
MBE DAY

SUMMARY

WIKIPEDIA DESCRIPTION

The **Most Excellent Order of the British Empire** is a British order of chivalry, rewarding contributions to the arts and sciences, work with charitable and welfare organisations, and public service outside the Civil service. It was established on 4 June 1917 by King George V, and comprises five classes across both civil and military divisions, the most senior two of which make the recipient either a knight if male or dame if female. There is also the related British Empire Medal, whose recipients are affiliated with, but not members of, the order.



HOW TO OBTAIN AN AWARD

Well now this all depends if you are setting out to obtain something or not!

Firstly whether you know about it or not it is essential to actually do some work that clearly falls within the definitions of one of the five categories.

(It must be said when we perused the nominees list that many seem to have been put there for simply doing their chosen job but that is another thing.... *steps down from soap box....*)

Secondly you have to be proposed by a reputable personage.

Thirdly the nomination has to be seconded by at least two other independent reputable personages that are familiar with you and the works in question.

The nomination has to be supported by a not inconsiderable report on works that have been done, the value of said works and level of involvement by the nominated person. We have since discovered that this process is about two years work on the part of the nominator and all must be done in absolute secrecy. So despite all the hard work you might be doing others have to do a fair bit behind the scenes just to get your works into the possibility of recognition.

The point of the above process is that a person cannot set out to do some work with the sole purpose of getting Royal recognition.

Solution

Get out there and do some work not for yourself!

Project Outline

So you might say what happened to lead up to this?

Well in our case or rather Mike's case it started as I am sure many have very many years ago.

I am not sure if there was a particular incident but at some point Dad decided to get involved a little with the Town.

Initial thoughts started as we found there was no Model Railway Club. So after some campaigning a small group was founded. As is possibly the usual case many venues came and went many attempts at building a

layout came and went. Eventually a good venue was found and the club which nearly failed became a good strong group. Resources were always limited but much was done and a large club layout resulted. Some fundraising and lobbying was done to obtain money for a disabled WC within the premises and I suspect this led Dad into the affairs of the council etc.

He was occasionally approached to join an existing committee and I do recall he often came home from a meeting having been voted in as their new Chairman!

It was not long before many other groups were asking for help from this new chairman person even if not directly part of their work as they needed someone who kept things on topic, stopped the time wasters quickly and organised particular tasks to people rather than allowed things to rumble on ineffectually!

There came into being a number of bodies in this area such as '**Advantage West Midlands**' They had a lot of money to provide to properly organised local groups. There then was brought into being **LARC or Leominster Area Regeneration Company**. This lasted 10 years and obtained / distributed 12 million in funds for very many projects including Leominster Shopfront refurbishments, Street enhancements, Local community group projects, reviewing and making unique Local development plans for the newly proposed Leominster Enterprise business park.

Later he has been involved in the local **In Leominster In Bloom** work. This has been ongoing for 12 years or more now and Mike has been chair for very many of those years obtaining many Gold and Silver Gilt awards. He has been young enough to be the one fit enough to erect displays early on Sunday mornings, collect car loads of plants at late hours and run errands for those rather less able to organise themselves! Now I am not sure if any club members have experience of this type of local work but the floral displays are only 1/3 of the marks. This award is about the involvement of High street shops, local disadvantaged people groups, volunteer groups, the schools, recycling and the Town council and so on. It must be said that years when Leominster was not winning were almost entirely due to environmental problems outside the control of the group.

A PROPOSAL

A recent large project has been **The Grange**. Leominster has a 'Wool Market' building. These are those buildings usually open at the ground level with a timber framed upper story for the auctioning. Our building has been removed from Broad Street during the Victorian times and re-built in Grange park just behind the town centre. This had for many years been occupied first as a private house then as County Council offices. The council offices had of course been extended out and around the core building generally ugly and poorly built. It came to pass that the round of cutbacks started during the Thatcher years resulted in the Council losing resources and many buildings including this one. Mike thought what is happening to this iconic building? The local residents have had no access to it for years and now it is looking like it will fall into neglect. As chairman of LARC he organised a group of like minded folk, both local and business people and invited the Town Council. The County Council Property manager was asked what was happening to the building? It seemed the only thing they had come up with was to put up some scaffolding, cover it up and mothball it until something happened. Like it fell down presumably.

