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FREE

COACHING DAYS OF ENGLAND

David Burnett presents an extract from some long-unseen prose by Anthony Burgess



In October 1965 the publisher Paul Elek (my employer) returned from a visit to Rome where he had discovered a street trader selling large reproduction 19th Century English coaching prints. Mr Elek bought some of these with the idea of making a picture book for the international market. He instructed me, after a very sketchy briefing, to put the book together. With the confidence of ignorant youth, I pressed ahead and, with a colleague, gathered large numbers of fine prints from Bond Street galleries. We devised an absurd colossal page dimension which seemed appropriate to display the pictures. An Italian printer was chosen. We compiled an anthology of texts from novels and journals of the period. We scoured picture agencies and museums and libraries for supporting images. When he saw the book taking shape, Mr Elek was delighted, but he said we must have a famous author associated with it. I knew Anthony Burgess, author of *A Clockwork Orange*, and also knew that he was permanently hard up (this was before Stanley Kubrick's film made his name). I therefore asked

Anthony if he would accept a commission to write a longish introduction to our book for the modest fee of £100. The author accepted and turned out a superb piece, fashioned in two narratives: the main text was straight history, and interwoven with it was an imaginary coach journey, an entertaining fictional evocation of what it was like to travel in a coach 200 years ago. I am sure that when the book was published in its gigantic format, nobody will have read Anthony Burgess's piece. And so, for the enjoyment of Civic Society members, here is part of it, in a more reader-friendly form. It is too good, I think, to remain unseen.

David Burnett

Surrounded by panels of old oak, under a smoky ceiling, you have eaten your early breakfast. It was served by a sniffing waiter smelling strongly of brandy (either a cold-cure or a dawn-livener) and it consisted of three fried eggs, nearly a pound of local-cured ham, very hot toast soaked in butter, and almost a quart of coffee, well-laced with rum. It is a cold but bright morning,

and you stroll out into the inn-yard to taste the air. Ostlers and stable-boys, whistling away, are polishing the spokes and rims of the four wheels of the Telegraph and giving a last rub to the harness. The coachman has inspected the horses and is now downing a viaticum of London gin and hot water. The guard is stowing the baggage and the parcels for delivery along the route. Passengers, aware that in less than ten minutes the coach will be off and that those who are not ready will be left behind, are already assembling. There is the inevitable fussy woman, with a small boy who, you know, will be sick on the way. There are a couple of thin men who look like undertakers or shifty solicitors. There is a very fat man with snuff-stains on his upper lip. He nods good-morning to you, coming up. These, and you, are to share the inside of the coach: you can all afford fivepence a mile. Those who can afford only threepence a mile and hence must travel on top, are ready too, a plebeian collection as well-wrapped in topcoats, cloaks and blankets as they can manage. They

have in their eyes the mixture of apprehension and resignation that is proper to outsiders. They look with a kind of shrinking deference on the coachman, a bulky autocrat who, through broken teeth, has spit lavishly on the cobbles and spread the gob with his boot.

'It's the matching of the team, sir,' says the fat man. 'Strong wheelers. No three blind ones and a bolter here, as you can see. And a good whip, this man. Know him? I know him. Flaming Jack Jarvis, a devil, one of Billy Chaplin's best. Won't have chain or skidpad on the hindwheel taking a hill. Risks it. But only overturned twice.'

A fop of a man, slim as a blade, has come out of the bar, laughing, with a new reeking glass for Flaming Jack Jarvis. Jarvis takes it, touching his hat. Gold chinks in the fop's hand. Jarvis takes that too, touching his hat again, this time with his gin-glass.

'Well,' says the fat man. 'He's going up on the box. Sir Somebody. Seen him about, one place and another, with his father's money to burn. Mad on taking the ribbons. Flaming Jack will let him.' The guard looks at his big timepiece, nods to the coachman. Jarvis shouts his all-aboard. The guard has his set of folding steps ready, also horse-blankets and straw for the outside passengers. The crisp air is flawed with smoky breath. Up, sir, madam. Small gifts of silver coin, though from one oldish man, ragged genteel, only a penny. Thank ye, sir, madam. You inside passengers prepare to mount, the gentlemen half-bowing to the lady and her brat to enter first. The guard says, 'You, sir, being as how you're the thinnest one, if you'll pardon the liberty...' And you, being the thinnest, are packed in the middle of the rear-facing seat. The fat man sits next to you, by the window, the lady on your other side, also by the window. The lean solicitors or undertakers are opposite, measuring you for a coffin or a tort. The boy is everywhere, very excited. Soon, you do not doubt, he will be sick. The seat is devilish hard; your naked bones feel it. Your spine, having no prospect of firm rest, aches in prospect. The inside of the coach is very dark and your sense of claustrophobia mounts, exacerbated by the noise of the scuffling of feet on the roof, like large scampering rats in the thatch.

