

Ludlow Heritage News

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FREE

Local Ludlow craftsmen, Stuart Preece and Sons, who specialise in the restoration of traditional plasterwork and stone work, have recently completed the repair and conservation of the James I ceiling in the Feathers Hotel, Ludlow.

The James I ceiling, as most locals are aware, is a heavily-enriched plasterwork ceiling containing interlocking strap-work with fruits, foliage and naturalistic patterns. This particular ceiling is one of the finest examples of Jacobean plasterwork of its period and style surviving.

The ceiling was damaged in 2010 by severe water penetration from an en-suite bathroom. The water found its way into numerous areas of the ceiling, including the star-shaped King James I coat of arms, and the underside and cheeks of the rear separating beam. It also caused damage to the supporting laths, and decomposure of areas of decorative plasterwork. In the cocktail bar immediately below the James I room, the water also penetrated the lath and plaster ceiling and the cornice-work.

Once we had carried out emergency propping and securing to the James I ceiling, we were then ready to take photos and measurements, produce detailed drawings, take squeeze impressions and cut and file a variety of templates which we could use to reproduce the desired mouldings and features. We then took samples of surviving plasterwork and paint finishes which we analysed to establish their material contents, which would allow us to source the correct materials for the repair to be like for like. The templates were filed out in zinc to the desired profile and fixed to a wooden stock. They were later used to form missing sections of damaged mouldings by passing the mould over the wet material a number of times while it was drying, hence forming the required feature.

The impressions we had taken of the ceiling decorations were turned into reverse moulds in our workshop, which were later used in the repair to stamp the enriched design patterns back onto the underside and cheeks of the beam, using the same materials, tools and techniques which were executed four hundred years ago.

Once the reverse moulds were made, we were ready to stamp the design back in place onto the beam, and finish by carefully hand carving out and making good any areas damaged by the removal of the mould. Individual enrichments were cast in moulds and carefully fixed in their original position upon the star-shaped strap moulding following the full-scale detailed stencil which we had produced earlier.



Getting plastered at The Feathers...

How the James I ceiling was restored

A few discoveries were made during the ceiling restoration. The decorative plasterwork on the underside of the front beam was not produced in the same material and manner as the rest of the ceiling decoration. It was executed in either a material known as composition or a material known as carton-pierre. Composition was a substance invented by Liadort, a Swiss clergyman. The material had been used in France from the time of Louis XIV in the decoration of buildings. It was introduced into England in about 1767 by Robert Adam, and was used widely throughout the country for the decoration of doors, panelling, walls, ceilings and mirrors.

There were many varieties of composition but almost all contained glue, resin, linseed oil and whiting (chalk).

Carton-pierre was a material which was an improvement on papier-mâché, and was introduced by M.Miziere, a Parisian modeller. The disadvantages with the material were later overcome by M.Romagnesi who reduced it to a much finer state enabling it to be used for finer work. The English carton-pierre was much stronger than the one used by the French due to more whiting being added to the mixture. It was used for similar purposes as composition, i.e. centre flowers, foliage, statues and internal decorations, but was slightly lighter in weight

and fixed in the same manner as composition to the substrate with nails or pins. Again, there were many different recipes for this material but they mostly contained paper pulp, glue, water, flour and whiting. It was said that the better the paper, the stronger the carton-pierre would become. The old craftsmen would use paper from old ledgers or rags to give the best results, but in later years the paper from the packaging of oranges was preferred.

This material was also used on both cheeks of both the front and rear beams. This suggests that the underside of the front beam had previously been altered, and perhaps the cheeks of both beams were then also decorated with

this material, whereas the earlier plasterwork to the front and rear decorative ceilings were of a lime, sand, marble dust and ox hair mix. We believe that the material used is more likely to be carton-pierre than composition.

This is a brief description of the work we carried out at the Feathers Hotel, but we hope that by the end of the year we will be in a position to organise an evening where we can show the stamp moulds that we made, the profiles and templates which we used in the repair, the recipes for the lime plaster backing coats and also the finishing plasters, along with a photographic slide show showing the complete step-by-step repair.



1. Drawing the position to which the enrichments of fruit and foliage will be fixed.



2. Detail of the reverse mould being set in position.



3. Putting final touches to the finished stamped position.



4. Fixing enrichments to the star-shaped outer rim of the King James coat of arms.

AURORA & WONDER THE COACHING ERA IN THE LUDLOW AREA

Following our piece by Anthony Burgess in last winter's Heritage News, Graham Berlyn throws more light on the golden days of coach travel in this area.

