

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

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

Photo: Ludlow Museum



The Tolsey in the early 1950s

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

Ludlow was soon under pressure to

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

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

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

Photo: Sutton Publishing Ltd.



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Left: The Star and Garter

Above: Tamberlaine House - both pictures taken in the 60s

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Clifton Cinema

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the Borough Council.

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

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

Hockey's Mill in Temeside, now residential accommodation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Photo: P.S. Stokes

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

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

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bins appear more than once.

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

Photo: Michael Evans

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

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

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

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

Key dates in the history of the Society

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

November 1963 The Society was registered as a Charity.

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

April 1969 Ludlow Conservation Area created within the Town Walls.



The Town Hall, built 1887, demolished 1986

Photo: Ludlow Museum

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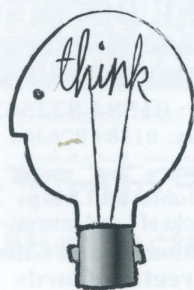
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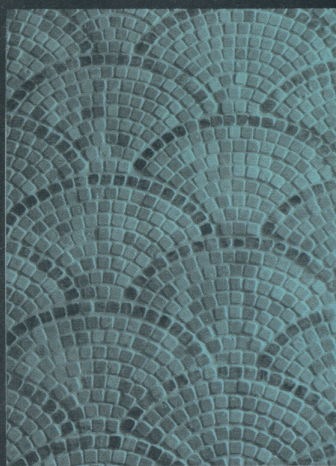
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October 1969 Public Meeting to discuss the route for the Bypass. County Council considering a double tunnel through Whitcliffe.

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

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

October 1971 The Housing Association officially launched.

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

March 1972 The Society became the Ludlow Civic Society.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

January 1979 Boyne House (the Ballroom

Photo: Michael Evans



The doorway at the Guildhall, once at risk

in Broad Street) completed and sold.

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

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

March 1982 Scheme for placing blue plaques on suitable buildings.

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

New listing of historic buildings in Shropshire.

January 1983 Involvement in the future of the Assembly Rooms.

May 1984 First issue of Ludlow Heritage News.

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

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

March 1986 Demolition of the Town Hall.

April 1986 LCS questionnaire on the future

Photo: Michael Evans



The Reader's House

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

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

October 1987 LCS represented on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

Opposed the proposed closure of Ludlow Hospital.

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

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



Lower Broad Street in the 1950s

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

November 1992 LCS interested in the future of Gallows Bank.

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



Photo: English Heritage NMR

St Thomas's Chapel, Dinham

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

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

April 1995 18 Castle Street in a dangerous condition.

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

December 1995 18 Castle Street demolished.



Photo: Ludlow Museum

18 Castle Street...



Photo: Ludlow Museum

...demolished in 1995



Photo: Michael Evans

...new development completed in 2003



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Valerie Thomas

READERS' LETTERS

Any queries, suggestions and responses to articles will be gratefully received. Please address your letters to:

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

MEMORIES

The Winter of 1947

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daphne Jones

Pig Monday

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

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

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

today) was the domain of the farmers.

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

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

Stan Jones

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

A Farmer buys a Car

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

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

Bill Watkins

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

Photo: Ludlow Museum



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

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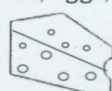
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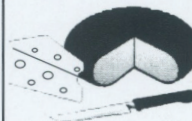
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