You can set your watch by the guard's cry without: 'All ready, outside and in!' You hear the driver crying to the inn-yard staff: 'Let them go,

then!' The sound of their clumsy boots on the cobbles, moving away from their horse-holding. That new sudden noise is the guard leaping up. And now the hoof-clatter and the rolling of wheels. The horn rends the clear morning, one round long-held note and a cluster of upper partials. Already the boxed-in smells begin to oppress - old bread, present peppermint (the boy is sucking away), mustiness, ghosts of ancient vomit, rank straw, dusty cushions.

'There they are out there,' says the fat man, who has a good view. He has raised his voice over the noise. 'Down by the Crown and the Star and Garter. Night express from Manchester, the one from Carlisle just behind it. Filthy bodywork, the nags all foam. And butterflies.' Butterflies? You remember: the short-distance coaches. You yourself peer out, leaning over. There must be at least a dozen out there, mail and stage, the odd post-chaise, even a private carriage or so. The stabling those inns must have. England has become all horses, like that land in Gulliver's Travels. Clatter and snort and whinny. And the whips, an endless crackle as of fireworks. And the horns, like Judgement Day.

'Short stage, sir,' says the fat man, 'this first. Not an inn, neither. Run by Sir Jasper Fotherwell, stabling for the fun of it. An old gentleman, one of the originals of our time. Good trotting ground, this.' It is, too; a good smooth stretch. You are well out of the town now, on the start of the open road. You have many hours ahead of you. Can you sleep? It seems unlikely. That breakfast is already churning up inside of you. A little brandy? You take out your flask. 'Cold morning, sir,' says the fat man, eyeing it. You offer the flask. The fat man takes a fair swig. The others refuse, except the boy, who says he will try a drop. His mother slaps him. Bare trees outside in the sun, a fierce frosty sky, cattle chewing roundly beyond hedgerows. Soon you hear music from above: it is the guard, trying out his key-bugle. It is too early in the day for his lip to be ready, but he gives you a verse of 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill'.

The brassy music and the brandy warm you. You can bear any number of miles. 'And,' the fat man is saying to the two lean ones opposite, 'it's good to get aboard in the light. You can see who's travelling with you. There was that clerical gentleman from Manchester, you'll remember, who boarded in the dark and made one-sided conversation all night with what he

took to be a big man in a fur coat. Turned out to be a performing bear.' The two men nod and say nothing. The boy laughs shrilly, showing a mouth full of half-chewed peppermint drops. He will certainly be sick, sooner or later.....

'.....And sweetly pretty it was,' says the woman. They were all talking now, though none so much as the fat man. 'I was living then at Windsor, you see. His lordship drove himself, and sometimes I saw the two with the foreign names. Princes they were ...' She means Lord Chesterfield; she means Prince Bathyni and Count D'Orsay. 'And then on the doors, all in lovely white, this lovely dancer. Taggy something. Thought the world of her, did his lordship.'

'Taglioni,' you say. You have said something at last. And in a good Italian accent.

'No, no,' the woman says. 'There was a letter G in it somewhere. And her ladyship with her own hands made a lovely bit of embroidery for the driver - a silk scarf he had, done in royal blue, and the name of this dancer - Taggy something - all in lovely crimson.'

The fat man snorts. This is turning the craft of the coach into mere woman's fripperies. Still, Lord Chesterfield - To one of the lean men opposite he says, 'I have heard of Defiance, but have never travelled in her. My business doesn't take me to Scotland.'

'Barclay,' says the lean man not addressed. 'Barclay the great walker. The Celebrated Pedestrian, he has been called.' His accent is refined Edinburgh. 'Why, man, he walked 110 miles in under twenty hours - for a wager, you know. And in three days he covered 200, and danced all night at a ball in between. And, again for a wager, and they say the Prince Regent himself laid a bet, he did 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours and won 1,000 guineas. Aye.' Impressed, the fat man offers him snuff; the lean one declines. 'And then, and he was already more than fifty, mind, he started the Defiance. His walking days were by no means over, but he loved to take the ribbons. Still does, they say. They say he drove the London mail to Aberdeen single-handed, three days and three nights on the box.'

'But the Defiance...'

'Started in Reform year - '32. Fifteen hours from the Star in Prince's Street to the Royal in Union Street.'