The coaching era covered the period between the 1650s and 1850s, with the golden days of coaching lying between the 1820s and 1840s. By that date, the railway had spread across much of this country, providing not only more comfortable transport for passengers but a quicker service for mail and goods too. Consequently, coach services became uneconomic and were forced off the road.

The earliest form of public vehicle was a carrier's four-wheeled wagon, hauled by up to nine or ten horses. These carried mainly goods, with a few passengers, and travelled at little better than two miles per hour. A journey made by this means was slow and uncomfortable, but people who neither owned nor could afford the hire of a horse, had no other choice but to walk. Stage wagon services developed from about 1617, the vehicles being towed by nine or more horses. So many animals were needed because roads were poor and were only usable for the most part in the spring and the summer. An early Ludlow carrier in the thirteenth century and four in the 15th and 16th centuries, are known from documentary evidence.

Charles I in 1635 made it possible for anyone to send a letter, which had not been the case before. Post horses ridden by 'post boys', part of the system set up in the same year by the Post Office, were employed to carry mail to different places, but the required pace of six miles per hour was rarely achieved.

Stage coaches first appeared on the roads with the establishment of the Chester Stage in 1657 for the general public. Travel by coach in its day was expensive, and because of this, the poor did not travel. Late in the 17th century goods such as parcels of Ludlow-made fine leather gloves were taken by carriers, probably

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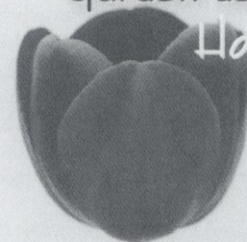


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in stage wagons, for sale in London and other places. Similarly, some goods from the capital and elsewhere were received here by the same means, and some heavier goods by the river Severn. A limited stage coach service between Ludlow and Worcester in the better weather, was not available until about 1730, connecting with coaches to and from other centres. Gradually, coach services were set up between Ludlow and Bishop's Castle, Bridgnorth, Knighton, Oswestry, Leominster, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Birmingham and further afield.

Because the government received many complaints of poor roads from those travelling along them, numerous acts were passed establishing the turnpike system of gates or pikes (bars) across the road. The first Ludlow Turnpike Trust was created in 1751, and the second in 1756. Tollgates or bars were set up at various places across the road, at which tolls were collected from those who would pass through on foot, horseback or with a vehicle, likewise from those who drove livestock. Toll houses listed in this area as part of the first Ludlow Turnpike Trust include those built at Ashford, Burford, Ludford, Ludford Park, Monksbridge and Overton. More were constructed after the second Ludlow Turnpike Trust came into effect at places such as Angel (Bitterley), Caynham, Hopton and Little Stretton. Where toll houses existed a collector normally lived and was employed to take tolls for persons, vehicles and stock passing through the gate. When mail coaches were in existence, they were not required to stop and pay a toll. These were paid by the Post Office on a monthly basis. Some named men and women turnpike keepers in this area have been found from documentary sources.

Turnpike Trusts continued to be created until the railway age, and by 1838 it was estimated that of 105,000 miles of public highway, 22,000 miles were turnpikes, with nearly 7,800 tollgates and bars from which £1,500,000 was collected annually at the time. Toll charges ceased in the 1880s, when county councils took over road construction and maintenance.

As the roads gradually improved, and post coach services developed, running to regular schedules, so more people began to use these



A coach travelling up the unmetalled Lower Broad Street toward the town centre.

services. The increase in travel encouraged certain individuals and local communities to erect pillars and obelisks to guide travellers. The earliest known instance of a road being marked in miles was that from Dover to Canterbury in 1633.

Mileposts early in the 17th century were made of wood, of which none survive today, being followed by milestones, and later by cast iron. These varied in style and design depending on the county in which they were located. Originally, Roman numerals were used, but for ease of understanding they were eventually changed to Arabic. The nearest remaining original milestone to Ludlow stands on the A49 near to Onibury station. Unfortunately, it was damaged at some time by a verge mower. Some milestones and posts, removed during WW2, were either lost or not replaced afterwards.

A Statute Mile, established by an act in 1593 in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was taken to be 8 furlongs of 40 perches each, a perch being 5.5 yards long. Milestones were spaced

this distance apart along the turnpike roads, though for a time there were variations in what a mile measured in different places in this country. John Ogilby, who produced the first accurate road maps of England late in the 17th century, used the statute mile.

