

Ludlow Heritage News

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FREE

The Reader's House needs no introduction to readers of Heritage News. On the cover of the edition for Summer 2008, serious concerns were raised about the fate of this Grade I listed building, one of Ludlow's finest. It had remained empty since the death of its last occupant in 2002. Although it had since passed through the hands of two new owners, it was once again back on the market, with no start made on the major repair and renovation work needed.

However, my wife Rebecca and I have now bought the house, determined to repair it and adapt it as our family home. We are doing as much of the work as we can ourselves, partly for the fun and challenge of it, but also to keep the costs to a minimum. Taking early retirement from my job as an archaeologist at Birmingham University has made this project possible, although we both have other commitments, not least a young family!

In some respects it is a pity that a building of the architectural and historical interest of the Reader's House should be used as a family home, allowing only minimal public access. After all, for much of the first half of the last century it was run as a private museum (admission 6d), while for much of the second half it was used as offices for St. Laurence's Church. And going back to the medieval origins of the building, during the 15th century it was the premises of Ludlow's Grammar School.

On the other hand, perhaps the best use for a house is as a house. In order to try to get the best of both worlds, before starting on the repair and alteration, in partnership with the Civic Society and the Ludlow Historical Research Group, we launched a project to research the architecture, history and archaeology of the house. Amongst the outcomes of the project will be an illustrated booklet and an interactive website, the latter allowing the 'visitor' to explore the house 'virtually'. Financial support for this project has been received from English Heritage, the Pilgrim Trust and the Walker Trust, as well as the Civic Society and the Historical Research Group.

The first stage of the project has been to produce an accurate, detailed record of the house as it is today. To do this, the building has been 'laser scanned' by a team from Birmingham University. A laser scan records the exact position, to millimetre

The Reader's House

Simon Buteux discusses the restoration of a Ludlow landmark



The timber-framed rear of the house is less familiar than the front. Since this photograph was taken work has begun on the restoration to their original form of three of the main windows.

Photo: Graham Norrie, University of Birmingham

accuracy, of everything it scans. From this raw data both conventional drawings and 3D models can be generated.

With the help of this detailed record, buildings archaeologist Ric Tyler will work out the architectural development of the house. Essential information on the date and sequence of construction will come from a programme of dendrochronological (tree-ring) dating of some of the timbers. As I write English Heritage have just completed taking ten samples for analysis, and we eagerly await the results. From the rental accounts we have a fairly complete record of who lived in the house when, and combining these with the dendro dates, we expect to be able to work out who built what. We know already that the magnificent three-storey porch was added by Thomas Kaye, rector of St. Laurence's and Chaplain to the Council of the Marches, in 1616. His name and the date are written above the

top window. However, the main part of the timber-framed structure is earlier than this but we aren't yet sure when it was built and by whom. As with so much of Ludlow's history, the main outline of the story of the Reader's House was worked out by David Lloyd, who was a great supporter of the project. He suggested two candidates for the building of the Tudor house: John Dalton, a bookseller who leased the house from 1555, and Francis Jenks, Town Clerk, who leased it from 1592. Hopefully, the dendrochronology results will shortly give us the answer.

The repair and restoration of the house is involving substantial work. As this work progresses we are making archaeological discoveries all the time. For example, under the present cellar floor we have found the footings of a massive medieval stone wall running through the centre of the building. We believe that this is an early churchyard



A watercolour of 1871-2 by George Price Boyce entitled 'Church and Ancient Uninhabited House at Ludlow'. The later 19th century was a period when the house was in severe decay.

wall, built perhaps around 1300. It gives us a clue to the original layout of the churchyard, and original ground levels, which have been much altered since. Soon we will have to dig a deep trench across the garden to install a new drain. This will hopefully provide more clues about the stone-built medieval building that preceded the timber-framed Tudor house (we will dig the trench archaeologically).

We are adopting a 'flexible' approach to the repair, restoration and alteration of the house, letting study of the structure and history of the building inform our decisions on what to do as we go along (in other words, we change our minds a lot). Shropshire Council's conservation team and English Heritage are providing much support for this approach.

The familiar stone-walled front elevation of the house, with its famous three-storeyed timber-frame porch, will remain substantially unaltered. In the timber-framed rear elevation, however, we are restoring several of the windows to their original form. This work, along with

most of the carpentry in the house, is being done by the Ludlow firm, Hubka & Co. However, it is in the gabled south elevation that our work may make the most dramatic impact on the external appearance of the house. It is clear that this south elevation, now largely blank, had a large window (or windows), perhaps of projecting 'oriel' type, running through the ground and first floor. It must have looked very impressive, and would have bathed the two rooms behind in sunlight. In line with our overall approach, at this stage we have applied for permission only to remove the panels infilling the window apertures, which will hopefully expose construction details, so we can work out what the window(s) might have looked like and reconstruct the possibilities on paper. Only then will we decide what we want to do.