'Union Street?' this is you.

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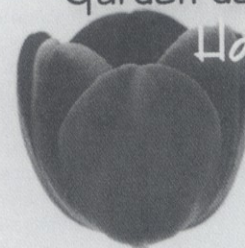
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'Aberdeen,' says the other, scorning your ignorance. And the other: 'Two coachmen, two, and a guard. In crimson and grey.'

'Pretty,' says the woman.

'Soon they had three, all called Defiance. Sprung and padded and candles for reading, and the coachwork in primrose colour and the wheels in scarlet. And silver buttons on the livery. And a safety rail on top, and twelve carried on the top. There has never been anything like Defiance, nor ever will. Why, the very coachmen have to be handsome men. Mr Barclay turned down one very good whip because his hat had too much curl in the brim. Aye.' The guard starts another verse of 'Sweet Lass'. 'Why,' says the lean man, 'they chose the guard of the first Defiance for his skill on the bugle. A true musician.'

'And,' adds his companion, 'they once set the church clock – I forget where now – by Defiance. The clock was four minutes fast, or slow – I forget which. But Defiance never was, nor never is.'

'A good name,' says the fat man, 'Defiance. I like a name to mean something. Like the New Reform from Newcastle in '32. Not like this Mazeppa they had. What in the world would a Mazeppa be when it's at home, I ask you?'

'Lord Byron wrote a poem of that name,' you venture. 'It appeared in '19. and that was the year the Mazeppa took the road.' The coach takes that in silence.

'Turnpike soon,' says the fat man at length, looking at his watch. 'Kate's Cabin or White Water or one of those. An easy life for them there, little house and all. Just taking the toll-money. And sometimes having to be knocked up out of bed to open up.'

'The Mail!' shouts the boy, his head out of the window. You can hear it coming up behind. The woman pulls her son towards her, so that all can see as well as hear. There it is, black and maroon, with the royal arms. No racing here. The Telegraph, your coach, gives way, a matter of precedence. And straight through the turnpike without paying. The Mail rattles ahead, horn blaring. Soon your guard joins in the blare. He has as much right as the mail-guard to warn the toll-keeper.

'My father minds the day,' says one of the lean men, 'when the mail came up from Edinburgh to London with but one letter. But one letter. Aye. And none to go back.'

The passengers have now grown names;

you have progressed so far – three stages in all. The fat man is Mr Bellaby; the two lean men are not brothers, but partners – though in what you do not know – and their names are Messrs Jeffers and Kirk. The lady is Mrs Tate, a widow, as she informs you, and her son is Henry, after his father. Your name is what it is. Mrs Tate is talking of the dangers of travel. She says:

'It is terrible, and none will do ought to stop it. Three killed last year, and two this year and the year not yet over. Death on the roads. Grown men chasing each other like boys. They were right to clap those two in irons and give them hard labour for a year. Nay, they should have deported them to the colonies.'

'You mean the Chester stage that chased the Holyhead mail?' says Mr Bellaby, comfortably. 'And a passenger killed at St Albans. Well, it is a chance we all take. But too often there is too much screaming at a fancied hurt, like a dog howling at a pain in his little toe. Have you not heard of what happened at Hockliffe? It was in the papers. The Greyhound from Shrewsbury with the blind horse, a wheeler, but it was not his fault. It was the other wheeler kicked over the trace and threw all over. Now a man comes crying that everyone is killed, and there was indeed this terrible heap of limbs. At night it was, and it looked ghastly in the lamps. But it turned out nobody was much hurt, and all were on their way, by a different coach, next morning. And you know what was the really terrible thing that happened that night?' You shake your heads. 'There was a woman brought to bed of a boy,' says Mr Bellaby. 'Before her time, as it happened. And she christened the boy after the unfortunate coach. There is a young man in Hockliffe called Greyhound.'

You digest that quietly. But young Henry obviously thinks it would be no bad thing to be called Greyhound. Greyhound Tate, a good name for a whip.

'And,' says Mr Jeffers, 'there was that business in '23 – the Robert Burns racing the North Briton on the Preston road. Racing for the bridge, and the Briton turned over on the parapet. A passenger's leg was ripped, yes, ripped – from knee to ankle. You may well look pale, ma'am. And, do you not know, the driver to this day pays a man in the village five shillings a year, one shining crown, to paint the parapet white.'