A stage coach service from Shrewsbury to London existed in 1681, but it lasted only a short time because the road conditions of the time were poor. A stage wagon service from London to Shrewsbury came into being between 1737 and 1753, but this service did not suit all who would travel. Heavy goods were conveyed either by cart and wagon, or on the river Severn. 1753 saw a regular stage coach drawn by six horses begin to run from Shrewsbury through Birmingham to the capital, taking four days and costing 18s inside, one way. Names of a few local coach drivers and mail guards have been found from documents and epitaphs.

In 1700, the Post Office named the following as post towns in Shropshire: Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton, Ellesmere, Halesowen,

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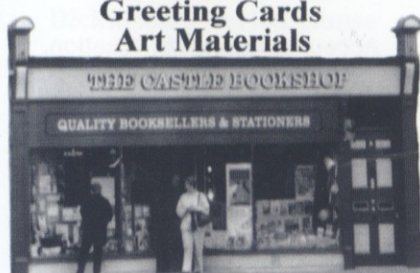


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Ludlow, Market Drayton, Much Wenlock, Newport, Oswestry, Shifnal, Shrewsbury, Wellington, Wem and Whitchurch. Prior to 1785, all Shropshire mail was carried by post boy on horseback.

In 1784, a trial night time mail service was started by the businessman John Palmer of Bath, at his own cost, running between Bristol, Bath and London. The journey was completed faster than the existing day stage coach by one hour, in sixteen hours. The Chancellor at the time, William Pitt, was impressed by the outcome of the trial and shortly afterwards proposed in Parliament that a mail service be established as soon as possible throughout the country. Together with other towns, Ludlow received its first mail service in September 1785. The mail coach, having taken on passengers at the *Bull and Mouth Inn*, St Martins-le-Grand, London, left there at 7.30 p.m., and was then driven to take on mail and the guard at the General Post Office, London, from where the journey proper began at 8 p.m., running through High Wycombe, Oxford, Moreton-in-Marsh, to the *Star and Garter Inn*, Worcester, arriving at 8.20 a.m. Here passengers alighted for one hour, enjoying what food and drink they wished, and awaited a fresh coach, driver and guard to take them to the Swan Inn, Tenbury, (strictly in Burford, Shropshire, as Tenbury itself is in Worcestershire on the other side of the river Teme), then on to reach the *Crown Inn*, Broad Street, Ludlow, at 12.24 p.m. The four-horse team was changed regularly in two minutes at inn stops along the route. The fare per person by the mail to London in mid 1799, one way, inside was £2.12s 6d, and outside £1.1s 6d. this was more than by stage coach because the mail travelled faster. Post men, and later women, were appointed by the Post Office to receive and despatch mail at the various posting houses en route. Several named local occupants have been found from records. Over time, a mail coach became known simply as 'the mail'.

Initially, the Post Office allowed four passengers to ride inside a mail coach, and later, two more to ride outside. Many readers will be aware of the name of a man called Mabbitt, who is thought to have been either a guard or a driver on a stage or mail coach that ran to

or through Ludlow. He is also remembered by a house named 'Mabbitt's Horn', which stands half a mile south from Ludlow, on the west side of the old A49. The search for further information on him continues. A few named local mail guards and drivers, and stage coach drivers have been traced from records. The daily mail services running to, through and from Ludlow on different occasions from the *Crown Inn* or from the *Angel Hotel* connected with those in Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Chester, Liverpool, Leominster, Hereford, Worcester, Birmingham, Bristol, London and others across the country. A mail ran from London to the *Crown Inn* Ludlow to Aberystwyth twice a week in 1807.

The 1820s saw a regular 3 p.m. service to Worcester, Oxford and London, by the light post coach, the 'AURORA', from the *Angel Hotel*, Ludlow, to the *George and Blue Boar*, Holborn. This coach stayed overnight at the *Hop Pole Inn*, Worcester, starting next morning at 5 a.m.

Early in the 19th century, the *Red Lion* and the *Crown Inn*, Leominster, were coaching inns at which stage coaches and the mail called regularly on services to and from Shrewsbury, Hereford, Worcester and Kington. These coaches connected with others running to and from Bristol, Manchester and places in south and mid Wales. Infrequent coach services ran from smaller Ludlow inns for limited lengths of time.