An appeal for information and help

Our research into the Reader's House is not just about the architectural history of the house but also its rich social history, and this will be reflected in the publications and web pages that result. It has become clear to us that many people have fascinating recollections of the Reader's House throughout the 20th century, when it was variously a museum and antiques showroom, church offices (with the youth club in the cellar), and the home of Stephen Bacon. We would be delighted and most grateful if people who have such recollections would be prepared to tell us about them, or preferably write them down so that we can incorporate them into the history. Any photographs (we can copy and return these), especially of the interior and the garden would be particularly welcome.

Furthermore, it has become apparent that there are many more historical sources that probably contain information of

relevance to the Reader's house, both in the last century and earlier, than we can manage to study ourselves. If there is anybody who is able to help with this aspect of the research, which promises to be very rewarding and may turn up some unexpected gems, we would be exceedingly grateful.

Contact: Simon Buteux at 01584 872295 or email: s.t.e.buteux@bham.ac.uk



The original window to the parlour was replaced by one of very poor quality, now rotten. A completely new window, to what we believe is the original design, has been built by Adam Foster of Hubka & Co., and is shown here being lifted into place.

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A Tribute to Dr David Lloyd MBE 1935-2009

The sudden and unexpected death of David Lloyd has left us all in shock and continuing sadness.

David was such a presence in Ludlow, with an irreplaceable knowledge of its history, its buildings and its people. Although history was his obvious focus, he became involved in most aspects of life in Ludlow, and many of our organisations owe a debt to David for his contribution to their wellbeing. In writing this tribute I will particularly mention those areas where we had regular contact. David had a special gift in being able to share his knowledge and his enthusiasm, and many of us benefited but also found ourselves drawn into organisations in support of David!

He was a founder member of the Ludlow Historical Research Group in the 1970s and continued as its research advisor until his death. His archive of research and documents has been left to the Ludlow Group and will be housed in the Library Resource Centre. The output of books and papers from this volunteer group are a lasting testimonial to David's influence.

David was Chairman of the Civic Society in 1996, but prior to that was involved with the Society in the 'listing' of Ludlow's many outstanding buildings. He was a regular supporter of the annual lecture series.

Tuesday mornings at the Assembly Rooms were a fixture in many people's diaries for David's exceptional lectures. They were a mix of high quality historical content together with informal interchange



with the audience, many of whom were themselves expert in particular fields. David's unique ability to maintain a strict timetable whilst enabling audience participation was special, and year after year perhaps 150 or more would be there to be part of it.

His contribution to St. Laurence's Church was a great part of his life and he served in many different ways including as Churchwarden and latterly as Conservation Trust Chairman. His fundraising efforts were very much part of David's contribution to all his activities, and many people enjoyed being part of that, ranging from guided

walks around Ludlow and surrounding villages to sponsoring him on his bike ride last year, and of course attending his many lectures. As I conclude this tribute his loss seems all the greater, but he has left behind a legacy which few could rival.

David was a family man with Wendy, his wife, and Susan, Alistair, Margaret and the grandchildren left with a loss even greater than ours. Our thoughts are with them, together with our sincere thanks for sharing him with us and all of Ludlow.

John Nash

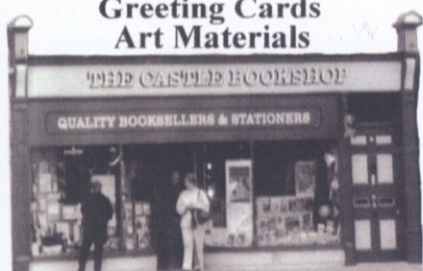
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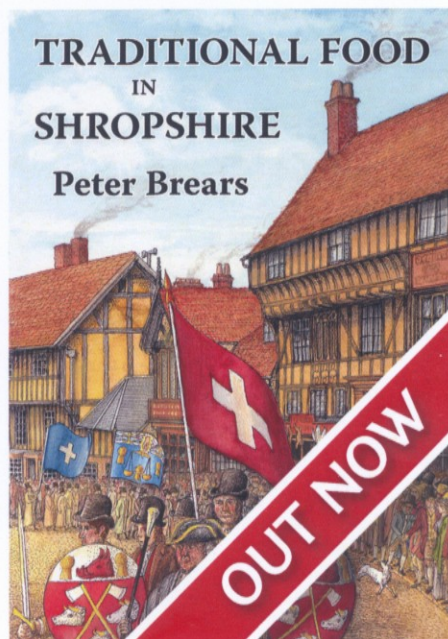
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TRADITIONAL FOOD IN SHROPSHIRE

Peter Brears



A tribute to that great 'Shropshire Lad', David Lloyd, and with grateful thanks for the unfailing inspiration, infectious enthusiasm and encyclopaedic knowledge he shared with members of the Ludlow Historical Research Group - along with sincere apologies to A.E. Housman - from Roy Payne.

