

LUDLOW

HERITAGE NEWS

LUDLOW
• CIVIC •
SOCIETY

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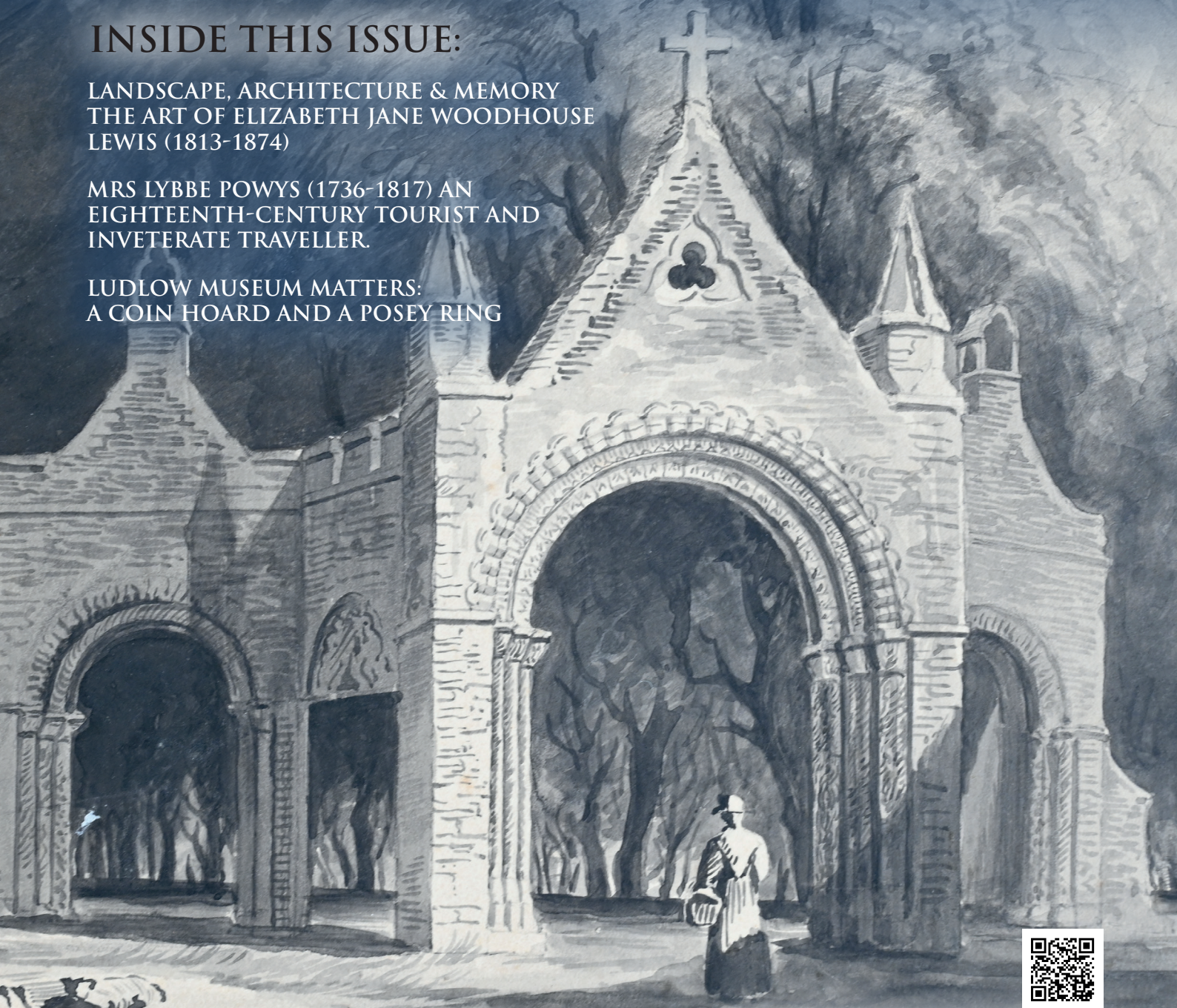
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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TOURIST AND
INVETERATE TRAVELLER.

LUDLOW MUSEUM MATTERS:
A COIN HOARD AND A POSEY RING



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COMMITTEE NEWS

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to the first Heritage News of 2026. Since our last issue (No. 82) in Autumn 2025 the Committee has been remarkably busy and industrious. In September 2025 we launched the first of what we hope will be a series of books about Ludlow's cultural heritage.

This first volume, "Buildings and Structures" has been selling well but some copies are still available at Castle Bookshop (see page 3). Members also enjoyed the usual Christmas celebration party held jointly with the Palmers in St Laurence's on December 10th and thanks go out to the Palmers for organising this. Towards the end of 2025 it became clear that the Friends of Ludlow Museum (FOLM) and the Historical Research Association were no longer viable organisations. There followed a series of discussions between the Civic Society and these groups, and it was agreed that the Civic Society would absorb the functions of these organisations and use remaining funds ring-fenced in the care of the Civic Society to further their aims. We are pleased to announce that as a result of these discussions, and correspondence with the Charities Commission by our indomitable treasurer Bill Cawley, that this has now been formalised. As a result, we hope to both support the work of Ludlow Museum and to continue to promote historical scholarship

relating to the town of Ludlow. One outcome of this is that we hope to have a regular slot in Heritage News under the heading "Ludlow Museum Matters" and the first report on this can be found on page 17.

The Committee were also pleased to represent the Society at St Laurence's Winter Festival on 29th November and Committee members Ann, Marina, Susan and Stephen did a sterling job promoting our cause and selling some merchandise (see below). Finally, in Autumn 2025 the Society planted an attractive ornamental tree in memory of two committee members, Jane and Michael Hunt, in the gardens alongside St John's Road. We are grateful to Ludlow Town Council for permission for this planting and feel the tree fills a useful space to complement other more mature trees there.

In this issue we present major articles on two remarkable women: Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis and Mrs Lybbe Powys. Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis was an accomplished amateur artist born in Mill Street, Ludlow in 1813 and possessed

of remarkable intellectual energy and independence. She married Ludlow-born geologist, antiquarian and churchman Thomas Taylor Lewis. Her work and artistic legacy is discussed by Nicola Kearton. This article coincides with an exhibition on Elizabeth Lewis in the Buttercross Museum starting in February 2026.

The second article is by Lady Valerie Thomas and describes the travels of Mrs Lybbe Powys - an eighteenth-century traveller and tourist who has left observation of her visits to Ludlow and the surrounding area in the form of a diary. This gives a fascinating insight into the sensibilities and experiences of a wealthy lady visiting Ludlow in the 1770s.

The notes above describe the visible manifestations of our work. But we should also acknowledge the tireless work of our sub-committee planning team that constantly monitor scrutinise and comment on planning applications that affect our town.

John Cartwright



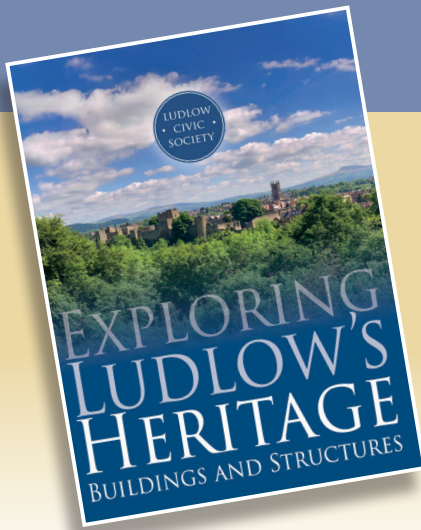
Susan Ashman promoting our cause at the festival.

CIVIC SOCIETY AT THE WINTER FESTIVAL 2025

LCS was delighted to be a part of the successful Winter Festival held in our beautiful St Laurence's church on 29th November 2025.

It was wonderful to see thousands turning out to enjoy this event and support local small businesses, crafts people and charities. We were pleased to see our members and talk to both visitors and residents about our key role in keeping Ludlow a beautiful place for all to enjoy. It was also encouraging to see our latest book being snapped up. Many thanks to our volunteers who helped to make this event a success.

Susan Ashman



NEW BOOK: EXPLORING LUDLOW'S HERITAGE: BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

SELLING WELL BUT COPIES
STILL AVAILABLE FROM

Castle Bookshop
LUDLOW

In October 2025 Ludlow Civic Society announced the release of "Exploring Ludlow's Heritage," which delves into the town's Medieval, Georgian, and Victorian structures.

The book compiles 27 articles, initially published in the society's biannual magazine from 2000 to 2024, and includes contributions from historians, property owners, and locals with specialist knowledge. The society decided to gather these articles into a single volume to provide a comprehensive resource on Ludlow's architectural history. All profits go towards Ludlow Town Walls trust. Copies from Castle Bookshop, Ludlow.



Left to right: John Cartwright, Marina Towner, Colin Richards, Ann Hedges and Susan Ashman at the book launch 4th October 2025.



