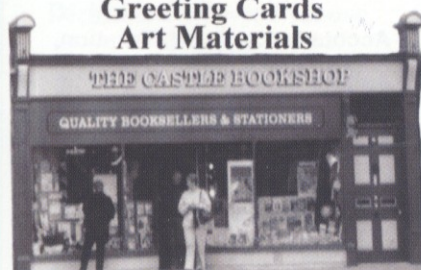
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Aviation pioneers

Bryan Heatley takes a look at the early years of aviation, as they were played out in the airfields and workshops of South Shropshire.

By the first decade of the twentieth century flying was becoming a regular event. However, the pioneering ascents had been made in hot air balloons. For example, the Montgolfier brothers had made a famous balloon ascent near Paris in 1783, and there was a well-documented flight from Chester two years later. From 1880 ascents were regular attractions at the annual Shrewsbury Flower Show, then called the Shrewsbury Floral and Musical Fête. Heavier-than-air flying machines had yet to make an impact.

There remains a strong feeling among the people of Craven Arms that a local resident, Ernest Maund, was the first Briton to make

a successful flight in a heavier-than-air machine. In the early years of the twentieth century he ran the Central Cycle and Motor Depot in Market Street, Craven Arms. He built a very early monoplane, but soon appears to have lost interest and went on to run successful businesses in Shifnal, Wem, Wolverhampton and finally in Rowley Street, Walsall, circa 1921-2. He earned a small place in industrial history by inventing the dipping headlamp for cars. For this he won the Hyde Park Award and a cheque for one hundred pounds.

Dating Ernest Maund's first flight

The date of Maund's 'flight' is somewhat obscure, but 1904 has been mentioned. It is said that the date 1907 appears on the reverse of a photograph of his machine. The first recorded flight of a powered machine in the UK was that of the American, Samuel F Cody, at Farnborough on 16th October, 1908. The Wright brothers' pioneering flight had taken place at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, five years earlier. It is generally acknowledged that Britain was behind both the USA and France in early aviation development. This was demonstrated in 1909 when Frenchman, Louis Bleriot, made the first cross-Channel flight.

The Craven Arms flight was from a field to the south of Stokesay Castle, now an English Heritage property, just outside the town and close to today's A49. A surviving photograph shows Maund at the controls of his aircraft. He is wearing the flat cap which characterised him. In front of the port wing



Ernest Maund at the controls of his aircraft, his cousin, and their wives.

Photo: Mrs V Wilding

stands his wife, well dressed and with a fine hat; forward of the other wing is the wife of Maund's cousin, similarly dressed. Another photograph shows a sign reading 'Come and see the flying machine, 3d for children, 6d for adults'.

Maund had married in 1897 or 1898. He had at least five children and was a lay preacher. He drove the night mail from Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton, making faster time than the coach as his vehicle was equipped with acetylene headlamps.

Notes of an interview with his son, Harry, give some pointers to events at Stokesay. He refers to the machine as 'one of his aircraft'. It was built to compete for a £1,000 prize offered by the Daily Mail to the first British pilot to fly for one mile. The engine was a 10 hp JAP. However, the winner of the Daily Mail prize, Colonel Moore-Brabazon used a larger engine.

A self-build project

Some of the component parts were from motor-cycles and cycles. Ernest Maund had been a blacksmith, so was able to construct the machine with little help. As a blacksmith he retailed petrol to the few cars that were about at the time. The aircraft took three months to build. It had a wingspan of about 26 feet. The propeller was made by a local carpenter. Assistance in construction was obtained from locals, particularly with the wing skinning. Before the flight the machine



Ernest Maund.

Photo: Mrs V Wilding



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seems to have been hidden under a canvas sheet until the viewing charges had been collected. A sign, "Briton No.1" was displayed. People came from Oswestry and Shrewsbury to witness the event.

The flight was, Harry claimed, for, perhaps, a distance of 1,000 or 2,000 yards, but his father could not reach a height to miss the trees, so he came down. Damage was sustained on landing, but the machine was rebuilt and Maund continued to charge for viewing. Mention is made by Harry of another aircraft being built in Manchester.

It seems that the monoplane had wings mounted at the top longerons, the fuselage was of welded steel construction and of triangular section as was common at the time. Twin skids were located forward of the undercarriage.