When first I came to Ludlow
I heard a wise man say
That Ludlow air and Ludlow days
Allow one time to stand and gaze
And still one's manic city ways.

When next I came to Ludlow
I heard another voice,
As down the hill strode David Lloyd
With many schemes to fill the void,
And keep one gainfully employed.

'Yes, leave your home behind, lad,
And reach the group your hand
To further its researches
While Ludlow tower shall stand.

'Oh! Come you on a Thursday
When Ludlow market's still,
And amateur researchers
Can more than have their fill.

'Of registers and records
Containing a huge cast
Of publicans and sinners
Who peopled Ludlow's past.

'Of burgages and rentals,
Of tradesmen large and small,
Of wardens, priests and merchants.
You'll grow to love them all.

'Then go you home an author,
Or go not home at all,
Your legacy remembered
Till Ludlow tower shall fall.'

THE GEORGIAN GROUP

Julia Ionides describes the activities of the regional branch local to Ludlow

The Georgian Group protects and preserves Georgian buildings, monuments and landscapes. It was founded in 1937 as a response to the destruction of Georgian buildings in Britain, and particularly in London. Outside the towns, country houses were suffering just as badly. An astonishing one in six of them - many Georgian, and many home to exquisitely-crafted interiors - were pulled down in the twentieth century.

Initially, the Georgian Group was a sub-group of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings - hence the word 'group' in its title, which has stuck, but it has

functioned as an independent organisation since the 1940s. Since then it has helped to protect such significant buildings as Carlton House Terrace as well as other superb Georgian terraces in London, Liverpool, Bath, Exeter and Newcastle.

Today, the Georgian Group is a member of the National Amenity Societies. This committee was established to 'preserve the art and architecture of past centuries, promoting the appreciation of buildings and the cultures that produced them'. Other members include the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),



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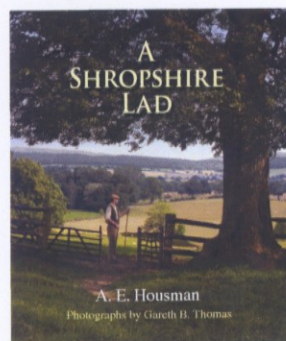
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the oldest conservation society in the English-speaking world, founded in 1877; the Victorian Society; the Garden History Society and the 20th Century Society.

Despite this, the Group has no power to stop buildings being demolished or altered. There are about 6,000 planning applications every year, and constructive comments are made on proposals to help owners, architects and planning authorities towards the best solutions. The Georgian Group, based in London, runs a programme of events throughout the year which includes visits to buildings, study days and conservation courses.

The Shropshire and Marches Regional Branch of the Georgian Group was set up in 1993 at the request of the then events organiser in London. Over the years our events have included visits to country houses and gardens and walks around towns, stretching from Gloucestershire in the south to Cheshire in the north, Staffordshire and Birmingham in the east and Wales in the west.

We also run study days and weekends. One of the most enjoyable was on Ice and Ice Creams, where we had a demonstration of 18th century ice cream making – the marmalade ice cream was delicious! On a more serious note, in 2006 we commemorated the abolition of the slave trade with a day led by James Walvin, an expert on the subject. We held it slightly early as James had so many commitments for the following year that he would have been unable to come. Gardens, Assembly Rooms, Dancing, Anglo-India and the influence of the Ottoman Empire have all been covered. Industrial archaeology, so important in Shropshire, is not left out,

Above right: The 1947 Bedford bus which took the group around Suffolk in 2007.

Left: Admiring the Wisteria at Trawscoed near Welshpool.



and many days and weekends have been organised on this topic.

In addition we run, on average, two conservation days a year for architects, conservation officers and those involved with buildings professionally as well as owners of Georgian houses. We have heard about paint, plasterwork, dry rot, conservation work on St. Helena, how to restore a lighthouse, identifying stones by licking them, and about sash windows and ironwork from the inimitable Charles Brooking, expert on all architectural 'sundries'.