TREE PLANTING

October 14th 2025. John Cartwright, Wendy McCracken and Ann Hedges planting a tree in memory of Jane and Michael Hunt

Members of the Ludlow Civic Society have recently planted a beautiful tree with exceptionally colourful autumn foliage in St John's Garden, Ludlow. The tree was supplied by Frank P Matthews of Tenbury Wells and planted in memory of Jane and Michael Hunt. Both Jane and Michael were very active members of the Civic Society who worked enthusiastically and tirelessly to support the work undertaken by the society. Their active involvement inspired others to join the society and to take part in initiatives and activities undertaken by the group. They are sorely missed.

LUDLOW'S CREST GETS A MAKEOVER

The Hosyer-Foxe Charity has recently completed significant repair, and redecoration works on both the front and rear of the Hosyers Almshouses. While the scaffolding was in place, additional works were undertaken, including roof repairs, targeted repointing of brickwork, removal of obsolete television aerials, and the restoration and painting of the Ludlow Crest—a prominent feature associated with the Ludlow Coat of Arms displayed on the property.

To ensure historical accuracy with regard to paint colours, Mrs Juliet Diamond of the Ludlow Civic Society provided guidance. Eric Williams, Clerk to the Trustees, researched and identified valuable reference materials on the Ludlow Civic Society's website.

Each feature of the crest represents some aspect of Ludlow's heritage: the feathers symbolise the connection with the Prince of Wales and the Council of the Marches, the white roses symbolise the House of York that had a close connection with Ludlow and helped finance the building of the Church Tower, and the lion couchant and guardant symbolises the connection with the powerful Mortimer family.

A notable publication, *Ludlow Heritage News* (Issue No. 2, September 1984), details the last major repainting of the Ludlow Coat of Arms—completed in 1984 under the auspices of the Ludlow Civic Society by stonemason Norman Griffin and graphic artist Derek James, who implemented authentic heraldic colours and restored the gilded Latin inscription beneath the arms.

For the current project, scaffold installation was provided by local contractor Steve Dovey and his team, while local tradesmen Tommy McCourt and Dave Edwards undertook the programme of works with considerable pride and attention to detail.

The cleaning of the Ludlow Crest was carried out meticulously, employing gentle tools such as toothbrushes to safeguard the stonework, resulting in the successful restoration of the original heraldic colours. Although the gilded lettering beneath the crest did not require renewal at this time, refinements were made to the black background for improved definition.

Over successive years, the Trustees of the Hosyer-Foxe Charity have maintained high standards in property management. Projects have included roof replacement following the detection of Deathwatch Beetle infestation, flat modernisation, reconstruction of the historic backyard wall, repairs to numerous windows, and ongoing exterior decoration.

With the conclusion of the last Quinquennial survey and the completion of identified works, planning has already commenced for the next survey, scheduled for 2026.

This proactive approach ensures that the preservation and maintenance of the Hosyers Almshouses will continue for the benefit of future generations.



LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE & MEMORY

THE ART OF ELIZABETH JANE WOODHOUSE LEWIS (1813-1874)

By Nicola Kearton



A miniature of Elizabeth, aged around 18 years old, with a fur-trimmed Ferguson tartan shawl around her shoulders.

Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis lived for much of her life at Yatton Court, Aymestrey, the family home built by her great-grandfather John Woodhouse. She seems to have been a remarkably independent spirit, who defied her father by marrying Ludlow-born fossil collector and antiquarian, Revd Thomas Taylor Lewis. An accomplished artist with a deep interest in architecture and local history, Elizabeth was closely involved in the intellectual circles of her husband. Lewis was one of the geological pioneers of Ludlow, playing a key role in the development of the Ludlow Museum and the Natural History Society. She produced numerous finely detailed drawings and watercolours of ancient buildings and landscapes in Herefordshire and South Shropshire. Some of these now serve as invaluable records of structures that have since been altered or lost. Her work reflects the intellectual curiosity of the Victorian period, the often-overlooked contribution of women and a strong concern for conservation.

Beginnings

Born in Mill Street, Ludlow, where her family had a town house, and baptised on 4th March 1813,¹ Elizabeth's early life was shaped by the loss of her mother when she was barely a year old. Ludlow had a reputation for skilled physicians, but despite this, the 21-year-old Eliza fell victim to puerperal fever after giving birth to a stillborn child. Elizabeth was then left in the care of her widowed maternal grandmother, Mrs Elizabeth Woodhouse, while her father, Scottish naval officer Captain George Ferguson, returned to active service in the Mediterranean.

At the time of his marriage to Eliza, in 1812, George Ferguson had been given a handsome annuity of £2,400 by his father-in-law, although the bulk of the Woodhouse estates remained outside his control. The Woodhouses were a family of lawyers and land agents who, by the end of the 18th century, had become significant landowners in both north and south Herefordshire. As the

illegitimate son of George Ferguson, fourth laird of Pitfour, Captain George's prospects were uncertain: he was accruing considerable gambling debts and had yet to be settled as his father's heir. Possibly the family had taken steps to protect the estate against Ferguson, which in due course gave Elizabeth financial independence and, with that, the ability to choose her own husband.

In 1821, Ferguson inherited the Pitfour estate, in Aberdeenshire, as well as lucrative plantations on Tobago, worked by enslaved people. This gave him the resources to marry a substantial heiress, the Hon. Elizabeth Rowley, and commence an eye-wateringly extravagant programme of 'improvements' on the Pitfour estate which eventually devastated the family finances.² Some of these were noted by the young Elizabeth, who visited her father in 1826, when she was twelve, travelling by steam packet from London with her grandmother. In her diary, written in a well-formed hand, she comes across as lively and intelligent: 'Mr Paotti [sic] has been here putting up the figures, One of Venus is remarkably beautiful, but the other

would be better for a gown and is placed in the room through which you must pass to go to dinner.³

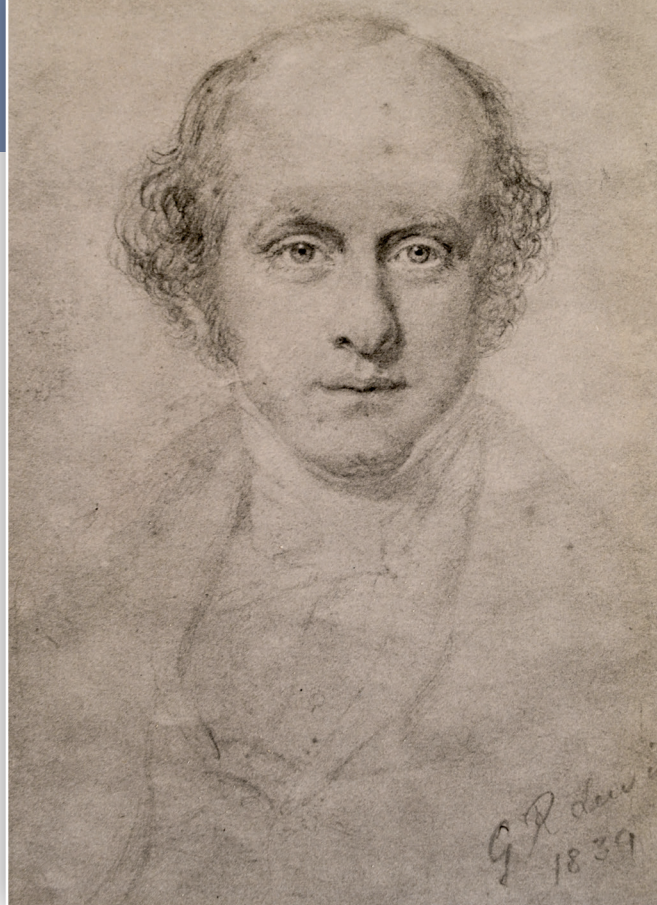
Elizabeth spent much of her childhood and early adulthood in Kensington with her grandmother. Mrs Woodhouse was the eldest of eight children of Canon William Holcombe of St David's, Pembrokeshire, who had engaged the architect John Nash to restore and rebuild parts of the cathedral.⁴ She ensured that Elizabeth received a broad education for a girl at that time. Given her own early exposure to the ruins of St David's Cathedral, perhaps she helped inspire her granddaughter's lifelong fascination for church architecture and its preservation. Elizabeth's artistic talents were encouraged by lessons from the landscape artist, Copley Fielding, who encouraged drawing from nature *en plein air*. By the early 1830s, the two seem to have split their time between Kensington and Yatton Court, Aymestrey, with occasional trips to Bath. Mrs Woodhouse wrote in friendly terms to the young, widowed curate of Aymestrey, Revd Thomas Taylor Lewis, offering to send books that he might need from London and requesting his help in supervising the planting of apple trees for the use of her granddaughter.⁵ However, in December 1833, she died and, a few months later, Elizabeth reached her majority and was effectively financially independent, if very much alone.

Love, Geology and a Sense of Mission

Left to her own devices, Elizabeth increasingly spent time in Aymestrey. Across the River Lugg from Yatton Court was the vicarage, home to the Revd T. T. Lewis, whose small daughter Kitty became Elizabeth's companion. Lewis's first wife had died in Ludlow in the days following Kitty's birth—a mirroring of the fate



Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis, c.1863-64, studio portrait by Thomas Jones of Ludlow.