Perhaps, one day, definite proof of the date of Ernest Maund's exploit will come to light. However, two items mentioned by his son give clues to the date. First, he talks about the Daily Mail competition, and, secondly, about an aircraft being built at Manchester. It was on 17th June 1910 that the Daily Mail offered a prize of £1,000 to the first British pilot to fly a British-built machine over a circular distance of one mile.

Maund: the first to cover the circular mile?

One competitor was the Manchester man, A V Roe, who made his first short flight on 23rd July 1909. The newspaper's prize was eventually claimed by Colonel Moore-Brabazon who completed the circular mile at Shellbeach near Eastchurch on 30th October 1910 in a Short Brothers' machine. This was a licensed-built version of the American Wright Type A, powered by a Green 50-60 hp motor. Perhaps the "Briton No.1" sign was misinterpreted; it could have referred to the first to cover the circular mile and not the first to fly.

Maund may not have been aware that Mr Alfred Maxfield was constructing his third machine in his workshop at Aston, Birmingham. His first two had not flown, but the third made a hop on 27th September 1909 and some time later reached a height

of 50 feet powered by a 9 hp engine. This aircraft was later exhibited at Birmingham's Masonic Hall.

It seems possible that Ernest Maund's 'flight' may have taken place in 1910 between June when the prize was offered and October when it was won. However, nothing can diminish his achievement. He built and, it seems, flew an aeroplane, giving competition to those who were both wealthy and influential, and he went on to prove himself as a businessman, engineer and inventor. The people of Craven Arms are right to hold Ernest Maund in high regard.

The dangers of early aviation...

At least one other Craven Arms man made pre-Great-War aviation history. He was Edward Hotchkiss. In Stokesay Church the most easterly window in the south aisle commemorates his life. Below the window is a brass plate which reads as follows:

To the glory of God and to the memory of Lt. Edward Hotchkiss of the Army Flying Corps. The first Shropshire aviator who lost his life while flying at Wolvercote, Oxfordshire, 10th September 1912. Age 29. This window and brass were erected by his family and many friends.

Another plaque exists at the crash site. This also mentions his passenger, Lt C A Bettington, who also died. This memorial was paid for by the subscriptions of more than 2,000 local people. The Hotchkiss funeral was with full military honours, the coffin being brought to Craven Arms by rail and conveyed to Stokesay on a gun carriage.

The aircraft Hotchkiss was flying was a Bristol-Coanda monoplane which carried the number 263. Coanda was a Romanian designer employed by the British & Colonial Aeroplane Co. The Bristol had taken part in the Military Aeroplane Competition at Larkhill, near Salisbury, earlier in the same year, marked as "No14". At this time monoplanes made up only a small proportion of the UK's military air fleet.

Those in authority seem to have blamed the crash on the Bristol's being a monoplane, although later investigation revealed the cause to be the failure of a rigging component. The result was that the British military gave future preference to biplanes; thus the accident holds a major place in Britain's aviation history as it influenced the development of the industry for many years to come.

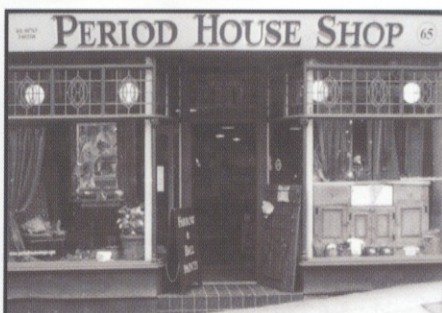
The first Briton to die while flying was the Hon Charles Rolls, founder of Rolls-Royce and native of Monmouth, killed at Bournemouth in 1910. He had made history by making the first flight across the Channel, returning without landing in France. His life is commemorated by a statue in Monmouth town centre depicting Rolls holding a model of his aircraft.

An earlier death resulting from a flying accident was reported in the Hereford Journal of 18th June 1910. It happened the previous Thursday at the Hereford and Worcester Agricultural Show when an aeroplane being demonstrated by a Mr Beresford flew into the crowd, killing Mrs Ellen Pitt.

Bentfield Hucks: taking to the air in Ludlow

Meanwhile, some aviation developments were taking place in Ludlow. A photograph taken in the summer of 1913 depicts Bentfield Hucks with what is thought to be a Blackburn Mercury monoplane (although it may have been a Bleriot variant) within a canvas hangar at Ludford Park.