'It was always said,' says Mr Bellaby, 'that

you should take neither the Birmingham Tallyho nor the Derby mail when they were on the one journey. Douglas was captain of one and Baring of the other, and they waged their private war with no thought of passenger safety. There was the time they crossed, and Douglas smashed into the rear of Baring with much bruising for all. And it was Baring who, if he reached the inn a second or two first, would have a plate and spoon waiting for him and stand in the yard when Douglas arrived, pretending he had just finished a big dinner.'

'Great men in their way,' says Mr Kirk.

'Monsters,' says Mrs Tate. You hear the guard's horn, warning the next stage. Soon you come to the Blue Boar, but there is no alighting, except for guard and whip. Fifty seconds is enough for each to down a waiting glass, hot but not too hot. The change is waiting. Four horses are led off to the stables, all of a sweat; the four new ones are fitted in, neat as machinery. Aye, boy. Right, boy. Guard and driver remount. The horn, the easing of the reins. Off again.

'Your northern roads,' says Mr Bellaby, 'leave much to be desired, if what I hear is true. I mean floods and the washing away of bridges.'

'We have had nothing like what happened with the Milford Haven mail,' says Mr Jeffers. 'Nobody's fault, true. But the river rose in a few minutes, over the bridge it was, and drowned all four horses. And then this lad swam to bring boats as the coach-top went under. All were saved, mail and all. But four horses gone.'

'Poor beasts,' says Mrs Tate.

'They were but horses,' says Mr Jeffers. 'Talking of floods, I had a friend who saw the Sterling-Perth mail go under that time. He saw one horse that broke loose and pawed at the bridge-arch till he was carried off by the waters.'

'The mail was lost,' says Mr Bellaby.

'The mail was not lost, sir,' says Mr Jeffers. 'A lad swam for the bags and brought most back.'

'But the poor horses.'

'There are always more horses to be got, ma'am. There are plenty of horses.'

The outsiders are feeling the cold, feet stamping on the roof. Will any, at journey's end, be carried into the inn like boards, stiff as boards? Mr Bellaby is saying: 'I will say this of the mail-guards, that they are decent sober men and, though they sit upon guns, are rarely hot-headed enough to want to use them.'

'There was,' says Mr Kirk, 'the case of the

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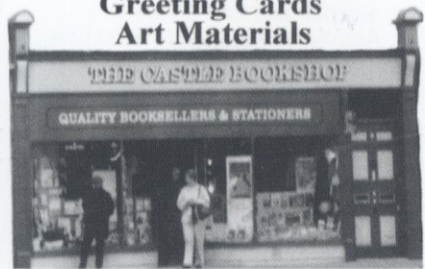


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press-gang that stopped the Liverpool mail, saying there was a man had deserted aboard, and then the guard gave it them with his pistols.'

'It was,' you say gently, 'the Preston mail, though indeed it was outside Liverpool. And the guard merely threatened, no more. But the point was that there was trouble between the Postmaster-General and the first Lord, and the sailors were court-martialled.'

'Well, that was right,' says Mr Bellaby. 'The mails must not be delayed. Is there not a fine of fifty pounds for that?'

'I wonder, though,' says Mr Jeffers, 'that the guards of the mail-coaches are as loyal as they are. Considering not just the bad pay but also the niggardliness of the Post Office in giving recognition or rewards for service beyond ordinary duty.'

'There is one thing and one thing only they must attend to,' says Mr Bellaby, 'and that is the delivery of the mails. The mails must get through. Under no matter what difficulties.'

'Very well,' says Mr Jeffers, 'but what of this Chester mail-guard who worked four hours in water up to his waist when the road flooded - Sweatman I believe his name was, and a name highly appropriate - rescuing passengers and saving the mail and then everything froze? It was the passengers got him that reward of ten shillings, but then a shilling was deducted because the mails were late. What do you think of that? And that other guard, I forget his name, who walked seventy miles with the mail-bags when the coach broke down at Cirencester. Seventy miles through ice and snow. His great reward was five shillings more on one week's wages. I could tell you many stories.'

You could tell many stories, too. The guard who died after pushing the mails in a cart through snow-drifts. The Dundee mail that had to be dug out of snow nine times in one journey. And that shocking winter of '31 when the Dumfries-Edinburgh mail got stuck. What were the names of the two men now?

'You will mind,' says Mr Jeffers, 'that time of the Dumfries-Edinburgh mail being buried deep, and the rule being that the passengers must fend for themselves, the passengers were left there to freeze. But MacGeorge the guard said he and the driver - Goodfellow I believe his name was - must ride horseback with the mails, and so they did. But then the horses could go no further. So the men walked and walked, as

best they could. Then the next day a shepherd saw a bright flash on the hill, so went forth to see. What should it be but the brass plate of one of the mail-bags, tied safe to a post. And then, days and days later, the bodies of the two were dug out. Now I cannot vouch for this, but the shepherd swore there was a kind of smile of satisfaction on the face of MacGeorge.'