Revd. Thomas Taylor Lewis, 1839, pencil sketch by the artist George Robert Lewis (author of *The Ancient Church of Shobdon*, 1852).

of Elizabeth's own mother. Lewis shared Elizabeth's intellectual curiosity and seriousness of purpose. He himself had local roots – his father had owned a butcher's shop at 2 Broad Street in Ludlow – although he had gained a scholarship to the prestigious Cheam School in Surrey, followed by St John's Cambridge. Here he attended lectures by Adam Sedgwick, one of the great figures of the 'heroic age' of geology. Sedgwick encouraged enthusiasts to get outside into the field and, following the death of Eliza, the grief-stricken Lewis did just that, writing that he had 'zealously collected the fossils which were everywhere in abundance, strewn over the roads and fields.'⁶

In 1831, Lewis was introduced to Roderick Murchison, president of the newly formed Geological Society of London, who was studying the ancient rocks of the Welsh Borders. Lewis guided him through the area, introducing him to local formations and to his own meticulous sequencing of fossils. It was this sequencing that aligned with Murchison's wider observations and contributed to the conception of the Silurian System. Lewis thus provided an important local scientific foundation on which others built. He was also at the centre of a 'nest' of enthusiastic amateur geologists, focussed in the Ludlow area, and one of the founding members of the Ludlow Natural History Society and Museum. For Elizabeth, this geological milieu must have been significant: her wide panoramas of the surrounding hills and close-up studies of the roughly weathered Silurian limestone, from which many of the buildings of Aymestrey were constructed, suggests an awareness of the underlying structures of these landscapes. As new conceptions of deep time spread among educated circles in the Welsh Borders, Elizabeth, along with other women of the area, would likely have been receptive to these ideas. It is notable that the first meetings of the Ludlow Natural History Society were attended by women including Lucy Countess of Powys and Frances Stackhouse Acton, key supporters of the Siluria Project.⁷

Alongside his geological pursuits, Lewis believed passionately in widening access to education. The village school in Aymestrey was unusual in that it was funded by a charity, founded in the reign of Henry VIII. However, by the 1830s, the finances of the Onneslo school were being misused and the buildings had fallen into neglect.



'Shobdon Arches', c.1840, placed in a parkland setting by Lord Bateman, painting in monochrome, c.1840.

Lewis galvanised the local trustees, supported by Mrs Woodhouse and increasingly by Elizabeth,⁸ and eventually succeeded in constructing a new schoolhouse and later appointing a qualified teacher who was capable of delivering the broader curriculum then being introduced nationally.⁹ Elizabeth played an important role in the school's revival, contributing £20 a year and providing a rent-free cottage. In early 1838 she wrote to Lewis of her willingness to do anything within her power to improve the lives of the parish poor. He faced local resistance including from his vicar, the largely absent

Revd. James Landon, who feared placing further strain on limited parish finances, but Lewis threatened to leave the parish if he did not get his way. As a young and conscientious Lady of the Manor, Elizabeth was drawn deeply into this campaign, and it is easy to surmise that this shared sense of mission first drew the two together.

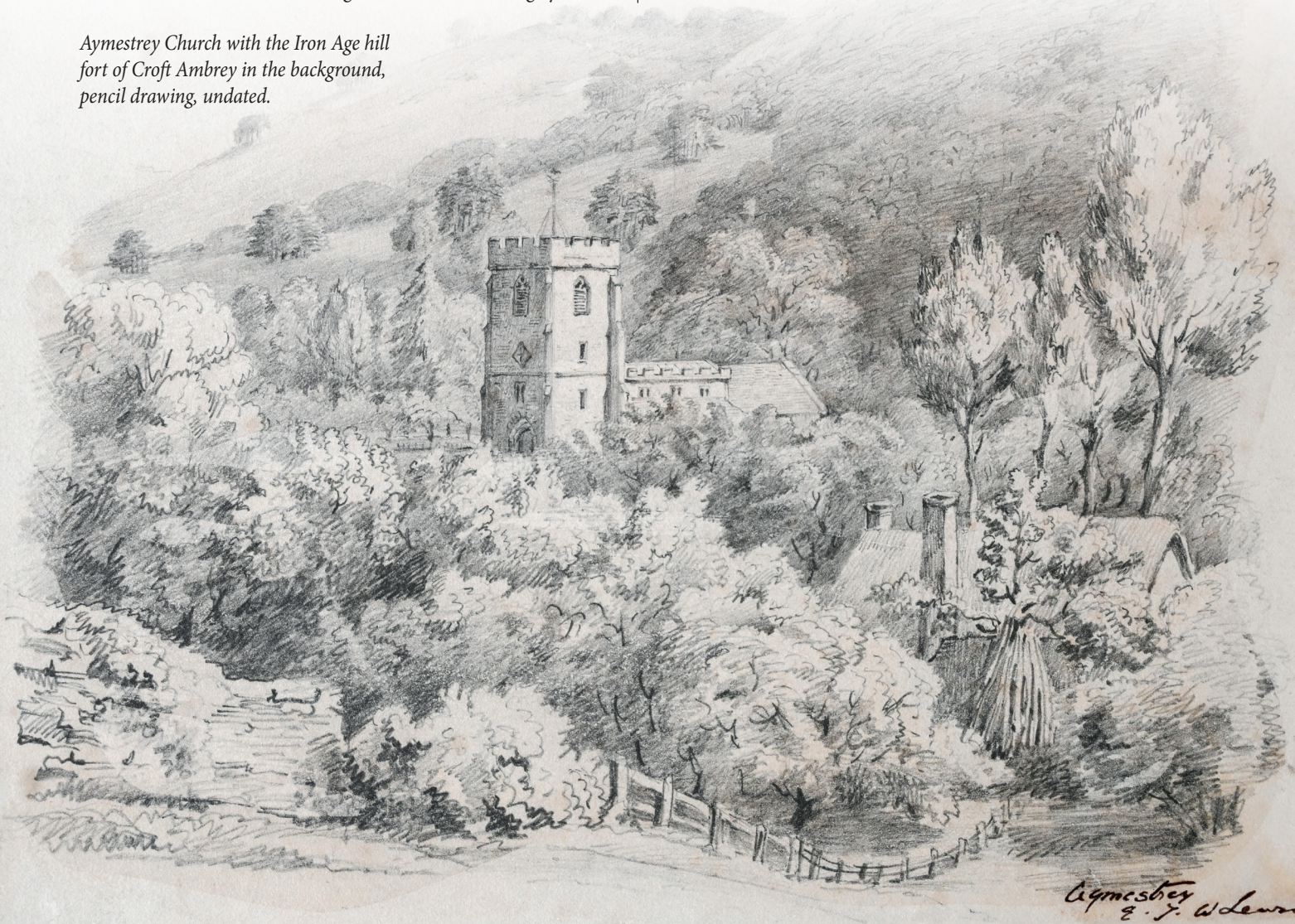
Elizabeth resisted pressure from her increasingly autocratic father, George Ferguson, who refused to accept her decision to marry a lowly curate, and cut her off permanently. The couple were married on 21st June, 1838, at St Mary Abbots, Kensington, close to Elizabeth's childhood home, and soon afterwards were enjoying what appears, from their shared sketchbook, to have been a most delightful honeymoon on the Isle of Wight.

Pictures of Aymestrey

Elizabeth's artistic output in the late 1830s and early 1840s was prolific. Her albums document travels all over the country, but her principal focus was Aymestrey and its immediate surroundings. Given the unevenness of the local terrain, Elizabeth, like Lewis, must have been a strong walker, with a stout pair of shoes as well as copious sketch books.

Evidence of the past permeates this part of north Herefordshire in a way that was irresistible to 19th-century Romantics. The stone tower of Aymestrey Church, built of Aymestrey [sic] limestone, the formation named by Murchison in a gesture to Lewis, was one of Elizabeth's favourite subjects. It was thought by the Victorians to

Aymestrey Church with the Iron Age hill fort of Croft Ambrey in the background, pencil drawing, undated.





Yatton Court, Aymestrey, view from across the Court Meadows, watercolour, undated (photograph: Joanna Middelthon).



St Giles, Pipe Aston, tympanum, 2nd July 1839. The annotation states that a copy of the drawing was included on Lord Berwick's cape for the celebrated Shropshire Pageant of 1934. Lord Berwick from Attingham Park took part in the pageant dressed as The Bishop.

have been used for defensive purposes during the border skirmishes of the Middle Ages. In Elizabeth's drawings, the tower is set against the backdrop of the Iron Age hill fort of Croft Ambrey; or viewed from the steep escarpment of Poke House Wood. Elizabeth used the tower as a vehicle through which to experiment with technique and mood, manipulating scale and atmosphere to heighten emotional effect. She repeatedly depicted the medieval preaching cross in the churchyard, suggesting an awareness of its historical significance as well as its precarious condition.

