

From the Editor

Following the consultation on car parking earlier in the year, Wiltshire Council has now raised the cost of parking in Devizes Town Centre and has announced its intention to charge for parking in the Market Place. There has been a long standing scheme in which motorists can park for nothing in the Market Place, currently for 30 minutes. Under the new proposals, motorists will have to pay 70p for an hour and £1.30 for two hours. A charge of £1 will be introduced on Sundays. Until now there has been unrestricted free parking in the Market Place on a Sunday.

In other Wiltshire towns where free car parking is currently available, charges of 20p for one hour and 70p for two hours are proposed. Wiltshire council has compared the costs in Wiltshire with parking charges in 'Key Competitor Towns' - Andover, Bath, Bournemouth, Cirencester, Frome, Newbury, Southampton, Swindon and Winchester. Can Devizes town centre really be compared with these much larger towns and cities?

If this wasn't bad enough, pay and display meters are to be introduced in the Market Place which is bound to have an effect on the visual appeal of our historic Market Place. It also calls into question the future of the Market Place as a space where commerce and town events take place. Although the Town Council has a certain amount of discretion to award 'free' places for events such as the Food & Drink Festival, the May Fair, the DOCA Street Festival and the Christmas fair, this is for a limited number of occasions only and is likely to come under pressure in the future..

Wiltshire Council has said that it will consult further on the Market Place issue but it seems set on proceeding as planned. Devizes Town Council is against this scheme and the Trust will back the Town Council in its opposition to this unwanted and unnecessary change. Please support us by writing to your Wiltshire Councillor and making your views known.

Philippa Morgan

Where next for St Mary's Church?

Philippa Morgan reports on a recent meeting



Following the failure of the appeal against the rejection of the planning application for changes to the Church in 2014, the process to find a new use for the building has continued.

A comprehensive Conservation Management Plan has been produced, and further consultation with the public took place on 1st February in the Church. The Trust Committee was in attendance as were the Town Council, Wiltshire Council and many townsfolk. We were reminded on a cold February night that one of the problems which will need to be resolved is the central heating – or lack of it.

The purpose of the meeting was to explain progress since 2014 and to seek people's views about the possible future uses identified for the Church. Of the eight options outlined, the project team had looked at ideas for a cafe, art gallery, craft workshops, a home for a number of charities, a dedicated theatre and a drop-in centre.

But the option felt most likely to be successful was a dual use church and

community space. This would have the benefit of continuing to meet the objectives of the Church and Poor Lands Trust and thus allow funding of the ongoing main-tenance of the Church.

Dual use would mean that the building could continue to be used for concerts, plays and other community activities, something for which its acoustics are so well suited. The consensus of those at the meeting was that this would indeed be the best use for the building.

Having achieved this support, the project team can now move forward and revisit the planning application with a view to re-submitting a revised application. This will need the support of Wiltshire Council Planners, Historic England and the Church Building Council if it is to be successful.

There will also need to be a business plan setting out the funding needed to achieve the changes. There is no timetable yet for when the revised planning application will be submitted.

Devizes School essay competition

Jade was the 2017 third prize winner.
Here is her entry.

My dearest darling Cassandra

I have the pleasure of writing to you from my own room and with everything very comfortable about me. I'm so very sorry that I haven't been able to write to you sooner, it's just that this town is so delightful and I have been too busy gaining old memories of when I last encountered this place. We have had charming weather, so much sun has gazed upon my skin.

As soon as I arrived I encountered an extraordinary site, a glamorous castle hiding in the background of Devizes. It was an elegant thing to see so strong and bold it's a shame it's hidden away. On my journey I stop to eat at a nice little cafe, it was small and sweet with the most captivating food. I had eggs benedict, which was charming, it was one of the best I have had in a long time.

My dear sister, you know how you have always wanted to meet some shire horses! Well my dear sister I got a lovely encounter of a couple of shire horses, they looked so proud and kind. The rider even let me give them a little pet, which was glorious.