A pause to do silent homage to the memory of MacGeorge. And, you remember, the time when the fog was so thick that the coachman could not see the rumps of his horses, and the mail got through; fog was no excuse for not delivering the mails.

'But,' says Mr Bellaby, 'the mails have not always got through. The times, thank God, are freer than they were from footpads and the like, but the mail-bags have been snatched at Wetherby not long ago. Many roads,' he explains to Mrs Tate, 'meet at Wetherby. It is roughly midway between Edinburgh and London.'

'The Angel,' you say. 'Perhaps the best inn of them all. A hundred horses stabled there, and four public dining-rooms.'

'It was at Wetherby,' says Mr Bellaby, 'that men in cloaks and masks rode into the Post Office itself and grabbed the sacks from the very hands of the Postmaster. Yes,' he says to you, 'I know the Angel well.'

Young Henry starts to laugh. 'Why are you laughing?' asks his mother. 'It is about the guard who mistook the mail-bag in the dark for the horse's nose-bag. And it was the nose-bag that got through.' It is a good enough story; the adults laugh too, though not so loud as Master Henry.

'Well,' says Mrs Tate. 'We shall be coming soon to our ten-minute rest. I shall be glad to stretch my limbs and have something hot. I warrant you gentlemen will also.'

Yes, indeed. Master Tate says: 'I could eat something. I could eat ten million jam tarts covered with buckets of custard.' A strong-stomached boy. As for your own stomach, it is not bearing up too well. The reek of the coach is in no wise mitigated by the winter air, for your travelling companions will not let much in. As for your bones, they are racked. You will be glad of that ten-minute break from the glories of coach-travel.

'Ten minutes,' says Mr Bellaby, 'is not enough for anything.' He tries to implode his dyspeptic belches, out of deference to the lady.

'I had almost to swallow my second egg whole.'

'Speed,' says Mr Kirk. 'Everything is sacrificed to the great god Speed.' You have seen him put down a plateful of cold ham, all ready-carved and set out for the hurried travellers, with record speed. You yourself had a large mutton-pie in your hand, ready to be brought out and finished while getting aboard again if need be. But you managed to finish it over your brandy and water, cold. Still, it lies heavy. Young Henry has brought a bag of tarts, with very crumbly pastry, into the coach with him. He is munching away, spraying crumbs about. His mother drank tea (which, in the old manner, she called tay), sipping and sipping without pause against the clock. Messrs Kirk and Jeffers had neat whisky, downing it with no grimace. Mr Jeffers ate nothing. Another three hours and you will be in London. The big rats in the thatch are, for the moment, quiet. And the road, though somewhat bumpy, is taking the coach well.

'Bumpy,' says Mr Bellaby, 'but it takes the coach well. Did you,' he asks Mr Jeffers, 'ever see Old John, rest his soul? He was always upon the roads, even in his last days, always searching for some new, better way of surfacing them.'

'Old John,' says Mr Jeffers. 'Well, he died working. In harness, so to speak. Eighty - a good long life. He was, of course, really a Macgregor, one out of that outlawed clan. They changed the name to Macadam, as you will know, because that could give no offence, everyone really being a Macadam or son of Adam.'

'You owe much to Scotland,' says Mr Kirk, 'as you will confess.'

'Confessed,' says Mr Bellaby. 'Whisky and porridge and Telford and Macadam. But there are some who say that their work was done too late. That we shall soon be leaving the roads to travel on rails.'

'Against the law of nature,' says Mrs Tate. 'Like flying.'

'No,' says Mr Jeffers, 'we shall be riding on the backs of those two great Scots for many a year yet. You take that from me, ma'am. They were sent by the Almighty, and the Almighty always knows what He is doing.'