This year we have run our 8th away visit, which in previous years have been to Wales, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Suffolk and Norfolk. The two nights away have now been extended to four this year when we returned to Suffolk.

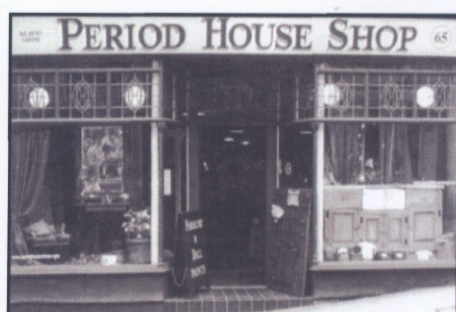
In November this year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the

publication of our book about Shropshire's most distinguished architect, Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. There will be talks about the work of his that has come to light since the book was published, and visits to places that he worked on.

Our visits take place rain or shine, and on the whole we are lucky with the weather, but we always suggest that people come prepared for everything. The Shropshire and Marches Georgian Group events are open to everyone, but prior booking is essential and sometimes there is an extra charge for non-members. An event list for the year is circulated in early January.

Contact: Julia Ionides, 83 Greenacres, Ludlow SY8 1LZ. Tel. 01584 874567. E-mail Julia@dogrosetrust.org.uk

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TRADITIONAL FOOD IN SHROPSHIRE

Meg Pybus reviews a new book by Peter Brears

Shopping with Michelin-starred chef, Shaun Hill in 1997, I was encouraged to find 90% of the produce for the evening meal available in Ludlow's market and old-fashioned specialist food shops. Our baskets overflowed with fresh vegetables, venison, wimberries, bread and cheese.

Traditional Food in Shropshire places my shopping trip in its historical context. 'Virtually every visitor to Shropshire over the last four hundred years has been impressed by its fertile countryside and prosperous market towns. It appears to be a land flowing not only with milk and honey, but also with...meat, corn, fruit and vegetables,' writes Peter Brears.

He is the perfect guide. A prize-winning writer on food, he first takes us into kitchens from castle to manorhouse and cottage. Kitchen inventories present a whole new vocabulary: andirons, jacks, niggards and salamanders, from the vast batterie-de-cuisine of Condover Court to the poor man's simple Coalbrookdale cast-iron pot.

Peter Brears reminds us that we have many reasons to be proud of our culinary heritage. Fifty years before Mrs Beeton, *A New System of Domestic Cookery* sold half a million copies. Mrs Rundell, the author, née Maria Kettleby, was born in Ludlow. Her family owned houses in Castle Square and Castle Street. According to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, her book was 'the earliest manual of household management with any pretensions to completeness, it called forth many imitations'. Surely she deserves a plaque?

The hundred recipes that Peter Brears has unearthed from archives, manuscripts and old cook books are a valuable collection. They are adapted for cooking today. Topically, the chapter on Everyday Fare presents us with opportunities for the cheaper end of wholesome cooking, even though we do not know the rural poverty he describes. For the more ambitious, there are five pages of diagrams for presenting a boar's head. So whether you fancy a Shrewsbury Cake or Market Drayton gingerbread for tea, a simple wimberry pie, a polly flap, a wig or wedding cake, funeral cakes or soul cakes, or lambswool apples for festivals, this

book will give you the recipe and tell you more – the history, the folk tales. They come from every Shropshire nook and cranny.

Happily, Shropshire is still 'flowing'. From north to south traditional breeds are returning to meadows and shops, with venison, the Corvedale prairies, the Ludlow Food Festival and miles of ancient hedgerow wild foods. Despite competition, Shropshire market towns, WIs and flourishing farmers' markets preserve the tradition. This is why this book is so timely. We need to boast to the rest of the country about our special food heritage.

Traditional Food in Shropshire is beautifully produced by David Burnett of Excellent Press of Ludlow, with sumptuous colour plates and meticulous drawings from the author.

Meg Pybus is the author of *Under the Buttercross*, an account of food traditional in Market Drayton. She is currently researching a new book about John Osborne and food at The Hurst.



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NOTES

from the chairman

With autumn in the air, it seems as though we are at a turning point in the year. We can look forward to a new series of lectures which have been arranged by Prue Bellak.

As we look ahead, we expect progress on a number of our projects. The appeal to our members for pledges to enable us to try to buy the land at Advocates Walk was relatively successful and we are now instructing an agent to pursue this further.

The survey on the Reader's House has been completed and the owner has now started work on the renovation of the house. This will form the basis of the lecture in February by Simon Buteux.

Sales of the DVD 'Conserving Historic Buildings' continue at a steady pace without having reached a wider market, so if anyone has marketing skills, particularly using the internet, please give me a call!