I never thought I would endure another fabulous visit, Devizes is better than ever. During my journey I stopped to have a drink at the Black Horse, which is down by the canal. I sat there and had a nice cold glass of beer. Because of my travel to Devizes I didn't get a chance to have a cold glass of much except my water that you packed for me (which I am very grateful for. Thank you again). So it was refreshing to have a glass. I sat outside in the sun looking out at the canal watching some of the boats glide through the locks, it was magnificent.

I'm in the Bear Hotel for the night which is delightful because everything is so comfortable and everyone is kind and generous around here. It's good to know I can make some friends for the next time I come down. Next time I come down here I will be sure to bring you with me because I know you would love it and appreciate the town just like I do. I'm off to bed now because it's getting pretty late and I don't want to be exhausted for the travel back tomorrow. I can't wait to see you my darling sister, I have missed you.

Lots of love from your one true sister,

Jane xx

Twelfth Night Revels

A special event at the Museum

January 5th, or Twelfth Night, was a time of revels and fun again this year as Wiltshire Museum held a fundraising event for the second year. The Museum Lecture Hall was decorated in tree branches and garlands, with a tree being used for guests to hang up their wishes for 2018.

Traditionally, Twelfth Night was a mid-winter festival, with its roots in pagan celebrations. The date for Christmas was chosen by the early church to try to wean early Christians away from their pagan customs and so adopted the date of the winter solstice festival. It marks the darkest days of the year, the days when we are all desperate for the sun and heat to return. Earlier civilisations would have had ceremonies involving fire and customs urging the spring to come.

Our very own John Girvan acted as the Lord of Misrule for the evening. In England, the Lord of Misrule – known in Scotland as the Abbot of Unreason and in France as the Prince des Sots – was an officer chosen by chance during Christmastide to preside over the Feast of Fools. The Lord of Misrule was generally a peasant or sub-deacon appointed to be in charge of Christmas revelries, which often included

drunkenness and wild partying. For those of you who are thinking the worst, I can assure you that there was none of that at the Museum!

The Potterne Mummers were in attendance to perform a short folk play. These plays differed in each place and had their origins in the middle ages. They are funny, sometimes saucy and a little bit slap-stick. The most common one performed today is St George and the Dragon. The Potterne Mummers' play involve a lot of fighting with some of the troupe dying on the Lecture Hall floor. (The picture below shows them sitting down and singing, as the guests arrived.)

The evening also involved Wassailing which involved a trip outside where we sang and drank the health of trees in the hope that they might better thrive. The purpose of wassailing is to awaken the cider apple trees and to scare away evil spirits to ensure a good harvest of fruit in the Autumn.

A Twelfth Night based picture quiz and some games of shove-halfpenny brought a more modern element to proceedings. All agreed that the event was great fun and will definitely be on the agenda in 2018!

Scenes from "Twelfth Night"



Two of the Potterne Mummers



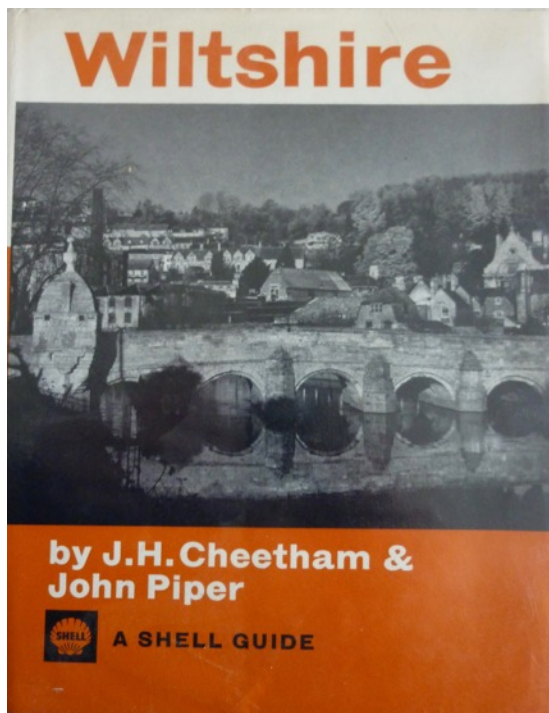
Games in the library



Traditional cakes

Shell Guides part 2

Philippa Morgan concludes her history of these iconic guides



The cover of the 1968 edition

The Shell Guides series started in June 1934, with John Betjeman's *Cornwall* and continued until 1984, by which time about half the country had been covered. The series was sponsored by the oil company Shell. The original guides were published on a county-by-county basis, under the editorial control of the Betjeman and (later) the artist John Piper.