London at last, and this is yourself, riding through it. That boy was, finally, sick, very suddenly too, so that Mr Kirk had to clean his sleeve with straw and then complain to Mrs Tate about letting the lad gorge as he did. So the lad ended somnolent and Mr Kirk and Mrs Tate



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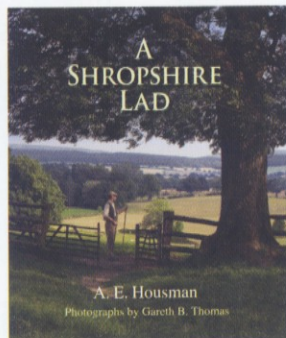
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not on speaking terms. Then Mr Bellaby said something caustic about the streets of Edinburgh Old Town, and there was a coolness between him and Mr Jeffers. You remain neutral; you have followed the tradition of, within reason, keeping yourself to yourself on a journey in a public vehicle. It always pays. And now London evening, gas-flares, the cobbles very loud with wheels and horses. Your guard blows his horn again and again as the coach negotiates the narrow streets that lead to the Belle Sauvage. The streets are all noise and shadows. Cabs are arriving at the inns, luggage being unloaded from the cabs and loaded onto the coaches that will start off soon, dead on the minute, to Lewes, Doncaster, Chesterfield, Liverpool – all the towns and cities of the kingdom. Your coach cannot yet enter the arch, into the inn-yard with its scores of stables. The breath of clattering horses smokes in the dim light, the team of some Flyer or Comet or Balloon pulling hard at the overloaded coach which is leaving. Your driver, Jarvis, can be heard jeering at a rival. And now you enter.

The guard, stretching with a groan, unfolds his little ladder. An outside passenger, a woman, is not well; it takes four men to lift her down. Easy then, lady, easy does it. And now all out, and now the tipping. You bow a good-bye to your companions of the journey, assured you will not see them again. You await the unloading of your two bags. An urchin calls a cab for you. You live in Wood Street, off Cheapside.

St Martin's-le-Grand. You are in time to see the punctual evening exodus of the mail-coaches, blessed, as it were, by the huge grey shadow of St Paul's. There is, surely, no sight on earth like it, and no sound. Doomsday trumpets ring down to the river as, in order, the Western mail first in honour of Palmer, the precious letters and parcels, and the less precious travellers, are borne out of London along Gresham street, Aldersgate, Ludgate Hill, Newgate, London Wall. This, you think, must go on for ever. This can never die.

And, of course, you are right.

Anthony Burgess

The Guildhall

Madge Moran contemplates this notable building

Members may be aware that the Magistrates and County Courts that occupy the Guildhall at present may be moving out. This will mean that a new use will have to be found for the building and raises the questions of its maintenance. This short article was written to highlight its architectural importance.

INTRODUCTION

The casual visitor to Ludlow's Mill Street may be forgiven for walking past the Guildhall not giving it more than a second glance, perhaps noticing that it functions as the Magistrates' and County Court, but that is all.



The Guildhall in Mill Street

It blends in so well with its neighbours and is an object lesson in eighteenth century architectural etiquette and good manners. But the Guildhall has a story to tell, and this article is merely an outline.

The more discerning eye might note that the restrained but elegant front door is off-centre, ponder the reason for this and wonder what, if anything of architectural interest, lies behind it. The answer, in brief, is 'a lot', and it is hoped to produce a booklet later which will deal in detail with the architecture and history of this remarkable building.

Right: A typical Pritchardian ogee arch inside the Guildhall

THE BUILDING

There are two significant dates which relate to the building. It was built for the Palmers' Guild in 1411. That is the date obtained through dendrochronology, and was remodelled for Ludlow Corporation in c.1769 by the Shrewsbury surveyor and architect, Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. It has come to light recently that another man, this time from Bishop's Castle, was involved. His name was Duncan Campbell and he was also a surveyor. More research needs to be done before a clearer picture of who did what emerges but there can be no mistaking the Pritchard touch in the detailing of the front door and how it reveals the Gothic influence of Batty Langley, the prolific publisher of architectural treatises.

Pritchard took Langley's beliefs as his guide, and this explains why the Guildhall is a Gothic building instead of a Classical one, which might be expected in the late eighteenth century. Perhaps, also, Pritchard had respect for the medieval builders and was anxious to preserve as much of their work as possible. This is borne out



The doorway influenced by Batty Langley



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by the treatment of the interior and, in particular, the preservation of the roof structure.

Good red brickwork in Flemish bond with fine lime-mortar jointing is used on the frontage.

THE INTERIOR

Once inside the building it becomes clear why there is not a central entrance - Pritchard was preserving the original entrance into a screens passage which was part of the standard medieval plan of service end, screens passage, hall and solar end used for the Guildhall. The second realisation is that the hall is fully aisled like a church with a 'nave' and two side aisles. This raises the question of whether the Guildhall was fully aisled from the start.

At present the aisles reach full height; originally they would have been low units beneath a continuous roof. Suffice it to say that some years ago, when the building was undergoing repairs, there was evidence on the aisle posts showing how the aisles were constructed.



The Courtroom showing the form of the interior as well as the clock and armorials behind the bench.