Hucks was a well known figure in aviation at the time and made demonstration flights in many parts of the country. He was the first Englishman to loop, and was the inventor of a mechanical starter for swinging the props of the early machines. At the outbreak of war both he and his aircraft joined the military. Sadly, this gallant air ace was to die in the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918 and lies in a War Grave Commission plot in Highgate Cemetery. An ancient building in Ludford Park is known as Hucks Barn, but there can be no connection with the aviator because



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BG Hucks at Ludford Park, Ludlow, with his aircraft, thought to be either a Blackburn Mercury or a Bleriot, standing in a temporary canvas hangar.

Photo: Ludlow Museum via M Speight

the barn is mentioned by name in *A Description of the town of Ludlow*, which was published in 1812.

It is not clear if the field from which Hucks flew at Ludford was maintained as an airstrip, but another photograph dated 1918 shows a De Havilland DH4 bi-plane from RAF Shawbury tipped on its nose having suffered an accident at Ludford Park during a flight in support of a local War Bonds promotion drive.

In the late 1930s a landing strip was established in the Ludford area by Matty Wilmot of Steventon, Ludlow, a water supply engineer. He flew a 1935 Miles M2 Hawk G-ACYA which he purchased from Barton, Manchester, in 1938. The strip was just across the river Teme from his home. The small metal hangar remains.

Mr Wilmot was not given much time to enjoy the sporty two cockpit aircraft as private flying was suspended on the outbreak of war the following year. The Hawk was taken to Hooton Park, Wirral, for assessment re-acquisition by the RAF. It was destroyed in a hangar fire there during the early days of World War II.

Records exist of flying from a field to the north of Craven Arms in 1929 when Sir Alan Cobham's newly built De Havilland DH61 Giant Moth, named "Youth of Britain" gave air experience flights to young people. This single-engined 'airliner' carried passengers within the fuselage while the pilot sat in an open cockpit behind the wings. "Youth of Britain" had a short life,

being destroyed in an accident in Rhodesia the following year.

No records appear to exist of efforts made in the 1930s to influence local authorities to build an airfield in the Ludlow area or of the home-building Pou du Ciel craze which gripped the young men of the time.

The Pou, or Flying Flea, was a tiny home-build aircraft which relied on a wing-warping control system. Sets of construction plans were sold in large numbers in the 1930s, but the design proved to have faults; the certificates of airworthiness of the comparatively few machines completed were cancelled, and the craze quickly died. Long after the end of the last war partly constructed Flea airframes were being discovered all over Britain.

The country's highest landing ground?

The only airfield of any size within the South Shropshire District is the Midland Gliding Club's hill site on the Long Mynd. At 1,400 feet above sea level it is said to be the country's highest landing ground and has been in use since 1934. Before World War II the club counted air ace Amy Johnson among its members.

Today, South Shropshire has little place in aviation, but it is good to see aeroplane preservation active in the County, notably at the Royal Air Force Museum at Cosford, and the very small private museum at the Shropshire Aero Club's field at Sleaf near Wem. An important historic machine now being restored in the well-equipped workshop at Cosford is the Miles Mohawk rescued from a scrap dealer in Spain, but originally built at Reading for Charles Lindbergh who made the first solo crossing of the Atlantic.

Aviation history was made once more in South Shropshire on 1st February 2008 when many Ludlow residents proudly watched a fly-past by 4 RAF Tornados paying their tribute over the funeral cortege of "great escaper" Squadron Leader Jimmy James MC.

The author will be pleased to receive any memories or comments from readers.

Arnold Mason RA

Kathy Compagno reveals the Ludlow connections of a member of her family, the portrait painter Arnold Mason whose father was a local Methodist minister.

In the Winter 2000 edition of *Heritage News* Megan Dawson wrote of a summer idyll spent by the young painter Winifred Knights at Hockey Mill at the bottom of Old Street in Ludlow.

The mill was being rented as a studio by her fellow student at the Slade, Arnold Mason, and, with other friends, Winifred joined him in the summer of 1920.

They became engaged, but when Winifred won the Prix de Rome and met Tom Monnington, another painter, in Rome, the engagement was broken off.

Winifred married Monnington, but remained friends with Mason for the rest of her life. We have recently heard from Kathy Compagno whose grandmother was a cousin of Arnold Mason's and who has been researching his family and his connections with Ludlow...