Yatton Court, clad rather unusually for the area in a glowing Bath stone and finished in the 1790s, stands out dramatically against the surrounding river meadows and woodland. Its large sash windows give onto light-filled interiors; this would have greatly aided the completion of Elizabeth's finely worked pencil drawings and watercolours, which she finessed from rougher sketches made on the spot. On the other side of the Roman road, the sluices of Aymestrey

Mill were used to control the often-unruly waters of the Lugg, channelling water into the parkland for the livestock. Elizabeth frequently drew Aymestrey Mill along with the triple-arched stone bridge, rebuilt after particularly devastating floods in 1795 by the master bridge-builder John Gethin of Kingsland. The landscape drawn by Elizabeth had deep personal significance and her affection for Lewis is also reflected in drawings of sites associated with their shared life: Aymestrey Vicarage, the Onneslo School, and the Great Quarry, where Lewis had made so many of his finds.

Romanesque Sculpture and Recording the Past

During the 1840s, Elizabeth's interests expanded beyond landscape to the exuberant, 12th-century sculpture, unique to the churches of the Welsh border, with its perplexing but playful blend of pagan imagery and Christian dogma. This sculpture, later termed the Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture, had been neglected for centuries; that any survives today is remarkable. Elizabeth produced detailed studies of sculptural elements at churches including Kilpeck, Eardisley and Pipe Aston, as well as an extensive comparative album of fonts from sites as far away as Lincoln Cathedral, St Mary's Beverley, or St Martins, Canterbury. This she titled *A Book of Fonts*.

Elizabeth appears to have worked alongside the artist George Robert Lewis, whose celebrated illustrated publications on Kilpeck and Shobdon helped raise awareness of this sculpture.¹⁰ Her drawings of the Shobdon Arches are particularly significant, as erosion has since destroyed much of the original detail. Elizabeth's albums also include drawings by George Robert Lewis and his sons, suggesting collaboration and exchange.¹¹ Comparing their work indicates that Elizabeth accompanied them on sketching expeditions, presumably offering local knowledge and hospitality. The activity of visiting medieval country churches was increasing in popularity with the arrival of the railways in the mid-1850s.

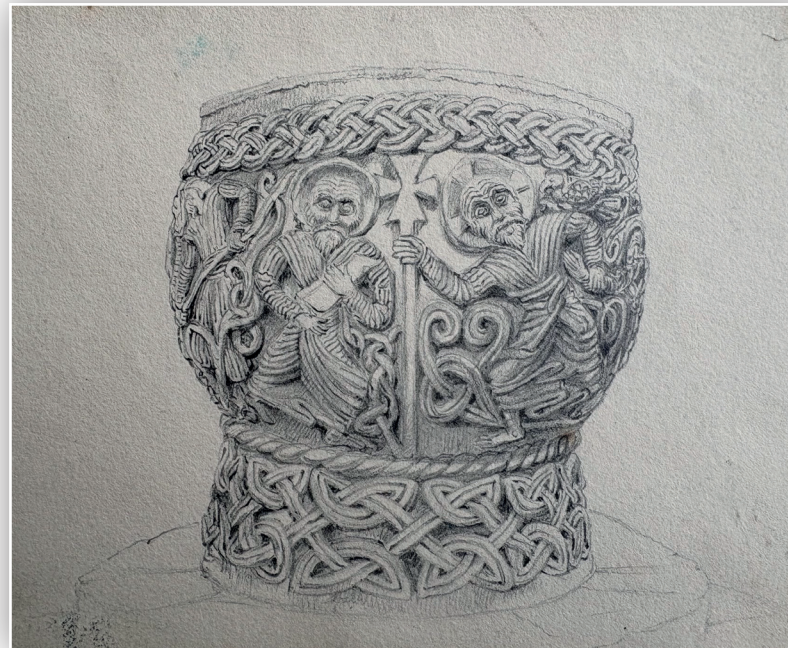
However, individuals like Elizabeth and the family of George Robert Lewis went further. They recognised that these monuments were fragile and under threat nationally and were part of early efforts to promote their conservation. Elizabeth's drawings of country houses, later demolished, such as Stoke Edith, Shobdon Court or Aramstone House, Kings Caple, owned by the Woodhouses, together with her many depictions of vernacular buildings provide a valuable record of the area's lost architectural heritage.



Networks of Enquiry

Lewis was appointed to a comfortable living at Bridstow in 1842, close to Kings Caple, and the couple moved with their growing family. Elizabeth continued to draw while extending her intellectual and social networks. Illustration was one of the key areas where women, with their limited exposure to formal education, could take part in otherwise male-dominated academic endeavours. Elizabeth had links with a number of women who contributed illustrations and scholarship to ground-breaking publications, including Lady Frances Vernon Harcourt, the illustrator of Revd C. J. Robinson, *A History of The Castles of Herefordshire and Their Lords* (1869) and Frances Stackhouse Acton, the prolific writer and artist whose many achievements included initiating the preservation of Stokesay Castle. A glimpse of collaboration is provided by the discovery of the Civil War letters of Lady Brilliana Harley, in an attic at Brampton Bryan Hall by Mrs Stackhouse Acton. These were transcribed by Lady Frances, who was living at Yatton Court during the 1850s, edited by Lewis and published by The Camden Society in 1854. These letters offer a rare insight into the female experience of the English Civil War during this period and must have been much discussed within their circle. A drawing in the Harley archives depicts the simplicity of the church at Brampton Bryan, built during the Protectorate, following the destruction wrought by Royalist forces. Although unsigned, it is clearly Elizabeth's work and shows the church before its external appearance underwent significant change later in the 19th century. Traces of the Civil War can be found all over the area, and the effects of time on crumbling castle walls, half reclaimed

St Barnabas, Brampton Bryan, c.1834, pencil drawing depicting the Protectorate-era church before it was transformed in the late 19th century (photograph: Edward Harley, courtesy of The Harley Archive).



The font at St Mary Magdalene, Eardisley, undated.

by nature, were a recurring theme for Elizabeth as evidenced in drawings of Ludlow Castle, Hopton, Stokesay and, particularly, Wigmore.

In 1851, Lewis co-founded the influential Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, of which he later became president. Although women were excluded from formal membership until 1954, Elizabeth was part of the wider informal network of enquiry, likely hosting gatherings and joining excursions. In all Lewis's endeavours, one senses Elizabeth's support and involvement. Shortly before he died suddenly of a stroke in 1858, Lewis was distressed by Murchison's perfunctory acknowledgement, in his 1854 publication *Siluria*, of the help that Lewis had given him and he wrote to his friend in vehement terms. Elizabeth advised 'throwing the note behind the fire', though Lewis's insistence arguably helped secure his later recognition. Murchison, genuinely grieved by Lewis's death, made a far more fulsome acknowledgement in the next edition, and included a personal letter to Elizabeth with a signed copy of the volume.



Ludford Church, pencil drawing, 14th July 1834 (Elizabeth notes it as being in Herefordshire, as it was until 1895).

[I] ... endeavoured to do justice to the scientific merits of your excellent and lamented husband ... Looking as I do with lively gratification on the many happy days we spent together long before he became attached to you – & rejoicing in having been his warmest friend at the happy period of his marriage.¹²

Life after Lewis

Lewis's sudden death in 1858 marked a decisive shift in Elizabeth's life and circumstances. She returned to Yatton Court with her three teenage daughters Agnes, Alice and Edith, each of whom later married local men.¹³ Lewis, and no doubt Elizabeth, had been involved in the proposed restoration of Bridstow Church at the time of his death, and it is likely that she transferred her energies to plans for Aymestrey Church. Although its restoration was not completed until 1886, twelve years after Elizabeth had died, she was remembered as an 'early and earnest promoter' of the project. Lewis, known affectionately to his Woolhope colleagues as 'The grandfather of the Silurian system', occupies a recognised place in the history of 19th-century geology, yet Elizabeth, like many Victorian women, has remained largely invisible. From the surviving evidence, however, she emerges as an accomplished artist, intellectual partner, and committed recorder of a landscape and heritage already under threat. An extensive body of her work survived within the family. Her albums—combining drawings, photographs, and

quotations—offer a vivid insight into her intellectual interests, aesthetic values, and emotional world. Her work documents buildings and monuments now altered or lost and reflects an early consciousness of conservation. It also points to a wider network of women contributing quietly but significantly to scholarship and cultural preservation in Herefordshire—contributions that are only now beginning to receive the recognition they deserve.



St James's Church, Wigmore, interior view. The watercolour is undated but it predates the restoration by George Bodley 1864-68.



Mortimer's Tower, Ludlow Castle, pencil drawing, 14th July 1834.



Aymestrey Mill, October 1837, rebuilt following a fire in the 1860s.

Further reading: Nicola Kearton, 'Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis: Love and Art in Siluria', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, 72 (2024), pp 56-81.