In 1825, the owner of the *Lion Hotel*, Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury, put on the road a fast day stage coach known as the 'WONDER', drawn by four horses. It ran daily each way via Birmingham to London, and became well known for time-keeping, safety and reliability. In 1838, because the railway had reached the county town from Chester, the 'WONDER' ran only from Shrewsbury via Ironbridge and Madeley to Birmingham, being drawn by two horses. It ran until 1843, according to the Birmingham Directory of that year, when it was finally withdrawn because trains ran faster, carried greater loads and were quickly displacing coach services.

During the season in the 1830s, stage coaches took those who would to Aberystwyth, to enjoy swimming. A particular coach on this

route was named the 'LEEK'. It started from the *Crown Inn*, Ludlow, at 4 a.m., and arrived at Aberystwyth the same evening. Other coaches ran from Worcester through Leominster to Aberystwyth, Cheltenham to Aberystwyth, and Birmingham to Aberystwyth, all of which were popular in the bathing season.

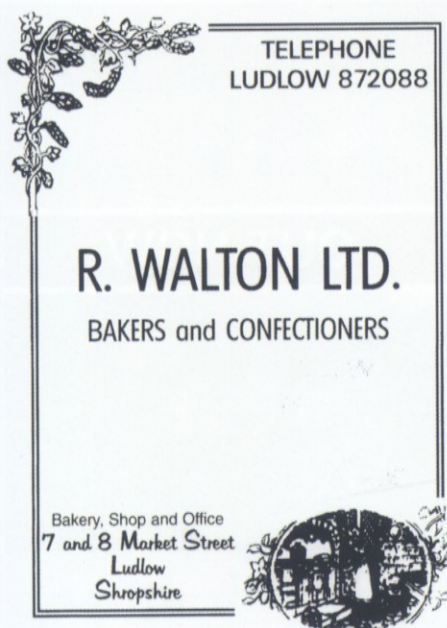
Stage coaches running in 1835 were the 'UNION' from the *Angel Hotel*, Ludlow to London, the 'ALERT' from the *Angel Hotel* and *Crown Inn*, Ludlow to Hereford from Shrewsbury, the 'ACCOMMODATION' from the *Angel Hotel*, Ludlow to Leominster, and the 'PILOT' from the Sun Inn, Ludlow to Leominster. These coaches ran several days a week at different times.

In 1836, a mail ran from Shrewsbury to Newport daily at 1 p.m., and from Leominster to Presteigne, also at 1 p.m., both except on Sundays. A mail was also running from Shrewsbury to Newtown in 1836. The same year, a daily stage coach ran from Hereford to Bristol, except on Sundays, also a return journey three times a week ran from Hereford to Gloucester, except on Sundays, and two single journeys per week ran from Shrewsbury to Cheltenham, except on Sundays. By 1848, the railway having reached Shrewsbury from Birmingham, the mail was soon transferred to carriage by this quicker means. Mail routes from Ludlow to smaller towns nearby ran to Bishop's Castle, Knighton and Cleobury Mortimer. Some of these local services, even at a later date, were still provided by a 'post boy' on horseback or in a gig. As late as 1843, the day's mail is believed to have been carried by the 'RED ROVER' stage coach, after the arrival of the mail train from London, leaving Birmingham at 3 p.m. each afternoon, except Sundays, to go via Dudley, Stourbridge, Kidderminster, Bewdley and Tenbury to the *Angel Hotel*, Ludlow, and then on to the *Lion Hotel*, Leominster. The service existed until some time after 1852 when the railway reached the town. This coach was unusual because normally coaches carrying mail did not have a name, except one: the mail coach named 'QUICKSILVER' which travelled daily from London to Devonport, so named because of the fast journey times it achieved. From the beginning of the mail coach service, the Post Office insisted that mail had

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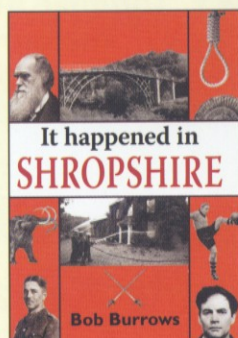
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to be conveyed quickly and reliably, no matter what the circumstances. The mail was assisted to make fast journey times by the fact that it travelled mainly at night when there was little traffic on the road, and was not required to stop at toll gates.

