

The Welford and Weston Local History Society

(www.welfordandweston.org.uk)

Newsletter 100 – 31st October , 2025

The Lights of Leamington, a talk by David Clargo

Followed by a showing of Welford in the 1970's made by Joyce Skinner

31 October 2025, at 7:30 pm

On October 31st, we're showing of a lottery funded film, and a talk, about the lights and displays that lit up the Jephson gardens in Leamington from just after the war until the early 60's. I went to see the film in Leamington & I'd like to share that experience with you.

Our presenter is David Clargo, co-director of Whittle Productions CIC. His fascinating illustrated talk explores the story behind *The Lights of Leamington* and the recent *Switched On Stories* heritage project. Discover how a dazzling post-war light festival transformed Jephson Gardens each summer from 1951 to 1961—drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors and rivalling the Blackpool Illuminations. The first Lights of Leamington festival took place in the summer of 1951 and was the town's contribution to the Festival of Britain, a nationwide celebration of British manufacturing and design. It was an opportunity for the nation to look forward to the future, following the dark days of the Second World War, and the austerity and rebuilding that followed.

The poster features a background image of Leamington's Jephson Gardens at night, illuminated with lights. In the top left, the 'Lights of Leamington' logo is displayed with the word 'PRESENTS' below it. In the top right, the 'SWITCHED ON STORIES' logo is shown in a stylized orange and white design. The main title 'The Story of the Stories' is written in large, bold, teal letters. Below the title, a paragraph of text describes the event: 'Step back into the magic of Leamington's legendary light festival with David Clargo. An illuminating talk packed with stories, photos and local history.' The date 'Friday 31st October 2025' is prominently displayed in large orange letters. At the bottom, the 'Welford & Weston Local History Society' is listed in white. In the bottom right corner is the 'Heritage Fund' logo, which includes a stylized hand icon. On the far left, vertical text reads 'Courtesy of Warwick District Council.'

Lights of Leamington
PRESENTS

SWITCHED ON
STORIES

The Story of the Stories

Step back into the magic of Leamington's legendary light festival with David Clargo. An illuminating talk packed with stories, photos and local history.

Friday 31st October 2025

**Welford & Weston
Local History Society**

Heritage Fund

Courtesy of Warwick District Council.

David will share highlights from the project, including moving personal stories, rare photographs, and insights from the recent exhibition, film and podcast series. In addition to the lights displays, there were fireworks, live music performances, ballet, dancing and the "Festival Inn" bar. Over 300,000 people attended that first eight week season, so it was decided to run it again the following year. The Lights continued for a further 10 years and the record attendance was almost 20,000 people one night in 1953!

Whether you remember the Lights or are discovering them for the first time, this engaging talk offers a unique glimpse into Leamington's cultural past and the power of community storytelling to preserve it for future generations.

If there's enough time after questions we'd like to show a film about Welford made by Joyce Skinner in the 1970's. This was discovered by our committee member Howard Francioni who is our "sound & technical guru"! It's a delightful film which shows how some of the buildings and streets have changed, but also how much community spirit exists which is still in evidence today.

This talk will be available to people attending in person in the village Memorial Hall. I would encourage you to renew your membership prior to the talk by following this link <https://www.welfordandweston.org.uk/Membership/>

Doors open at 19:10 and the talk itself will start at 19:30. We look forward to welcoming you to what promises to be another great talk.

Karen Dickinson and the team, 27th October, 2025