The posts themselves are clad in eighteenth-century wood panels but most of the original posts remain inside the cladding. These are octagonal, moulded, and preserve the mortices for the original arches defining the form of the hall. The present arches are higher

Other distinctive features of the hall include the medieval timbers of the lower sections of the roof trusses, a boss on each of the tie-beams, one of which is a frightening grotesque. There are also four roundels in the street-facing windows, each having a story to tell and, the elegant fittings of the eighteenth-century courthouse with its true colour scheme. It is obvious that the Guildhall continued further northwards - the solar end has gone.



Left: A timber post inside its 18th century cladding Right: The grotesque head

THE ROOF STRUCTURE

Access to the roof above the inserted ceiling is very difficult, but once achieved the effect is breathtaking. The medieval roof is intact and would, of course, be intended to be seen. Eight bays survive with three main trusses, four intermediate trusses and cusped windbraces. Cusping is a feature of the roof and gives it beauty.

Detailed analysis will be found in the forthcoming booklet.



The medieval roof of the Guildhall

SUMMARY

Ludlow's Guildhall is the only standing fully aisled hall in Shropshire. There were probably a handful of others but Shropshire is 'cruck country', not 'aisled hall country'. It seems that Pritchard and his associates had respect for the building, but sadly that respect seems to be lacking in the present owners. When the latest

maintenance work was being done it was sad to witness mutilation of the feet of some of the posts. The broach stops which would bring the square shape to octagonal, and were meant to be seen, were concreted in, never to be seen again. Also deplorable are the modern light fittings which obscure the bosses, and the cheap peg-boarding at the back of the bench.



A view from the bench

THE PALMERS' GUILD

The Guild is thought to have been founded in the middle of the thirteenth century. To be a Palmer a person had to make the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and come back bearing a palm leaf as proof. Thus it was a religious institution, concerned with the saving of souls, and subscription to the Guild was an insurance policy for the hereafter as well as more mundane things. As with modern insurance companies the Guild expanded into property, building, buying and selling and thus became very rich and powerful. The Guildhall in Mill Street is a rebuilding of one there in 1283. At the Reformation it was taken over by Ludlow Corporation.

Readers should look for the east window in St John's Chapel in the parish church, which is known as the Palmers Window; the last panel shows the Palmers feasting in what is clearly an aisled hall. A painting by local artist Noel Shepherdson shows the Palmers at their Pentecostal Feast and this will appear in the forthcoming booklet.

Madge Moran © 2010

All photos are by Madge Moran except for the Courtroom images which are by Peter Howell.

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NOTES

from the chairman

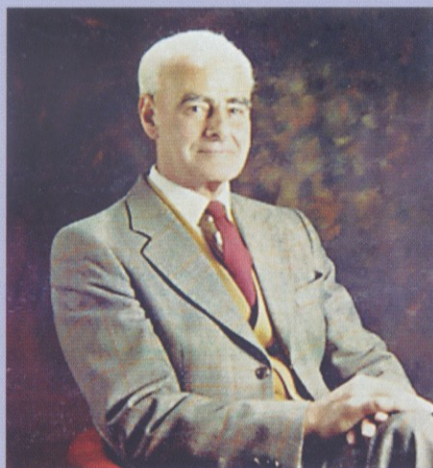
Once again the development of the land next to the Reader's House and St Laurence's Church is the major issue concerning the Society, and we are working closely with other interested parties to try to stop the planning application being approved by Shropshire Council.

Initially it was said there was nothing that could be done, given that the earlier application was approved on appeal. However, given that this is clearly a new application, and following a great deal of research and work done by our Committee member Simon Buteux, we are much more hopeful that it can be refused by Shropshire Council. There is now a grass roots campaign led by Joyce Brand, a resident of College Court, which is receiving good press coverage, and there are now well over 100 objections to the application demonstrating widespread concern against this overdevelopment of such a sensitive site. We are grateful to our members who have written to the Council and lobbied their representatives, and there can be no doubt over the town's feelings towards this plan.

The Society's offer to buy the land remains live although it was turned down by the owner. Should any member who made a pledge wish to withdraw it, I would appreciate a call or note, and, equally, should there be others who might wish to help, if the opportunity arises again, then please get in touch!

On a broader front, the Society provided an input to Shropshire's Core Strategy Plan Document which considered areas of Ludlow that might be developed for additional housing. There was general agreement that the Southern Approaches should remain undeveloped.