Endnotes

- 1 Elizabeth's gravestone in Aymestrey church and memorial window at King's Cople give her birth year as 1814, but her baptism record and evidence from the Chancery suggest that she was in fact born in 1813. In the family, it was thought that her mother had died following her birth but, in fact, Eliza seems to have died following the birth of a second 'unconscious' daughter. There is a beautiful wall tablet relief to Eliza by John Flaxman R.A. also at King's Cople.
- 2 For a full description of the 'improvements' and ultimate ruin of the estate, see Buchan, *Pitfour: Blenheim of the North*, op cit. Pitfour house was demolished in 1926.
- 3 Elizabeth might have meant Bartolomeo Paoletti (1757–1834) or his son, Pietro (1801–1847) both prolific casters of classical sculptures whose work would have been popular at the time.
- 4 Richard Suggett gives an account of Holcombe's involvement in what turned out to be a highly contentious scheme in "Done after the Fantastic Order": John Nash's Restoration of St David's Cathedral', *The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XXI, 2013, pp. 106-22.
- 5 Letter from Mrs Elizabeth Woodhouse to Revd T. T. Lewis, 7th February 1832, BR52/28 HARC.
- 6 J. C. Thackray, 'T. T. Lewis and Murchison's Silurian System', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, 42, 1977, pp. 186-93.
- 7 J Norton, '150 Years of Ludlow Museum', *Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society*, 3, 27 (1983).
- 8 Correspondence between Lewis, the Trustees of the Onneslo Charity, the Bishop of Hereford and others provides evidence of the personal involvement of both Elizabeth and her grandmother, as well as Lewis's organisational abilities (HARC BR52).
- 9 Margaret Turner, 'The Rev T. T. Lewis and the Wall family of Aymestrey in the early 19th century', *Herefordshire FHS*, April 1999, pp. 184-89.
- 10 G. R. Lewis, *Illustrations of Kilpeck Church, Herefordshire, with an Essay on Ecclesiastical Design and a Descriptive Interpretation* (1842); *The Ancient Church of Shobdon, Herefordshire, illustrated and described* (1852).
- 11 Henry Barrett Lewis and George Lennard Lewis, *Herefordshire Drawings 1837–1841*, 2 vols, HARC.
- 12 Letter from Murchison to Elizabeth, London, 2nd February 1859, family collection. This letter was slipped inside a signed copy of the third edition of Sir Roderick Murchison, *Siluria: The History of the Oldest Fossiliferous Rocks and Their Foundations*, John Murray, London 1859.
- 13 Agnes married J. G. Rodney Ward, Lady Langdale's agent for the Harley estates, who subsequently undertook an extensive building programme around Aymestrey; Alice married Robert Wyndham Smith and took over Aramstone House; and Edith married the Revd. Thomas Owen Rocke of Clungunford, son of one of Lewis's many geological friends.

MRS CAROLINE LYBBE POWYS

by Valerie Thomas

Mrs Lybbe Powys was an eighteenth-century tourist, an inveterate traveller. The most important thing about her is that she recorded her journeys in the form of a diary, sometimes incorporating letters to family and friends, which details her observations and opinions as she travelled about the country from 1756 to 1808. She never travelled abroad but confined her journeys to England itself. And in 1771 she visited Ludlow.

Caroline Lybbe Powys was born Caroline Girdle in 1736. She was the only surviving child of John Girdle, surgeon-in-chief at St Thomas's Hospital and a member of the Royal Society, and his wife Barbara Slaney. Both of her parents came from prosperous families. Her father had property in Berkshire and built his own house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Her mother had estates in Worcestershire and Berkshire. After their deaths Caroline was a wealthy woman.

She grew up in London but after her father died, she and her mother moved to Caversham near the Berkshire property. It was at a local assembly that she met her husband, Philip Lybbe Powys. They were married on 5th August 1762 at Whitchurch-on-Thames in Oxfordshire. Philip's father, another Philip, was the son of Sir Thomas Powys of Henley Hall near Ludlow, and his second wife Elizabeth Meadows. He married Isabella Lybbe, daughter of Richard Lybbe who was High Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1739. Their son was given his mother's surname as a second Christian name, though it seems to have been adopted as part of his surname and so later made its way to his wife as well, though in documents such as her will she is given her correct name, Caroline Powys. Philip graduated in Civic Law at St John's College Oxford and was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1759. Thereafter, he practised as a lawyer in Oxfordshire. In 1778 he was made Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

His family estate was at Hardwick, near Whitchurch-on-Thames, on the bank of the river, a venerable old house which had come to them through Isabella Lybbe. In her journal Mrs Lybbe Powys is quite scathing about the poor position of other houses she visits, comparing them to Hardwick which, set back to avoid flooding, is beautifully situated by the river. She describes it as 'a large old house, almost twelve rooms on a

floor, with four staircases, the situation delightful, on the declivity of a hill, the most beautiful woods behind and fine views of the Thames and rich meadows in front.'

Philip's brother, Thomas, was Rector of nearby Fawley where he lived at the Rectory. He later became Dean of Canterbury Cathedral and was a chaplain to George III. Rumour has it that he proposed unsuccessfully to Jane Austen's mother, Cassandra Leigh, who grew up near Henley-on-Thames, and he did officiate at her marriage to the Revd. George Austen in Bath and was godfather to one of their children.

Philip and Caroline had first a daughter, Caroline, who died, then two sons, Philip Lybbe and Thomas, and later another daughter, Caroline Isabella who married Jane Austen's cousin, Edward Cooper. When their sons had grown up and left home, the Lybbe Powyses and their daughter left Hardwick and moved into Fawley Rectory with the Rev. Thomas. Later, to their delight, their elder son moved back to Hardwick with his family.

The Lybbe Powyses seem to have had a very happy marriage in which they shared a busy social life around Henley, attending dinners, balls and amateur dramatics put on by the local gentry. And, above all, Philip seems to have had plenty of spare time to accompany his wife on her journeys around the country. Later, his poor health led to their long and regular visits to Bath. But Caroline's journeys began six years before her marriage. In 1756, when she was eighteen, she went with her mother and family friends, the Jacksons, on a trip to Norfolk. Her father was unable to go with them, and he had asked her to write an account of the tour, and, as she says, 'to be particular in my description of places and things that might give me entertainment'. This keeping of a journal became a habit



'Etruscan profile' silhouette of Lybbe Powys taken by Jacob Spornberg at Bath, 1807.

as her taste for travelling grew. She was a cheerful and indomitable tourist, making more journeys to Oxford, Yorkshire and Plymouth before her marriage.

Travel was by no means easy or comfortable. Apart from a limited number of arterial routes, anything off the main tracks was very hard going and before the end of the seventeenth century no-one travelled unless they had to or had a definite purpose for doing so. The uniting of the kingdom, for instance, led to accounts of the country which involved travelling the length and breadth of the land such as Defoe's 'Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain', (1724 - 1726). But gradually people wanted to see for themselves, and those who had the leisure and the wealth were willing to brave the inconveniences to satisfy their curiosity. And increasingly they wanted to record their impressions and to tell of their adventures. Maps such as Ogilby's road maps of 1675 began to appear to help them on their way.

Even with the new turnpike roads (from 1663 onwards), most tracks could become impassable, from the deep wet clay in Sussex where the horses could sink to their bellies, to the sand of East Anglia where Mrs Lybbe Powys remarks 'for about thirteen miles, deep sand over the horses' hoofs'. Where carriages and carts passed often there were deep ruts. Floods were frequent and bridges unsafe; ditches and drains were often neglected. Shropshire was well-known for its bad roads and long journeys. The locals, though, took these inconveniences in their stride. Mrs Lybbe Powys says of her hosts, 'They think nothing of going a dozen miles for dinner, tho' own to being bruised to death and quite dishabillered [unclothed] by the jolts they must receive.' Whether you travelled by public stagecoach or hired a private post chaise or had your own carriage,



A watercolour of Hardwick House, the family seat of the husband of Caroline Lybbe Powys painted by Lewis John Wood RI in 1869.

the roads were a risk. Stagecoaches were cheaper, of course, than private coaches, but extremely uncomfortable. Springs at the time were rudimentary.

Accidents were common, but they were not the only danger. There was also the threat of highwaymen. Mrs Lybbe Powys tells us that in 1797 her husband and their son Tom were robbed by a highwayman only four miles from Henley, on the Oxford road, just at three o'clock. She shows some sympathy with the robber, though, as 'We hear the poor man was drowned the week after by trying to escape...through some water which was very deep. He behaved civilly, and seemed, as he said, greatly distressed [impoverished].'

So given such difficulties and discomforts it's hard to see why anyone should set out on a journey unless they had to. But tourism became ever more popular. There were wonderful new houses and gardens to see, and to visit if the family was away; there were the new agricultural improvements and thrilling industrial developments such as the Bedlam furnace at Madeley Vale, factories that you could tour, mines that you could go down. Some went as far as the outlying parts of the kingdom, Scotland and Wales, which still seemed to be foreign countries. And the development of the spas with their healing springs led to health tourism on an increasing scale. At this stage,

though, people were not generally touring to see the beauty of the mountains or wild landscapes. They preferred to see a land that was productive and useful. The poet Gray in 1762 went to the Peak District and wrote to a friend that it was 'a country beyond comparison uglier than any other I have seen in England, black, tedious, barren, and not mountainous enough to please one with its horrors'. Neither did tourists particularly value historic buildings, finding medieval domestic architecture antiquated, and the most they will say of a cathedral or a castle is that it is 'fine'. It was not until the age of the 'picturesque' at the end of the eighteenth century and the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century that wild country was valued for its beauty.