Because standardised time throughout this country did not exist until 1840, mail guards were required to carry a special time piece provided by and set at the Post Office before the start of each journey, in order that the coach should keep to a definite schedule. These time pieces could not be set or altered by anyone but post office staff in a Post Office. When the mail stopped along each route, post bags were dropped and picked up, and news, gossip and time were briefly exchanged by the guard, giving rise to the expression 'passing the time of day'. Local time is determined by the movement of the sun, and varies four minutes for each degree of longitude to the west or east of the Greenwich Meridian, being later to the west and earlier to the east of the Prime Meridian. 'Railway time' was the name given to the standardised time arrangement first applied by the Great Western Railway in 1840. Standardised time enabled trains to run to an arranged schedule, connecting with others at junctions, and with boats at docks at a given time and place.

Smaller weekly cart or van services, running between Ludlow and local villages were a popular means of transport, enabling goods to be carried and people to visit briefly relatives and friends, as well as to attend fairs, markets and auctions.

There were several goods carriers, with warehouses in Corve Street and Lower Galdeford, providing regular short and long distance services to various parts of the country. A 19th century timetable shows a carrier from Worcester to Tenbury and Ludlow, connecting at Worcester with flyboats on the canal to London, and vessels on the river Severn travelling to Bristol, where their loads were transferred into a sea-going ship for onward carriage to London and places round the coast. A canal flyboat had priority over slower traffic. Certain goods, ordered from suppliers in London by John Pearce junior, ironmonger of Ludlow, 1682-1697, are known

to have been sent by sea to Bristol, transferred there into a trow, a flat-bottomed river vessel, brought up the Severn to Bewdley, then by horse and cart or wagon to Ludlow. Transport by water was cheaper than by road, though the journey may have taken a little longer. The return journey Bewdley-Bristol-Bewdley, via the river Severn, 160 miles in total, took about fourteen days, water level and weather conditions permitting.

There is one epilogue to the days of coaching: a very late special horse-drawn omnibus coach was provided for a few years, it is believed, by the *Feathers Hotel*, Ludlow for clients to and from the railway station, until about 1939. The *Angel Hotel* also operated an omnibus coach in the 1860s, and possibly later, for the same purpose.

The change from coach to rail occurred in the short time between 1837 and 1848, when the once well-known road vehicles were soon scrapped and burnt, with a number achieving a different use – as hen houses, whilst some of the newer coaches were sold to road transport companies in Spain. No genuine original mail coaches are known to have survived today in this country, but several replica working stage coaches have been made, including one of the 'WONDER', which has been brought to Shrewsbury on a number of occasions by its owner, in order to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation.

The author would be grateful for any verbal or written memories readers may have of elderly relatives who had travelled a long time ago in either a stage coach or a mail coach: where they travelled to or from; in what year; by stage or mail coach; day or night; the cost of their journey; and the name of the passenger, please. Travel in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire would be of particular interest. Any relevant information will be most gratefully received and treated in confidence. A few such accounts have been obtained, but others would be welcome. Memories of this kind are, sadly, rapidly disappearing. Any contributions, please, to Graham Berlyn, c/o Ludlow Historical Research Group, at Ludlow Library & Museum Resource Centre. Would providers of information kindly give their name and address. Thank you for any help.

LOCAL CLAY PIPES

Graham Berlyn's brief history of the 17th and 18th century clay tobacco pipe making industry in South Shropshire and North Herefordshire

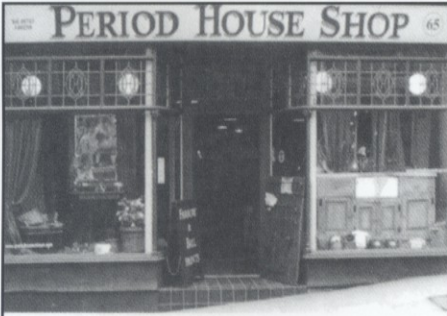
The industry in Britain probably commenced in the mid 1580s, in Bristol, after early-returning colonists had brought back with them to the city a few pipes and some tobacco leaf and seed from North America, where tobacco-smoking by the local people had been observed. To start with, small clay pipes were made in this country because the price of imported tobacco was so expensive – between three and five shillings per ounce, depending on the quality, which limited use to the few who could afford it. London also imported tobacco, and pipes were soon made there too. In both places two-piece cast iron moulds were used.



The earliest known reference to the use of tobacco in Ludlow, from documentary evidence, is to a Christmas feast in the Castle in 1596-1597, the tobacco and pipes probably being brought from elsewhere by participants.

