

## Leamington People and Places: Stage 2

*Leamington People and Places* is a project conceived by Leamington History Group and local filmmaker Mark Ellis to develop a series of short films designed to communicate the passion, knowledge and wisdom of a generation of local history experts to a mainstream contemporary audience. These films will appear on our website and YouTube channel, be promoted on our successful Facebook page, and made available for others in the local community to share.

We want to translate some of our knowledge into a format which will engage mainstream audiences (including residents, tourists and school students), help people learn more about the people and places which represent the highlights of our town's history, and set this in its broader cultural and historical context.

Our aims are to...

- Capture the knowledge and passion of our expert historians for posterity;
- Engage, inform and inspire local children to understand more about the town where they live;
- Encourage the broader community to re-evaluate Leamington as a town with significant historical and touristic merit in its own right – and not just a nice place to go shopping!
- Develop a model for preserving local history and connecting with new audiences which can be replicated elsewhere.

The films comprise a mix of interviews with local historians, newly shot footage of architecture and artifacts, and archive footage/stills where available. The scripted narration is voiced by young people from the local area. As well as providing local schools/colleges with an opportunity to participate in the project, we hope that this gives the finished product a greater sense of freshness and contemporary relevance.

We are creating these films, making them free-to-watch and as widely available as possible as a public service. We are engaging different groups in the community in their creation, promoting Leamington to its residents and visitors, and providing a valuable educational resource for all. As such we believe the project is worthy of funding support from third parties with sympathetic goals and values.

### What have we achieved so far?

Our first “proof of concept” stage involved producing the first film in the series at our own expense.

*Birth of a Spa Town* focused on the development of Leamington Priors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – the discovery of the springs in Old Town, the development of

the rival baths and pump rooms culminating in the building of the Royal Pump Rooms, the rapid growth of the town between 1800 and 1840, and how the practice of “taking the waters” became, and then ceased to be, fashionable.

It featured LHG members Sidney Syson, Michael Jeffs and Michael Pearson, Warwick District Council’s former Heritage and Arts Manager Jeff Watkin, students from Myton School and local actor Alan Gill (Teatro Theatre School, *The Crown*).

LINK: <https://youtu.be/4AJW09hskNQ>

It was released online at the end of May 2020, has been successful in reaching out to a wide audience, with over 5,700 views on YouTube, and a further 450 on Vimeo. Our Facebook post featuring a trailer for the film reached over 17,500 people, with over 3,200 engagements. It was featured on the home page of the Leamington Courier website and prominently in community social media such as NextDoor Leamington.

We have also received a lot of positive feedback; here are a few examples...

*"Being a Leamingtonian I really enjoyed listening and found it very interesting. Wished we were told more about the history of Leamington when we were at school."*

Mary Moonie Chapman (via Facebook)

*"Thanks Mark and Leamington History group for telling the story so well of how we became Royal Leamington Spa... a must watch."*

Carole Sleight, Arts Officer, Warwick District Council

*"That's absolutely fabulous! It really brings it to life... I've always found history difficult to engage with, really because of the difficulty of accumulating a picture of the times in mind as I hear more facts. This approach to presenting it cuts right across that. I really didn't know how interesting it all is."*

Mike Fedeski – Director of Postgraduate Research Studies, Cardiff University

*"Amazing video, great to see a well-made film on this topic. Our Grandparents will love watching this."*

Simeon Lee (via YouTube)

*"Congratulations on your short film. It's fascinating to watch – it certainly taught me a lot about local names and places I wasn't previously aware of."*

Bridget Rendell – Myton School

*"This is brilliant... thanks LHG."*

Creative Leamington (via Facebook)

*"An excellent introduction to Leamington and fascinating even for us older hands who thought they may have known it all."*

Robert Nash – Town Clerk

*"Fab History lesson on the early development of Leamington Spa town..!! Looking forward to the next continuation episode..!!"*

Paul Savage (via Facebook)

## Stage 2 – the sequel

Whilst the first film is fresh in people's minds, schools are closed and many (particularly elderly) people are still in lockdown, we would like to create a follow-up film which answers the question "what happened next?".

We will look at the period from 1840-ish to 1900-ish and examine how and why Leamington continued to grow despite the collapse of the spa industry. It will explore (among other things):

- The development of Leamington as an industrial base (the influence of the canal, the rise of the ironworks and the story of the Leamington Kitchener);
- The town's transition from aristocratic resort to self-sufficient civic community;
- Improvements in living conditions for the common people (such as the arrival of clean drinking water);
- The creation of Leamington as we know it today – the buildings of John Cundall and the engineering of William de Normanville.

Like the first film it will give a flavour of what life in the town was like in that period, and include interesting human interest stories (e.g. the invention of lawn tennis, Leamington's association with elephants).

## Funding requirements

To produce our second film we require funding – a total budget of £3,000.

This will cover the following costs:

- Fees for the time, expertise and equipment of our professional filmmaker Mark Ellis, who will write and direct the film (as he did with *Birth of a Spa Town*). We have negotiated a heavily discounted day rate with Mark.
- Rights costs for any music, images or film footage we need to buy in (LHG has a reciprocal agreement in place with Leamington Art Gallery and Museum which means that we are able to use their images free of charge).
- Equipment hire, if required.
- Studio/venue hire (e.g. for recording voice-overs).
- Any third party contractors (e.g. specialists to film drone footage of Leamington landmarks).

## **Who will manage the project?**

A sub-committee of Leamington History Group (including the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) will oversee the project,

Day-to-day management of the production will be by Mark Ellis, working closely with a project manager from the LHG committee.

## **Project timetable**

We are looking to secure funding for Stage 2 by the end of June.

If we are successful, production will begin immediately. Even assuming no further relaxation of lockdown measures in the meantime, it will be possible in principle to film everything we need whilst observing social distancing measures.

Our aim is to publish the finished film by the end of August.