Mike said "We will buy it". - I suspect this came as a surprise to everyone in the room in reality.....

Mr Councillor asked how much they could pay.....there was a heavy silent pause from everyone.

Dad stuck his hand into his pocket and slapped a pound coin onto the table.....

Mr Councillor quickly picked it and said "Done".....people breathed once more.

So some years later we have an award winning redevelopment. This now sports the Mayors chambers, open to visitors with several showcase museum displays, smart business meeting lobby with small cafe, two wings of small 'starter' business offices with further locally made displays. A large meeting room with lift access, smaller rooms all for hire, a wedding venue; in short a modern professionally designed venue that is open to the Town. The most important thing of course is the framed pound coin on the wall.....

MBE - ON THE DAY

So this is another long story but there it is.

A large and imposing letter arrives one morning. Mike was highly sceptical of this. Once open he was convinced of some hoax and called the number. A very educated imposing voice took his call and despite his continued sceptical comments, congratulated him of his current position! He did take some persuading!

In fact one has a choice of how to receive your award. It is of course the expected thing to go to the Palace and be seen by Mrs Queen. Or alternatively it is possible to have an event at a venue of your choosing. This will certainly NOT be attended by Mrs Queen. But the former only allows 3 people to visit while the latter allows for as few or as many as you like. In short - from your own front room to anything that you wish to arrange!

Mike has always been highly conscious of the group effort that has always been needed to undertake a task of this magnitude. He was also highly concerned that another person was really more deserving. For many weeks this troubled him until we found that said person one of those who seconded his nomination! So he asked for the ceremony to be at The Grange Court building on order for as many of those involved and all the volunteers of all those activities he has been involved in to be present. This decision has been the cause of considerable setbacks and multiple date changes. We had a huge list of attendees and keeping everyone informed and trying to arrange catering and repeat cancellations was highly stressful. In the end the ceremony was put to us as being part of a Royal Visit by HRH The Duke of Gloucester (*who we met years ago while*

working in a model railway shop in London and certainly IS another story!) and supported by Lady Darnley who is a user and supporter of the Grange project.

So on the day there is a strict protocol to follow of course and I had been sent a dauntingly long letter advising of all the hundreds of things that had to be done, from how people must be positioned, how to greet and address all the dignitaries and how to arrange the tables!

Thankfully the Royal Visit meant all this was suddenly handled by the very professional Palace liaison Office - WHEW!

So we had the local youth Cadets group looking after the medal and handing it to the Duke with Lady Darnley doing the introductions and relevant County dignitaries attending as they were part of the whole Town events. On the day the ceremony was delayed and we were all kept waiting a fair while. In the end of course it all went well. Speeches were made and Mike managed to hijack events enough to make his own short representation about all those involved in Town activities! I think HRH was secretly pleased about this he looked happy enough about it!

Later the cafe ladies brought up huge scrumptious home made cakes and we all had plenty with tea.

So WHO put him up????

Well we have known one John Knight - now OBE for very many years through a friend of Mum.

John was an adopted boy by another carer she worked with. He has no legs and suffers considerably with many ailments. He is an official government lobbyist and has been heavily involved with the development of the Building Regulations Part M (this covers access to and provision of facilities within buildings. Such things as - Accessible WC's, ramps, size of stairs- all sorts of stuff). I have to implement this in my work and many is the time that I chastise him over some awkward part of these well intended but actually sometimes not well defined or just plain difficult bits. He laughs and has some knowing comments to pass on.....

THE DAY