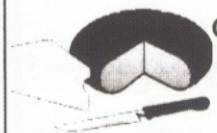
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My grandmother was Arnold Mason's cousin and their shared grandparents were Edmund Mason and Sarah Ann, née Plant, who came from the Black Country. Edmund was born in Rowley Regis, Sarah Ann in the Hill Top area of West Bromwich. The family had no Shropshire connection (Edmund and Sarah's children were born in Dudley, Rowley Regis and Tipton), and by 1901 the family had mostly settled in Walsall, Staffordshire, so I had often wondered about Arnold's connection with Ludlow.

At first, I had presumed he was attracted by the well-known peacefully rural Salopian scenery for his painting, but I have now learned that the answer lies with his father's occupation.

Arnold's father, William Henry Mason, was a Primitive Methodist Minister and was posted to various stations for his ministry, staying less than five years in most places. Thus, his children were born in many different places. Arnold's birthplace was Birkenhead, and all were in northern England, with Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire all represented.

The 1901 Census found Arnold living at home with his parents at Bollington near Knutsford, Cheshire. He was an art student aged sixteen at the time, and was soon to leave for London to continue his studies at the Slade. Arnold's first painting, *Reverie*, was hung at the Royal Academy Show, and a portrait of his Gerrard grandmother was hung soon after, in 1908. When he finished

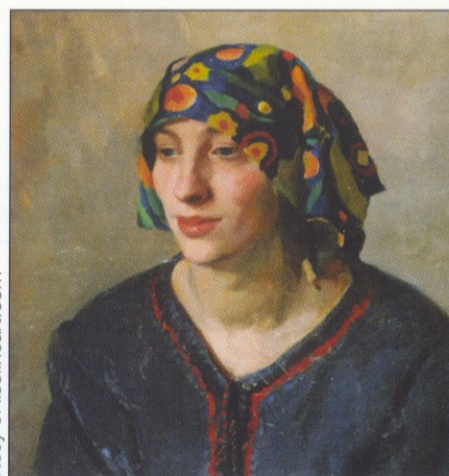
his studies, Arnold worked for two years with Sir William Richmond RA as an assistant. At this time Richmond was working on renovations at the Old Bailey, including the famous murals.

A British Institution Scholarship circa 1910 enabled Arnold to travel to Italy for two years to learn from the works of the Old Masters, and he then appears to have settled in London as a portrait and landscape painter, with a brief hiatus serving with the Artist's Rifles during the Great War.

The connection to Shropshire is found with a listing of Reverend William Henry Mason's postings after 1901. In 1903 Reverend Mason was stationed at Oswestry, then Whitchurch in 1906, and then Ludlow in 1909 for two years. After postings to Wales and Derbyshire, he returned to Shropshire in 1918 for four years at Market Drayton. These are the years when Arnold was working and studying in London, and he would have enjoyed the challenge of painting scenic Shropshire when visiting his parents. The Masons were a close knit family, as evidenced by continuing large family reunions and gatherings – most recently to celebrate the 100th birthday of Arnold's cousin, Phyllis. Arnold delighted in painting family portraits as gifts for his relatives, which have become family heirlooms. After the engagement with Winifred Knights ended, Arnold returned to work in London, with extended holidays in the South of France with its marvellous "light" for his landscape studies.

Although he and Winifred remained close friends, Arnold had a lifelong partner named Barbara Cowles. Her father was Frederick Cowles, a Methodist minister; this was perhaps one of the bonds she shared with Arnold.

Although most of Reverend Mason's Ludlow congregation have probably passed away by now, it is likely that his ministry was fondly remembered for many years. An obituary of him published in a book of Methodist minister biographies states: "He loved to preach and was ever willing to help, but his great strength and fruitfulness was in



Winifred Knight by Arnold Mason.

Courtesy of lissfineart.com

his pastoral work. He was a constant and systematic visitor, and in time of sorrow and bereavement his ministry was effective and precious. His nature was sympathetic and genial, and many turned to him in the hour of their need."

Arnold became a very successful painter. He had many well-known portrait commissions through the years, most notably that of Mrs Wallis Simpson, whose sittings sketches were dated 1935, Freddie Grisewood (a broadcaster with the BBC), Elinor Glyn (novelist, screen-writer and director), and Group Captain Peter Townsend (Princess Margaret's first love).

In 1940, Arnold was named an Associate of the Royal Academy, and was then elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy in 1951, which allowed him to add the prestigious initials RA after his name. The Illustrated London News of 31st March 1951 described Arnold as: "a well-known portrait and landscape painter whose work is shown in all the principal London Exhibitions. He is represented by paintings in the Tate, Manchester and Hanley Art Galleries, and in private collections".