As the practice of smoking spread across the country, so too did pipe-making, to service

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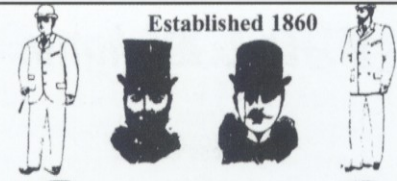


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the new habit. People started to grow tobacco illegally in Shropshire, Herefordshire and other counties, but, because the climate and soil here were unsuitable, the quality of the leaf was poor compared with that imported from the British and Spanish colonies in North and South America. Pipes made in different places in this country, to begin with, were similar to those in the capital, but gradually local pipe-makers developed their own style of bowl.

Early pipe-makers probably did not mark their products, but, later on, a pair of initials, a symbol or a name were stamped beneath the heel of the pipe bowl, and later still, a name was stamped on the stem instead. The marks enabled customers to see whose product they were buying, and were an early form of advertisement.

Pipe-making in the area covered by this article probably started between 1610 and 1615. Several very early small, unmarked bowls have been found here which may have been made to provide for the needs of visiting members of the Council of the Marches, 1473-1689, when they met in Ludlow Castle in the 17th century, some of whom came from London where the habit of smoking was already established. The industry in Ludlow and Ludford was practised for about 171 years by twelve men from six families. This is known from parish registers and documentary evidence. The industry also existed in Bromfield, Caynham, Cleobury Mortimer, Farlow, Kinlet, Birtley, Burrington, Kington, Leominster, Lingen, Ludford, Orleton and Pipe Aston. Cottages where pipe-makers lived in Ludlow still stand in St. Thomas's Lane, these being known from leases. Some pipe clay was obtained from Broseley, whilst some may have been used from seams on Cleve Hill, but research on this matter continues.

By the late 17th century, more people could afford to smoke, and illegal growing of tobacco became uneconomic. The price of clay pipes in Ludlow in 1688 was 9d for 1 gross, or 2d for 1 dozen.

The industry had died out by the end of the 18th century, the reason being that transport and routes were improving making for cheaper and quicker distribution of pipes produced by the expanding pipe-making firms at Broseley. As a consequence, the competitive pressure on family pipe-making concerns became so great that they had to close.



A pipe bowl stamped WV by maker William Underwood of Lower Raven Lane, Ludlow.

Snuff was in use, mainly by the upper classes, by the mid 18th century, and by the mid 19th century pipes made of briar, cigars and cigarettes became available. These alternative forms of tobacco use became more popular and caused a steady fall in the sale of clay pipes which never recovered, so by the early 20th century clay pipes were no longer regularly used.

Some of the last uses made of clay pipes were as targets at fairground shooting ranges, and by children to blow bubbles from soapy water. A few individual specialist pipe-makers exist today, providing for such markets as souvenir shops, theatres, period house interiors, historical re-enactment groups, collectors and exports. The last pipe-making firm in Shropshire, William Southorn & Co. of Broseley, closed in 1960, but was purchased, conserved and re-opened to visitors in 1997 as 'The Pipe Museum'. It is now a constituent part of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

Many thanks to Ludlow Museum Resource Centre who kindly supplied the stagecoach and clay pipe images.

NOTES

from the chairman

The primary objective of the Ludlow Civic Society, as stated in our constitution, is "to secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, improvement of features of the town that are of historical or other public interest". I share with our outgoing chairman, John Nash, the view that the primary job of the chairman of the Civic Society is to do his best to try to achieve that objective.

The campaign that dominated John's three years as Civic Society chairman, and which he pursued with characteristic vigour (along with former chairman James McFarlane and secretary Valerie Thomas), was to prevent by whatever legal means possible the building of five 'luxury townhouses' on Church Walk immediately adjacent to St. Laurence's and the Reader's House. Granting planning permission for this development has been widely viewed as granting permission for the destruction of a much-loved piece of Ludlow's historic environment.

By the time this edition of *Heritage News* is published I am sure that most readers will have heard the wonderful news that the land has now been purchased on behalf of the Ludlow Civic Society and is safe from unwanted development. Consultation on the future use of the land is underway but one aspect of this is non-negotiable: as long as the funds can be found, the historic garden will be retained as a garden for community use in perpetuity. It is anticipated that the rest of the land will also be used for community benefit, probably in the form of an almshouse or other affordable housing which respects the sensitive surroundings.