On Monday 26th August, 1771, in the first decade of their marriage, the Lybbe Powyses set out to spend three weeks with Philip's relatives, the Hills, at Court of Hill, near Nash, about ten miles east of Ludlow. Mrs Lybbe Powys recorded her impressions in letters to her cousin, Mrs Wheatley, which are incorporated into her journal. The travellers took with them their six-year-old son, Phil, leaving three-year-old Thomas behind. They were accompanied by only one manservant. Phillip did not like travelling with female attendants, and Caroline thought 'young Phil might be spared a nurse or two'. In fact, like his

mother, he thoroughly enjoyed travelling and was no trouble. Their intention for the first day was to travel eighty miles to Worcester, so they left their own carriage at Benson and hired a post chaise 'as more expeditious than coach or phaeton'. It was a long way, but they found time to visit Oxford, and they dined at Broadway. They were travelling on the new turnpike roads which, with the faster post-chaise, allowed them to cover such a distance with stops in one day, and this brings home the difference between main and country roads when you read that later it took two and three-quarter hours for them to travel ten miles from Court of Hill to Mawley Hall for dinner. Even so, Mrs Lybbe Powys was critical. 'The roads here are turnpike but not good,' she says. She was also not impressed by the Cotswold dry stone walls: 'The country unpleasing. Stone wall hedges and heaps of same materials lie so scattered about for mending as gives a most littered appearance.' They arrived at Worcester at nine, 'ourselves and little companion not in the least fatigued, tho' a long journey for a boy of six, but novelties took up his attention, and the day passed agreeably even without sleep.' They stayed overnight in Worcester and the next day, after finding time to do a thorough tour of the Worcester china factory (where she noted that 'a vast number of the workers were very little boys'), they travelled west



Court of Hill near Nash, about ten miles east of Ludlow, where in 1771 the Lybbe Powyses spent three weeks with Philip's relatives, the Hills.

staying at the Hundred House in Great Witley ('accommodation dreadful, she says) and arriving at about seven the next day at Court of Hill where they were 'received by that family with that cheerful ease characteristic of real friendship'.

In her description of the house Mrs Lybbe Powys for once allows herself to become quite lyrical: 'Court of Hill is an ancient building, spacious, not uncomfortably so, situation particularly fine, the house stands on a steep knoll which is laid into paddock from three sides of which it is impossible to conceive a prospect more beautiful, except for the want of water [no Thames]. You look from a vast eminence down on valleys so sweetly diversified, then the country rising mountain above mountain, almost reaching the clouds.'

They were returning a visit made by Philip's Powys relatives nine years before, in the year after their marriage. Anne Powys, Philip's great-aunt, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Powys of Henley Hall near Bitterley, by his first marriage. She had married Andrew Hill, and the present Thomas Hill was their grandson. He became MP for Leominster in 1774 but died in 1776.

The Hill family delighted Mrs Lybbe Powys. 'Their manner of living is, as I've before heard, always in the superb style of ancient hospitality. You see generosity blended with every elegance of fashionable taste, but they have a vast fortune and only two children (both daughters).' For this occasion, they had filled the house with friends and relatives. On Thursday neighbours came to call but on Friday they all set out to visit Henley Hall itself. The house had recently been sold by Sir Lyttleton Powys 'rather to the concern of the family, particularly the Hills who were most of them brought up there... They think it is a

pity to go out of the name that has been in possession such a number of years.' The house was still full of Powys portraits. Mrs Lybbe Powys describes it as 'a fine old place, badly situated... the house and furniture are quite antique [not a compliment], but' she concedes 'one receives pleasure in these reviews of former times.' They all dined out on Saturday at Bitterley Rectory, the home of Francis Rocke and his wife Martha. They were related to the Hills and their son Thomas was Rector of Bitterley and of Ludlow from 1762 to 1803. On Sunday, of course, they went to church, but, their own clergyman being on a tour of pleasure [a note of disapproval here?], we had one too thoroughly versed in the Welsh language for us to understand the least of what, poor man, he no doubt thought English.'

Monday 1st September saw some of the men up by six to go shooting. They were shooting for pleasure but also for the pot which was useful in a house full of guests. There was plenty of venison, and this is one way in which Mrs Lybbe Powys regards Shropshire as lagging behind the clearly more sophisticated Thames Valley, where the old feudal habit of keeping deer and donating haunches of venison to friends and tenants was ending. She says later that most of the company were tired of venison as 'Mrs Hill was obliged to give us a haunch five days running, they had such quantities sent them... In Shropshire they have not yet come into the saving method of 'disparking' as about us, where venison now is an absolute rarity. I've not had but two haunches at Hardwick this summer, not even our annual buck from Blenheim.'

On Tuesday Sir Walter and Lady Blount from Mawley came to dinner. They were Catholics but this made no difference

to their social status. Mrs Lybbe Powys particularly admired the pair of silver buckles given to Sir Walter by his cousin, the Duchess of Norfolk – 'very handsome indeed they are'.

On Wednesday evening they all walked up Clee Hill, 'a vast mountain', to see Mr Hill's lime kilns at work. Here, Mrs Lybbe Powys is not only very accurate in her observation, but she enters imaginatively into the conditions of the workers and the aesthetic effect of the fires.

'To see the quarries of solid rock is rather tremendous, not made less so by seeing men standing on its sharp points. They make a small hole with a chisel, in which they place gunpowder, light it, and retire to a safe distance; you instantly hear the report of its blowing up that stone, or rather it only cracks, and then the labour is immense before the stone is thrown down. When it does fall they have to break it in pieces very small, and for doing this use hammers 30 pounds in weight. Only think of labouring with tools so ponderous, and these poor fellows work for about a shilling a day. Next a deep hole is dug in which is regularly laid bit by bit the pieces of stone till raised above the ground five or six feet; underneath is an oven easily set fire to. As these kilns are on the slope of the knoll they burn five or six days and nights, and there being several at a time, have a pretty effect from the house in a dark evening.'

The Lybbe Powyses' visit to Court of Hill was timed to coincide with one of the high points in the Ludlow social calendar, the Ludlow races and the balls that accompanied them. These were part of the celebrations associated with the election of the new Bailiff to the Town Corporation. The local gentry families came in from their estates to their town houses or took lodgings in the town to take part in these activities. The Hills did not have a house in Ludlow, so they took lodgings for themselves, and their guests were distributed among the houses of their friends. The Lybbe Powyses were to stay at 52 Broad Street. This was one of three houses in Broad Street owned by the Salweys but now let to Robert Pardoe, one of a family of close neighbours and friends of the Hills. So, on Thursday the party reached Ludlow in time for a mid-day dinner and then travelled to the racecourse at Bromfield. Mrs Lybbe Powys was very impressed. The racecourse, she says, was 'most exceeding pretty, so calculated for a race. 'Tis a circular spot one mile round, and a perfect flat, so that the horses are in your view the whole time, and the field

itself is so beautifully surrounded by such fine wooded hills that you seem in an amphitheatre, surrounded by country most delightfully cultivated.¹

After the races they all flew back to dress for the ball. Here, the one manservant who travelled with them came into his own as he was 'clever in the hair-dressing way' so that Mrs Lybbe Powys was ready long before those who waited for the commercial hairdressers. They reached the ball at about nine. This took place in the old Market Hall which was built by 1706 and at this time had been panelled with walnut though not yet with the chandeliers and sash windows which came later. The Powyses may not have known that Philip's ancestor, Sir Thomas Powys had given £100 towards its construction. Mrs Lybbe Powys was told that the assembly was not as brilliant as formerly, mainly because Lord Clive's family had gone to a spa, but with two lords and six baronets' families, she thought 'it might be styled tolerable.' There were many pretty women, among them their cousin Harriet Conyngham who was 'sweetly delicate in manners and learned as her father instructed her in the Greek and the Latin from her earliest years' though Mrs Lybbe Powys doubts whether this would be 'any advantage to us females'. Another was Lucy Pardoe 'a very fine girl, all pleasing vivacity' who appears in my book¹, as she later married James Kinnersley and lived at the Broad Gate from 1784 to 1813. When their party left the assembly they adjourned to Mr Pardoe's house where 'our whole company came to supper; not abed as you may suppose till near five.'

According to custom, they all met the next morning at the theatre, 'a pretty one' according to Mrs Lybbe Powys. This was in Mill Street but later demolished. Travelling companies, including the Kembles with Mrs Siddons, performed in the season. There were generally two plays, chosen by the stewards' ladies, and this time they were 'The Author' by Samuel Foote and 'The Citizen' (probably 'the Citizen turned Gentleman' by Edward Ravenscroft). They were 'performed exceeding well'. The gentlemen then dined at the 'ordinary' or common table at various inns in the town, perhaps the Angel or the Crown, and 'every lady of any consideration' was invited to Mr Davies's, 'a gentleman of large fortune, an eminent attorney, of course acquainted with the surrounding families'. This was Somerset Davies and his

house was 27 Broad Street. He is a good example of the way that at this time the line between the professional classes and the gentry was becoming blurred, and a lawyer had the right to call himself a gentleman. A large fortune helped. Somerset Davies later bought Croft Castle in 1799 from Thomas Johnes.