The Second Edition of the Shell Guide to Wiltshire was published in 1956, revised by David Verey. My copy was further revised by J H Cheetham and John Piper and was published in 1968. The Wiltshire Guide appears to be the only Shell Guide with which Cheetham was involved. John Piper's son Edward took many of the photographs in the book.

In this version of the Guide, Devizes is described thus:

"A medley of streets and architectural styles and a place in which it is a pleasure to walk. Some new shopping developments by men from London, but the old country-town bustle does not seem to be greatly altered. Even the street names are charming: *Wine Street*, *Little Brittox* and *Snuff Street* are typical. The list of good buildings is a long one. There are a few 16th- and early 17th-century cottages, some half-timbered, tucked away down little alleys, but the best architecture in Devizes is undoubtedly Georgian."

The Guide continues with descriptions of many of the Georgian buildings that we know and love. It then covers the Victorian era, describing the Corn

Exchange, the 'Gothic' Masonic Hall, St James's Hospital and 'quite a few pleasant villas'. (St James's Hospital, originally the Union Workhouse, was on the site currently occupied by St James' Surgery). And finally it describes St John's, St Mary's, St James and St Peter's churches.

Apparently John Betjeman was unhappy with the direction in which the Shell Guides were going in the 1960s and resigned from his editorial role in June 1967. A number of post-war titles, including Shropshire, Oxfordshire and mid-Wales went out of print at around the same time as his resignation. Under Piper's editorship, the Guides doubled in size with high quality photographs.

During the 70s, the demand for topographical guides declined and the last guide, which was about Nottinghamshire, was published in 1984, the year that John Betjeman died. John Piper had been involved in the Shell Guides for 46 years when he resigned. Perhaps his only regret was that many counties remained uncovered. Why for example, was *South West Wales* revised when *South East Wales* was to remain outside the scope of the series? Likewise, why the revised guides to Wiltshire (1968) and Gloucestershire (1970) when neighbouring counties such as Somerset should have taken priority? Nonetheless, the Shell Guides were comprehensive in their coverage of East Anglia, the Midlands and the counties between London and Land's End, quite an achievement.

Museum News

A selection of forthcoming events

Members Tour: Behind the scenes at Roman Baths' Archway Project

Wednesday 28th February 2018, 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

A special guided tour of unseen parts of the Roman Baths and a unique opportunity to explore, in small groups, parts of the complex that have laid dormant for centuries.

Tickets £18, which includes a £5 donation to the Archway Project.

Members will need to use their own transport or car share. Please be aware that charges are made for evening parking in Bath.

Archaeology in Wiltshire Conference:

Saturday 3rd March 2018, 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

At the Corn Exchange, Devizes

Talks include: Around the county - Wiltshire and Swindon round up; Avebury Soundscapes; Using botanical pointers to target woodland archaeological excavation; Mutilation, curses and a lost god - the South Wiltshire Temple, A Romano-British water shrine ... and much more.

Tickets £35 (WAHNS members £25; students £15) **Booking essential**

Drop in session - Votes for Women!

Saturday 10th March 2018, 10am - 1pm

Inspired by the centenary celebrations of women over 30 years old winning the vote on 6 February 1918, the Museum is planning to join the Devizes Carnival with a parade of "Votes for Women!" placards in September 2018. The Museum will be hosting the first dropin session on Saturday 10 March from 10am to 1pm for people to share information and chat about the findings so far.