I must take this opportunity now to thank all of those who have already made donations towards the cost of bringing the garden into the direct ownership of the Civic Society. The purchase of the garden land and the creation of the garden will together cost in excess of £100,000, so more donations are needed. Any sum, no matter how modest, will be greatly appreciated. Donations should be sent to John Nash, Linney Villa, Linney, Ludlow, SY8 1EE. John has kindly

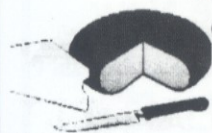
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agreed to take on the role of coordinating the Church Walk project for the Society.

The rescuing of this site from inappropriate overdevelopment was very much a community effort, involving St Laurence's Church and the Town Council as well as many individuals from Ludlow and beyond. I pay tribute to everyone who has been involved from when the campaign first began almost a decade ago – too many to mention by name. Thanks to all of them, we have at last a happy ending to a serious failure of our planning system.

But could it all happen again, somewhere else in Ludlow? Unfortunately the answer is 'yes' and, worse than that, it looks as if it could happen much more easily in the future. At a national level, a new threat comes from the government's National Planning Policy Framework, the draft of which was published on 25 July. The Framework is a radical streamlining of the existing 1,000 pages of national planning policies down to just 52 pages. In some ways such simplification is to be welcomed. However, the main thrust of the Framework is to slant the rules heavily in favour of developers by providing a very strong presumption in favour of development. The government has received a barrage of criticism from, amongst many others, the National Trust, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Civic Voice, the *Financial Times*, *Country Life* and the *Daily Telegraph* (which has started a 'Hands off our land' campaign). In the light of this, claims by the government that the opposition is "a carefully choreographed smear campaign by left-wingers" are hardly convincing.

The general consensus seems to be that the government has been hijacked by the property development lobby and has wrongly diagnosed the planning system, rather than wider economic factors, as the cause of the housing shortage and other ills. Planning Minister Greg Clark, keen to emphasise that the negative consequences of development are outweighed by its economic benefits, has lashed out at opponents, accusing them of "nihilistic selfishness" and of wanting to "preserve [their towns] in aspic". To me, Dame Fiona Reynolds, Director General of the National Trust, strikes a much more balanced note: "The National Trust believes in growth, as we all do – but not at any cost. Development that works must pass a triple bottom-line test – by showing that it meets the needs of people and the environment, as well as the economy".

Even English Heritage, which is of course largely government funded, has issued a statement expressing concern over the wording of the draft National Planning Policy Framework. It points out that the Framework will allow moderate and minor harm to 'heritage assets' such as listed buildings. Only "substantial harm or loss" will need to be justified and mitigated. EH concludes that "cumulatively this could have a devastating effect on our nationally important buildings and sites".

Those who care about Ludlow should be especially worried. How much 'moderate harm' can the town's 500 or so listed buildings take before the character of the town as a whole is seriously damaged? Furthermore, one person's 'moderate harm' is another person's 'substantial harm'. What shocked me so much about the proposed development on Church Walk was that the English Heritage advisor and Shropshire Council's planning and conservation officers (Colin Richards excepted) all stated that the development would preserve and enhance the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent Grade I listed buildings. To nearly everybody else this statement was blatant nonsense, and we could only imagine that arms had been twisted. I have no doubt that under the new National Planning Framework developers will put pressure on officers to categorise what any sensible person would interpret as 'substantial harm' as merely 'moderate harm', threatening an expensive planning appeal if they don't get their way. The Planning Inspectorate has announced that it is already playing by the new rules.

To add to our troubles, it looked for a while like Shropshire Council was going to withdraw its support from both the Ludlow Conservation Area Advisory Committee (LCAAC) and the Town Council Representational Committee. Instead, the council was going to create a new Ludlow Planning Liaison Group, modelled on the existing Shrewsbury Planning Liaison Group. Reference to the constitution of the Shrewsbury group shows that it is "a forum for stakeholders to discuss significant pre-application proposals and to provide feedback on service related issues", that it meets only once every eight weeks, and that there are virtually no conservation/historic environment interests represented on it. Stuart Thomas, the Area Planning Manager responsible for south Shropshire, was quoted in the Shropshire Star as saying, "[A] new community stakeholder group will replace the

two existing planning groups. Development management is a time-sensitive process with a high degree of customer interaction and a broad range of stakeholder interest". If this were to have happened it would have meant that no consultation would be undertaken on 'routine' planning applications and listed building consent applications in Ludlow.