His wife, Isabella, who received the guests was 'a very clever agreeable woman, and we had everything in the highest elegance' says Mrs Lybbe Powys, but she thought 'it looked so odd sitting down three-or-four-and -twenty ladies and not one man (but my very little one, Phil)'. The main courses were followed by dessert, every kind of fruit, ice, pineapples and fine wines, so that they hardly had time to get back to the races again before the horses started. Once again they returned to dress for that evening's ball which they left at about four in the morning when, she says, 'a very large party indeed (being double our usual one) met at Mr Hill's lodgings, where he had ordered a supper for a very numerous company.' They then stayed some hours 'talking over, as usual, the incidents of the day and were most exceedingly gay.'

Mrs Lybbe Powys admits, 'I can't say it was early when we met the next day' but she found time to walk about what she calls 'the prettiest town in England. It stands on an eminence or rather brow of a hill, which renders every street as remarkable for neatness as they are for the goodness of their houses.' Her description of the castle itself is suitably awe-struck. 'From the castle terrace under which runs the river Teme, you look down on it from a vast height, while the fine nodding ruin hangs over you on the other side, making a landscape the most picturesque.'

On Saturday evening they returned to Court of Hill. Sunday was spent 'as usual with people cheerfully thanking for the enjoyments of life.' This time they had an excellent preacher, Mr Bowles.

Monday was a rare day at home. Mrs Lybbe Powys gives a good idea of how the leisured classes passed their time in the country. 'The morning, as usual, divided into parties of riding, walking, shooting, reading, working [by which she means needlework], drawing.' Like her mother, she was a skilled needlewoman and like most ladies, occupied her hands with making intricate and decorative objects. Emily Climensen, the editor of her selected

journals, tells us that she embroidered, worked in cloth, straw and feathers, made pillow lace, paper mosaic work, painted on paper and silk and had many other skills. She continues, 'We never met at dinner till after four (this, too, you know is the usual Hardwick hour), tho' indeed in the shooting season seldom before five.' Tea, of course, was taken after dinner, then they generally went for a walk. In the evening cards were provided, a large table for Pope Joan and another for Quadrille, and 'many lookers-on besides.' 'Never supped,' she says before eleven or abed till near two.' She then had letters to write and probably her journal to keep up. And Philip rose early to go shooting. So it will come as no surprise to find her saying, 'I don't really think I could say I had a night's rest while there.'

In spite of this they all happily received the family of Mr Bowles, the preacher, the next day, Tuesday. He lived at Burford House near Tenbury and he had married a Miss Hale, a Hereford beauty of very large fortune. 'He has indeed a good income of £12,000 pounds.' It is quite striking how uninhibited people at this time were in defining others by their income or assets, in a way that we might find embarrassing or irrelevant. The other defining quality was beauty, particularly for women, of course, though Mr Bowles is described thus: 'I never saw anything so handsome, too much so for a man, I think.' On Wednesday they received a visit from a Miss Strahen who seems to have had every desirable quality except beauty; 'she was almost a proverb for plainness'. So, Mrs Lybbe Powys approved of her cultivating her mind instead. 'In that she succeeded. No-one's company is more sought.'

On Thursday some of the party returned the visit of the Blounts and dined at Mawley Hall. 'Mrs Hill attended three of us ladies in the coach. Mr Hill, Mr Conyngham and Mr Powys on horseback.' The ten miles on country roads took them two-and-three-quarter hours. 'The road over Clee Hill more horrid than any I had yet seen, literally mended with iron-stone. We were however shook mighty merry and only forced to get out once. Had the sweetest views.' Her description of Mawley Hall's interior is recognisable, though her comment on the astonishing staircase and hall, that they are 'exceedingly pleasant' seems rather an understatement. She is more fascinated by the decorations and use of the latest fabrics

1 'The Broad Gate. A Ludlow House and its Inhabitants' Valerie Thomas (2020)



The Old Market Hall, Ludlow where Lybbe Powys attended balls in 1771.

from India such as chintz. 'Lady Blount has more chintz counterpanes than in one house I ever saw' and the clothes of her little boys, 'fine sprigged muslin'. Again, she does not hesitate to tell us that Lady Blount was the daughter of Lord Aston and co-heiress of £200,000.

Perhaps a less attractive side of the house party emerges when they return to Court of Hill to find that a Welsh clergyman and his wife have invited themselves to stay. 'Mr Evans is or rather was a poor Welsh clergyman, having £18 only a year, till Mr Hill gave him a small living which made his income to about £80, making him and his wife the most grateful couple in all Wales. They are always desired to make an annual visit to their benefactor, and not knowing the house was full of company, or having the sense to make enquiry, they came, and at first I verily believe were near frightened to death.' They were, of course, pressed to stay, but behind their backs there was a good deal of sniggering from the other guests, particularly at the wife. They laughed at her 'amazing black wig', at her large red handkerchief which she pinned on each shoulder for every meal, and at her eagerness to taste 'every nice thing'. Fortunately, Mrs Evans seemed quite unaware that she was a figure of fun and enjoyed herself thoroughly. 'She was really diverting, laughed so heartily and seemed so happy, particularly when Conyngham talked Welsh to her.' Her husband, though, 'equally illiterate' according to Mrs Lybbe Powys, chose rather breakfasting on cold pasty with the Hills' manservant than with the gentlemen.

On the following Monday, 16th September, the Lybbe Powyses left Court of Hill after

breakfast. 'Most of us rose from the table in tears at the breaking of a circle which for three weeks we had with so little ceremony and sincere friendship experienced the real enjoyment of a large society.' They had an agreeable journey to Worcester, where they walked about a good deal, 'taking the boy to the cathedral'. They stayed the night at Broadway and the next morning walked up the hill to see the view and then went on and stopped at Blenheim. On the outward journey Mrs Lybbe Powys had referred to Blenheim as 'that heavy pile'. Now she found something new to criticise. In the park 'The new piece of water is a grand design of Brown's, though I think one too plainly sees that 'tis only a piece of water which I should have thought might have been concealed by so great a genius as Mr Brown's.' In other words, it was not a proper river like the Thames at Hardwick.

They dined and 'stayed a vast while in Oxford...and our little fellow-traveller was so diverted with the grandeur of it that we did not reach Hardwick till between nine and ten when we had the inexpressible satisfaction of finding all we could wish.' Her younger son, 'my little Tom', had been a good deal on her mind.

Many years later, on April 20th, 1809, when the Lybbe Powyses were still living at Fawley Rectory, tragedy struck. Returning from the Quarter Sessions in Oxford, where perhaps he had had too good a dinner, Philip travelled in a post chaise with another gentleman as far as Assenden, where he got out to walk across the fields to Fawley. In the pitch dark he lost his way and fell into a pond where he drowned. He and Caroline had been married for forty-seven years and, as she says, they were never

long unhappy when not separated. Later the same year her brother-in-law, Thomas, Dean of Canterbury, died. She moved from Fawley Rectory when her younger son Thomas took over the living and lived for a few years at Bishop's House in Henley, still by the Thames, enjoying her seventeen grandchildren. She died in November 1817. She had given up keeping a journal at the end of 1808, possibly because rheumatism in her right hand made writing difficult, though she continued to write letters.

Caroline Lybbe Powys was clearly a charming, outgoing and intelligent woman who loved travelling. 'I don't know how it is,' she says, 'but one is apt to think a journey of 100 miles so vast an undertaking, when in fact, when once set out 'tis trifling.' Her journal is essentially a personal document, and she has little to say about contemporary politics, religion or current affairs. Like most women of her time, she regarded such subjects as outside her domain. In fact, she was very conscious of her ignorance and lack of education and doubted the use of education for women, unless, as in the case of Miss Strahen, they had nothing else to offer. But as a young woman, on a visit to the garrison at Plymouth, she does write rather wistfully, 'In my description of this place I fear (from not having a knowledge of that science) making a mistake...but the terms of fortification are quite out of female knowledge, and what with many other things the men would perhaps say we should not endeavour to understand; yet I must own 'tis my opinion that women might be made acquainted with various subjects they are now ignorant of, more for want of instruction than capacity; and what at first may appear intricate, after a quarter of an hour's conference might give entertainment. But is it anything surprising the sex should amuse themselves with trifles when these lords of creation will not give themselves the trouble (in my conscience, I believe, for fear of being outshone) to enlarge our minds by making them capable to retain those of more importance.'