Arnold's home and studio were located in Cheyne Walk in Chelsea for many years, but in 1962 he moved to his final residence at 151A Gloucester Road. Arnold Mason RA died in hospital on 17th November 1963 at the age of 78 after suffering a severe stroke.



The Zion Methodist Chapel, New Road, Ludlow. In 2004 it joined the Methodist church meeting in Broad Street.

Photo: Janice Cox

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NOTES

from the chairman

First, I would like to express the Society's thanks to my predecessor, Nick Holcombe, who, until July of this year, had served the Society for five years as Treasurer and two as Chairman.

In both capacities, Nick had encouraged the use of the Society's funds to give regular support to local organisations. The Society's accounts for 2007/8 show substantial grants to Slow Food UK, Friends of Whitcliffe, the Conservation Trust for St Laurence's, Gallows Bank and Dinham Millennium Greens, the Friends of St Leonard's Churchyard, and Ludlow Christmas Lights. The 2008 AGM approved these grants, most of which will run for a further two years.

Planning developments

In our last edition, we were able to commend the South Shropshire District Council's

decision to approve a new 'Victorian' Conservation Area for the Gravel Hill/ St Julian's Avenue area. The Society is less enthusiastic about the design of the new Aldi supermarket in Station Drive. Although the developers attended an open meeting organised by the Society, they did not take on board our objection to the height and appearance of the east elevation which was subsequently approved by the Council's Planning Committee.

Apart from the Aldi development, there have been no major development proposals for some while, unsurprisingly, in the light of the economic woes besetting the country.

Reader's House rescued

We are pleased to note that the Reader's House has been purchased by sympathetic owners and, following a number of successful 'open days' we are co-sponsors with Birmingham University and Ludlow Historical Research Group to enable a comprehensive architectural survey to be carried out using the latest laser technology. This will 'capture' the house as it is before any renovations and changes are carried out.

In August, as part of the Green Festival, the Society sponsored a visit and presentation by Michael Loveday, chairman of 'living streets'. He provided a stimulating view of ways of improving the centre of towns similar to Ludlow, and of how the balance between people and cars might be improved. We intend to keep these ideas under review.

Future developments in the town are likely to centre on proposals for a new Hospital and we hope to take part in the consultations, particularly on whether it will be built within the town or across the bypass.

Christmas Forum

The annual Christmas discussion forum takes place on 10th December and we hope to welcome as many members as possible to share a glass of wine and to hear their views on matters of concern to the Society.

As someone new to the Committee, I would like to express my thanks to my fellow committee members for their support, and I look forward to greeting members of the Society at future meetings.

John Nash

Ludlow Civic Society

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

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Please treat all my subscriptions and/or donations to the Ludlow Civic Society until further notice as GIFT AID. I am currently a UK taxpayer.

Date:.....Signed:.....

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/other):.....

Address:.....

.....PostCode.....

EVENTS

The Civic Society Lecture season started with a talk by Tim Ratcliffe, a local architect, on Conservation. This was well attended and well received.

In October, there was an excellent talk on Chippendale Furniture by James Lomax, Curator of Collections at Temple Newsam in Yorkshire, which houses one of the finest collections of Chippendale furniture in the country. This will be followed in November by a talk on Captain Scott's expedition to the Antarctic in 1901-1904, by Judy Skelton whose grandfather was the Chief Engineer on this expedition. In December, there will be the usual Christmas Party and Discussion Forum, with wine and mince pies. All the lectures are at Oscars, but the party will be held at the Harley Centre.

The New Year starts with a talk by Anthony Peers, an architectural historian, on the history and recent renovation of Birmingham Town Hall. This will be followed in February by a talk by Brian Viner, local journalist and author. In March, Dr Lawrence Goldman, of St Peter's College, Oxford, will talk about the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, and in April Dr Rose Kerr, Asian Art expert, will give a talk on Chinese ceramics. The AGM will be held on May 13th. Prue Bellak

MEMBERSHIP

Just under 200 Annual members have now renewed, leaving about 50 who have not. Would anyone intending to renew (or join) please send in their forms and cheques as soon as possible – £12 per person per year.

The response to our targeted mailshot in April was very poor and will probably not be repeated next April.

If you are already a member, please keep an eye out for anyone moving into your area who might like to become a member. There is an application form immediately to the left of this column.

Michael Coleman-Smith