Lecture: The Calne Fates by Reverend Professor Martin Henig

Saturday 10th March 2018, 2:30pm - 4:00 pm

In the Lecture Hall at the Museum

Tickets £7 (WAHNS members £4.50)

Lecture: Feast! by Sue Greaney

Saturday 21st April 2018, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

In the Lecture Hall at the Museum

Tickets £7 (WAHNS members £4.50)

Bookings and enquiries:
www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk

Or call 01380 727369

You can now search the
Museum's Collections
database online

www.wiltshireheritagecollections.org.uk

The changing street scene



The saw, at its new home

Have you ever noticed the very large cut-out sign of a saw in Northgate Street? Until recently, it hung on the front of Gaiger Bros Ltd carpenter's workshop. It was originally constructed between 1950 and 1960 by Geiger's carpenter Roly Bryant of Bromham. (Roly was the father in law of Trust committee member, John Girvan). The giant saw has been removed from the former site and is now on the new carpentry machine workshop at Gaiger Construction site in Northgate Street, where Wadworth's Brewery until recently used as a storage and transport depot. The building has now been converted into offices and brings all of Gaiger's departments together in one place..

At one time, this site was known as the Maltings as it was used as part of the brewing process. It's good to have a small piece of Devizes history retained as a point of interest as part of the historic heritage.

(photo by John & Ann Girvan)



www.trustfordevizes.info

Dates for your diary

The Trust's Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday 22nd March, 7pm for 7:30pm in the Assembly Rooms at Devizes Town Hall. Our speaker this year will be Susan Boddington, the Curator at Calne Heritage Centre and Museum.

The AGM is open to all, but only existing members can vote. If you know someone who is interested in joining the Trust, please encourage them to come to the meeting.

What's in a name?

Tony Sedgwick recounts the story of Thomas Wyatt Road

My daily dog walk takes me down Thomas Wyatt Road, that horseshoe shaped carriageway that snakes around Drews Park - what was originally the Wiltshire County Lunatic Asylum. One cannot help but admire the building and, in my opinion, the architect, Thomas Wyatt, thoroughly deserves to have the road named after him. One must also be grateful to those that oversaw the conversion of the building to its current use as housing. Sensitively done, with parkland left intact it is surely a first class example of conservation.

The Asylum was built in 1849 in response to the County Asylum Act of 1845, which obliged each County Council to provide an Asylum for their Lunatics, and the Lunacy Act of the same year effected a major and very significant change in that inmates were no longer seen as prisoners but rather patients. The new system was truly revolutionary; instead of lunatics wasting away in a prison environment, as patients, they worked and took part in recreation.

In common with most asylums, Roundway had a large farm where they grew food for the hospital's consumption and which was the main centre of employment for the male patients. The farms proved to be one of the most profitable activities the patients undertook. The kitchens were also a great source of employment, with food grown and produced by the patients. The laundry was the largest employer of female inmates. Aided by outside supervision and training, other useful and profitable activities took place. These included shoe repair, printing and clothing repairs.

The design of Wiltshire's Asylum was for 250 patients and consisted of four ward wings and a small infirmary. Each ward comprised of a gallery to the front with single rooms and dormitories behind to utilise the available sunlight. Airing courts were provided adjacent to their respective wards and included shelters to protect inmates from inclement weather. Demand proved greater than supply and within five years additions, particularly to the female wards, became necessary and extensions opened in 1858, 1866 and 1877.

Growth continued during the life of the asylum with an isolation hospital, a larger laundry and houses for the staff. After the Great War, more developments took place with new buildings being erected well away from the original (along what is now Newman Road) and the Wiltshire County Mental Hospital, as it was then called, housed over 1000 patients.

After the Second World War more major changes took place. The 1959 Mental Health Act and advances in antipsychotic drugs led to the discharge of patients to be treated at home, culminating in the 1983 policy of Care In The Community. The buildings were now far too large and expensive to run and it was inevitable that the hospital would close which it did in 1995.

What came to being in 1849 served the community well for almost 150 years and we must be thankful that its conservation has allowed us to continue to enjoy the works of such an architect as Thomas Wyatt.

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