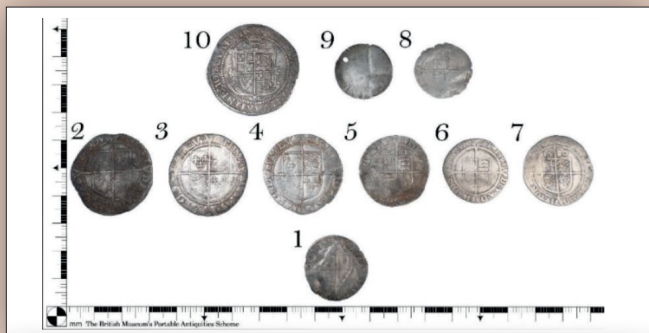
But it is just her observation of the trifling details that she records minutely in her daily life that is the great strength of her journals, and her charm arises from her immense enthusiasm, optimism and positive enjoyment of what she sees on her journeys. As she says on her way to Ludlow, 'The pleasures of travelling in my opinion ever compensate for inconveniences on the road, and ladies too delicate should remain at their own seats.'

LUDLOW MUSEUM MATTERS

New Acquisitions by the Museum. Treasures from the Past- two recent South Shropshire discoveries and what they tell us about our local history.

Here we report on two recent archaeological finds purchased for the Museum Service with funds from the Friends of Ludlow Museum (now recently incorporated into Ludlow Civic Society).

Treasure number: HESH 2022 T82: Burwarton Post Medieval Coin Hoard.



The coins were discovered during a pay-to-attend metal detecting rally held in Burwarton, Shropshire. These rallies are an increasing feature of the rural landscape. They offer another form of income diversification for farmers and do enable insights into our buried past locally as long as the proper reporting processes are followed, which they have been in this case.

This small post-Medieval coin hoard of 10 silver coins was discovered below the surface of a ploughed field. The coins consisted of a single groat from the reign of Mary I, two groats, three sixpences and three shillings from the reign of Elizabeth I, and one half-crown from the reign of James I. Clearly this makes the Treasure Act of 1996 apply to this hoard as they all date to a period more than 300 years ago and the coins are all made from silver, a precious metal. A coin hoard is defined by the Treasure Act as being a group of two or more coins which are deposited together so, despite its small size, this is a hoard of coins.

The coins come from the Tudor to early Stuart periods, the bulk being produced during the reign of Elizabeth I. The latest coin, a half-crown of James I dating from AD1623-24 suggests the hoard was deposited sometime after this date. During this period, coins from Elizabeth and Mary's reigns would have still circulated as currency, therefore it's very likely they were deposited originally as a single group, before being disturbed by farming activity. The fact the coins were recovered from a small, localised area provides further evidence for this assessment. Perhaps the coins were from a lost purse or a deliberately buried hoard placed into the ground at a time of social and political unrest.

Greete Post Medieval Finger Ring, Treasure Number HESH 2024 T704.

This was discovered by a single metal detectorist detecting on a field for which he has permission from the landowner.

A gold, decorated finger ring with an interior inscription, dating from the 16th to early 17th century (AD 1550-1650).

The band is intact and in its original form. It is circular in plan and D-shaped in cross section. It is notably small, with an internal diameter of only 13.7mm. We know that before the advent of modern nutrition people were certainly smaller in the past but it may be that this ring most likely belonged to a female. The exterior surface has a central band which has been decorated with a repeating floral and interlace pattern that has been pressed into the surface of the metal. Above and below this central band are smaller bands acting as borders. Small amounts of blue and white enamel can be seen in the recesses of the decoration, indicating the ring would have originally been adorned with colourful enamel decoration. The interior inscription reads "Let Virtue Guide" which is assumed to be a shortened version of the more common posy ring inscription "Let Virtue be Thy Guide". The Portable Antiquities Scheme has other similar inscriptions on posy rings from this era, although none have the inscription in exactly this format. The ring itself is in excellent condition, which provides great potential for it to be used in different displays and exhibitions in Shropshire Museums. It is visually appealing and very finely decorated. The fragments of enamel which remain upon it give a tantalising glimpse of how jazzy the original decoration would have been and an insight into the skills of post medieval goldsmiths and jewellers.

Both finds are still with the Portable Antiquities Scheme team. Once we have purchased them they will go on display - probably at first in Shrewsbury and then possibly at Ludlow Museum in due course.



LET VERTV GUYDE

LUDLOW MUSEUM TO CELEBRATE ITS 50,000TH VISITOR AND A NEW ROLE FOR THE CIVIC SOCIETY

Ludlow Town Council reports

Ludlow Museum at the Buttercross has become one of the town's most cherished cultural spaces, and 2026 marks an especially meaningful moment in its story. Approaching its 10th birthday in its current form, the museum has firmly established itself as a welcoming gateway into Ludlow's rich heritage. Housed in the elegant 18th-century Buttercross, the museum blends architectural beauty with an accessible, modern interpretation of the town's past—from its medieval foundations to its role as a thriving market centre.

The museum's journey to this milestone has been shaped by community commitment and professional expertise. Since opening as a refreshed, professionally curated museum nearly a decade ago, it has steadily grown in reputation and reach. Shropshire Museum Service continues to play a vital role in this success, providing specialist curatorial support and helping to shape high-quality exhibitions that showcase and safeguard the museum's remarkable collection of artefacts.

This year the museum will also celebrate

another remarkable achievement: welcoming its 50,000th visitor. That figure reflects not only the appeal of the displays but also the dedication of volunteers, staff, supporters, and local organisations who have championed the museum's role in telling Ludlow's story.

A new chapter has begun with the Ludlow Civic Society taking on stewardship of the Friends of Ludlow Museum. This transition strengthens the longstanding relationship between the museum and the Civic Society, aligning their shared aims of preserving,

interpreting, and celebrating the town's heritage. Under this new arrangement, the Civic Society will continue to support exhibitions, events, and educational activities, ensuring the museum remains lively, relevant, and rooted in community involvement.

As the Buttercross Museum prepares for its 10th anniversary year, the museum stands as a testament to what local pride, collaboration, and expert curatorship can achieve. Its next decade promises even more opportunities to deepen public engagement with Ludlow's remarkable past.

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OBITUARY

ANTHONY MAHALSKI

(1944-2025) An appreciation by Hugh Wood

Tony Mahalski was a larger-than-life figure who graced Ludlow for the final twelve years of his life. He came after a successful career in the City where he became the go-to authority on the financing of gold exploration and production. A popular and flamboyant character, his car continued to sport the appropriate licence plate '24AU'.

Though his surname betrays 19th century family origins in Poland, Tony was the epitome of the 'English Gentleman': courteous, charming, cheerful and helpful. After so many years in the international hurley-burley of London and beyond, he was delighted to discover beautiful Ludlow with its history and old-world feel. But the icing on the cake was the welcome that he and Linda received here, and the wealth of new, and interesting friends they made.

Tony threw himself into Ludlow life, determined to make a significant contribution. I came across him first in St Laurence's church where he had recklessly offered to take a regular turn in charge of the shop, at that stage run completely by volunteers. My first impression was that he was surprisingly noisy and 'chipper' for a complete newcomer, and I found myself reserving judgement about him. It wasn't long, though, before his easy, cheerful manner won me over, and his infectious laugh soon became a welcome sound all

over the town.

He found many ways to contribute to the life of the town. He supported St Laurence's church and the Ludlow Palmers, was treasurer of the Friends of Ludlow Museum and became vice-chair of the Civic Society. Hearing that new blood was needed, he agreed to be elected as a town councillor, but didn't continue in the role for long: Tony was a doer and soon found his inability to make a meaningful contribution irksome.

Art and music were very important to Tony. He studied the art market carefully, being particularly interested in, and knowledgeable about, 19th century British painters. As a young man he played violin in the orchestra of the stock exchange and he was a great supporter of music-making in Ludlow, sponsoring concerts in St Laurence's. His musical taste was wide, but conservative, with Handel, Mozart etc. being firm favourites; I tried unsuccessfully to interest him in Mahler!



Tony treated everyone he met with the same courtesy and attention, whatever their colour or social status. He was 'Tony' to all and always left you feeling that you were his personal friend. Nothing showed our affection for him more plainly than the continual flow of people visiting him at home during his long final illness. He loved Ludlow and we loved him, and very much regret his passing.

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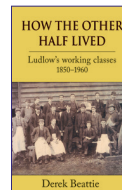
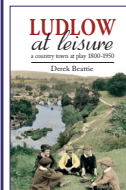
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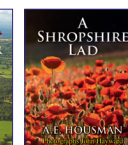
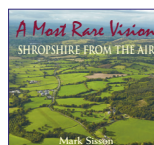
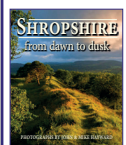
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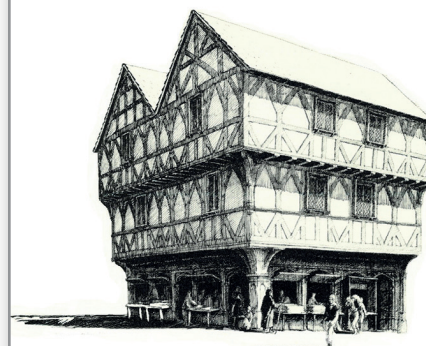
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The gallery is also home to a large collection of oil paintings,
watercolours, etchings, maps and books relating to Ludlow,
many of which are for sale.

We are working with Garth Reynolds on a book on the
history of Reynolds Furniture Company and would love to
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Quaker connections.

To view by appointment only, discuss your interests,
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