Following vigorous protest, especially by the Civic Society, it now turns out that Mr Thomas was misquoted in the newspaper and that his letters to the Town Council and the LCAAC were misinterpreted. We are now assured that the Town Council Representational Committee will continue to be supported by Development Management. The LCAAC will also survive, although support for it will be at a reduced level and transferred to the Historic Environment section of Shropshire Council. In addition we will have the new Ludlow Planning Liaison Group, providing the opportunity to discuss significant pre-application proposals.

Thus the Ludlow community as a whole will still have a good set of tools to scrutinise planning applications and provide advice and comment from a variety of perspectives. The big question is whether the planners will listen. They didn't listen in the case of Church Walk and the changes which are likely to be introduced with the National Planning Policy Framework will provide even less reason for them to listen in the future. There are challenging times ahead for conservation in Ludlow, when one fears that the need for austerity and the demands of growth will be used as excuses for unnecessary, irreparable damage to our historic and natural environment.

Simon Buteux

DIAMOND JUBILEE 2012

To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, we will be looking back at events which took place in Ludlow in the Queen's other two Jubilee years, 1977 (Silver) 2002 (Gold). If you have any photographs or personal recollections of the events which took place in the town to commemorate these events, either e-mail them to castlebookshop@btconnect.com or drop them into Castle Bookshop, 5 Castle Street, Ludlow.

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EVENTS

The season of Civic Society Lectures, 2011-2012, started with the long-anticipated talk by Duncan White, entitled 'Country Pottery'. Duncan White is a well-known local potter and artist who exhibits at the Silk Top Hat Gallery. He gave a very lively and fascinating talk, and brought some beautiful examples to show us.

In October Dr. Henrywood gave an equally interesting lecture on a related but totally contrasting subject, 'Blue and White Pottery'. Dr. Henrywood is a specialist in this field and co-author of the Dictionary of Blue and White Pottery, an essential for all collectors. On Wednesday, November 9th this will be followed by a talk by Nigel Goodman, ex-housemaster at Eton College and lecturer, on 'Canaletto and the British'.

There will be the usual Christmas party and forum at Palmer's Hall on Wednesday December 14th. Wine and mince pies and, it is hoped, controversial topics and questions.

The lectures in 2012 begin with 'A Map of Childhood and other Ages' a reading by the poet, Gareth Owen from his own works. This is followed by the Fred Reeves lecture which takes place on Wednesday 8th February. It is given this year by Jonathan Wood, Chairman of the Ludlow Historical Research Group, who will be talking on 'Ludlow and Farnham: architectural excellence in Shropshire and Surrey'.

The next talk is given on Wednesday 14th March by Arthur Milner on 'Damascus tiles and the Art and Crafts Movement'. The last lecture on Wednesday 11th April is on Wigmore Abbey, and is given by well-known actor, John Challis.

The AGM takes place on Wednesday 9th May. All talks, apart from the Christmas party, are in Oscars, and start at 7.30.

More information on all the lectures and speakers can be found on the website.

Prue Bellak

MEMBERSHIP

As the Society enters its new year, membership stands at just over 400 members. Amongst them we are delighted to have welcomed some twenty two new members since the last issue of 'Heritage News'. Thank you to all those existing members who responded promptly to the renewal invitations issued in August – and, as usual, I'd like to reassure those yet to do so that it's never too late!

Many members have opted to pay their annual subscription by standing order, and we hope that this will prove to be more efficient and economical for both the members who choose to do so and for the Society. Standing orders can be set up at any time of the year, and anyone who wishes to consider this for next year can obtain the necessary information either by contacting me or viewing the Society website. There has been speculation that the use of cheques is to be phased out by the banks. Until this happens, we will, of course, continue to accept payment of subscriptions by cheque.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries or feedback regarding membership matters.

Rebecca Buteux



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

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

Ludlow Civic Society 2011-12 Officers and Committee

President	Sir Keith Thomas	Hon. Treasurer	Tony Cant
Vice-Presidents	Dr Martin Speight Dick Stephens Philip Dunne M.P.	Hon. Secretary	Valerie Thomas
Chairman	Simon Buteaux	Committee Members	Prue Bellak, Ian Bott, Peter Burden, Rebecca Buteux, John Nash, Bill Eastwell, Tim Smith, Stanton Stephens, Mike Wake.
Vice-chairman	Dan Lloyd		

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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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