The new Shropshire Council has had the inevitable teething problems, and the planning system has been adversely impacted. Trying to follow the progress of applications has been very difficult, and it is fortunate that, as a result of the economic climate, the number of applications has been low. Bill Eastwell is our committee member who co-ordinates our responses to planning matters.

Ian Bott has been obtaining quotes for the hire of a 'cherry picker' to help with the removal of unwanted plant life from the roofs of Ludlow. Why not look up at your roof and gutters and see whether you might wish to take advantage of this opportunity? Details will be available shortly.

We have been following with interest and some concern the plans for the new

Hospital in Ludlow. The greatest concern centres around the co-location of the two GP practices at the hospital, which, with the decision to locate the hospital across the A49, will result in a major loss to the town centre. We have been lobbying for a continuing satellite facility in the town centre at the very least, but this is far from certain. Failing that, most residents of Ludlow will be obliged to drive or catch a bus to visit their doctor, which cannot make sense!

At the time of writing, the funding for the new hospital is somewhat in doubt and it may all need a rethink. In the meantime we will support the various initiatives to bring more treatments into the existing facilities.

I started by referring to a turning point in the year, and, as I look back, the sudden death of David Lloyd followed shortly afterwards by the death of Graeme Kidd, are still hard to believe. They were both people who gave freely of their time and talents to the benefit of Ludlow and will be greatly missed. As I walk about the town I expect to see them on their way to an event or meeting, and it will be some time before we can come to terms with their loss. Our thoughts and sympathy are with their families whose loss is so much greater.

John Nash

EVENTS

The Autumn season began with a very well-attended and highly enjoyable lecture by Peter Brears on 'Traditional Food in Shropshire' on which he had also written a book which was available. This was followed in October by a splendid talk by Caroline Magnus, the owner of Stokesay Court, which was built by glove magnates – hence the title, 'Running the Gauntlet'.

In November we have the story of Rickards, the well-known local

ironmongers, told by Jean Brown, Tony Brown and Norman Grimmett. The usual forum and Christmas party will take place in December, with mince pies and wine. This year it will be held in Palmers' Hall.

The New Year begins with a talk by a local potter, Duncan White, on 'Country Pottery'. This will be followed by an account of the history and restoration of the Reader's House by its owner, Simon Buteux. Then we have a talk by Barbara Holcombe, lecturer in English literature, with the intriguing title 'Barbara Pym – Shropshire's Jane Austen?' Finally, the well-known local publisher Merlin Unwin will give a talk entitled 'Book Publishing – the Awful Truth'. One wonders what that is.

The AGM will be held on May 12th. All talks, except for the Christmas Party, will be held at Oscars.

Prue Bellak

MEMBERSHIP

The current membership year started on 1st September, and at the time of writing (1st October) 190 annual members have renewed their subscriptions. This leaves about 60 of last year's annual members still to renew.

The Society is reliant on membership to finance its own operation and to provide support for a number of local organisations which do valuable work in Ludlow, particularly at present when income from deposits is minimal. We would therefore urge all our members to renew their subscriptions and to encourage any friends or newcomers to the town to join the Society.

An application form is included on the back of this copy of Heritage News, and further copies are available by calling the Membership Secretary on 01584 874373.

John Bowles

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A TRIBUTE TO GRAEME KIDD



It was with great sadness that the Committee of the Civic Society learnt of the death of Graeme Kidd at the age of 52. Graeme had recently taken over the layout and production of the Society's newsletter, Heritage News, and had been responsible for giving it a more 'up to date' look. Graeme came to Ludlow in the 1980s. A native of the West Midlands, Graeme moved to Ludlow via London where he had been involved in various aspects of publishing. He was involved with some of the earliest UK based computer and computer gaming publications, some of which found a somewhat unlikely base in Ludlow from the mid 1980s! Known as the computer expert – at a time when computers were seen as something new – Graeme did much to promote the use of new technologies in the town.

Graeme had a great love of Ludlow and served as an elected member of Ludlow Town Council. He went on to serve as Mayor for four consecutive years between 2003 and 2007. In 1995 he was one of the founding members of the Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival, and he played a pivotal role in the huge international success we see today. Graeme was also heavily involved in the development of the CittaSlow movement in the UK, helping Ludlow to become the first CittaSlow town in Britain. Graeme gave advice to many other groups, and the nine plus CittaSlow towns in the UK bear witness to his influence and guidance.

He is survived by his wife, Sally Newman Kidd, and two sons, Warwick and Alasdair, to whom we send our deepest sympathy.



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

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