The proposals regarding developing Ludlow Hospital have been affected by the change of government and the reviews of planned expenditure. There have been



JACK GATEHOUSE 1914-2010

John Gatehouse, always known as Jack, was born in Ludlow on 21st November 1914. He attended Ludlow Grammar School between 1927 and 1936, becoming Head of House (Greaves), and Senior Prefect (Head Boy). In 1936 he moved on to Liverpool University and obtained a BSc. in 1939. In 1940 he enlisted at Hereford and was sent to a tank regiment. This was followed by a spell in the OCTU and on passing out, he was posted to the Royal Corps of Signals. His first posting was to Spurn Point where he covered the area from the Humber to the Wash. In 1943 he met his wife Audrey who was in Signals in the ATS; they were married

in York. On D Day III he went over to France and there he dealt with all communications through France, Brussels and Germany. As the war progressed he was mentioned in dispatches for services at the crossing of the Rhine. After the end of hostilities the army did not instantly release Jack. He was stationed in Paris assisting the French Postal Service in re-establishing postal communications which had been disrupted by the war. Indeed, after his funeral, a group of the Royal Signals Association took his wartime uniform to be put on display in the Royal Signals Museum at Blandford.

After the war his first teaching post was at Hulme Grammar School at Oldham. Jack came back to Ludlow in 1950 to teach Chemistry at Ludlow Grammar School, where he remained for the next twenty-eight years, becoming one of the best-known members of staff. During the 1960s he became a founder, along with Fred Reeves and Lord Plymouth, of the Ludlow Museum and Library Advisory Committee which played an important role in both institutions until the mid 1970s. On his retirement he became a governor of the now named Ludlow College, and also had a new teaching room named after him – the Gatehouse Room. Jack was equally active outside the Grammar School, being a JP and involved with Ludlow Museum. He was an active and respected member of the Ludlow Civic Society in the 1970s and 1980s and served on the Committee. In 1997 Jack and his wife moved north to be near their family. They lived at Shotley Bridge in County Durham where he died this year. His contribution to the life of Ludlow was outstanding.

no meetings of the Hospital Forum and, although there are sporadic headlines in the local paper, there do not appear to be any real developments to report.

The Society continues to support other local organisations and provide appropriate grants. We have also supported the appeal towards the David Lloyd Memorial which will take the form of restoring the ancient 'roundel'

windows in St Laurence's Church.

Autumn is in the air and with it the start of our programme of lectures and meetings. I hope to see you there and hope you enjoy the varied programme. There is also the opportunity there to keep you informed on various local issues.

John Nash

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EVENTS

Very sadly, Duncan White's lecture on pottery had to be postponed again. We hope that he will be giving it next season. We were very fortunate to find Charlotte Hollins from Fordhall Farm who came to our rescue. She gave an immensely interesting and enthusiastic talk about the saving and revitalising of the farm by herself and her brother.

In October, the local publisher and journalist, David Burnett, gave a fascinating talk with the intriguing title '*Jane Austen's Handkerchief - and other Grub Street Memories*'. In November we will have '*An Evening with John Betjeman*' by Richard Field, English master at Shrewsbury School for forty years. In December we will hold another Christmas party and Forum in the Palmers' Hall.

The New Year begins with the Fred Reeves Memorial Lecture given by Roger Bartlett, Professor Emeritus of Russian History at University College, London. This will be about Ludlow's Sebastopol Cannon and the Imperial Russian Ironmaster, Charles Gascoigne. In February, Geoffrey Crofts, auctioneer and valuer at Brightwells, will talk about '*Fun and Antiques*'. In March, following the publication of his book '*Till Ludlow Tower Shall Fall*', Clive Richardson will give a talk with the same title about Ludlow's part in the First World War. In March there will be a lecture with music by Ted Maidment - '*Don't be Sniffy about La Bohème*'!

And in May there will be the Society's AGM.... *Prue Bellak*

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Society has remained constant this year at over 350 life and annual members. Amongst these are fourteen new members to whom we would like to extend a warm welcome. Thank you to all for the prompt responses to the renewal invitations, and to those yet to respond I would like to issue the reassurance that it's not too late to do so!

Whilst writing, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank everybody - too numerous to reply to individually - who, along with their renewal cheques, sent messages of support and encouragement for the work we have undertaken at the Reader's House and in opposition to the scheme for overdevelopment of the neighbouring land. Since moving to the town we have been very aware of the regard in which this little corner of Ludlow is held, and also of the interest that our labours have generated. We very much hope to report before the end of the year that the Reader's House is once more occupied as a family home.

Rebecca Buteux



Responses to articles are always welcome. Please address your letters to:

The Editor, Heritage News,
7 Dinham, Ludlow SY8 1EJ

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

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