

From the Editor

At the Trust AGM on 20th March, Ted East confirmed that he would be standing down as Chairman and as a Trustee. Despite appeals in Trust News and personal approaches to various members, no successor had been identified and a further appeal to members at the meeting did not bring a response.

Your Committee therefore decided that, until such time as a Chairman is appointed, we will hold meetings on a rotating chair basis. This is not quite as dangerous as it sounds - we will not be taking it in turns to whizz around until we make ourselves dizzy - but it does mean that we will each be chairing at least one meeting during the year.

There is no requirement from the Charity Commission for an organisation to have a Chairman but we do need to nominate a contact point and Tony Duck has kindly agreed to take this on. We will continue to look for someone who is prepared to take on the role but, in the meantime, we hope that our members will see no difference in the service that we provide.

We would like to thank Ted for his huge contribution to the work of the Trust. He will continue to be heavily involved in local activities and we wish him every success, particularly with his efforts on the neighbourhood plan. We also say goodbye and thank you to Sarah Cowley who stood down as a Committee member at the AGM. We welcome Peter Alfrey to the Committee as a new Trustee.

Philippa Morgan

The Great Parking Debate



Mention the P word and everyone has an opinion. Parking affects all of us in one way or another in our roles as drivers, pedestrians, traders and customers.

Wiltshire Council is holding a public consultation about parking later this year and we have been invited to express our views at an early stage in the process. We are holding an open meeting on the subject on 6th June (see the back page for details) and we are also hoping to get feedback via the questionnaire included in this edition of Trust News.

At a national level, there is a debate about the relationship between parking charges and activity on the High Street. Out of town and internet shopping does not incur parking charges while shopping in the town centre often does. Many towns are suffering from large numbers of empty shops – the national average vacancy rate is 14% - and in some cases, reducing parking charges is seen as part of the solution. This has been tried in Swindon where charges have been cut by up to 50%.

There are plenty of parking spaces in Devises. The Station Road car park is underutilised with a large number of spaces available. There are approximately 200 free on-street spaces, most of which have a 1 hour limit. The Market Place provides 70 spaces with a 30 minute limit. We manage without these spaces on our busiest day of the week. When the Market Place is used for other activities, people have to find other places to park.

Many commuters park in residential streets close to the town centre for nothing

raising the question of the need for residents' parking. This would mean more on-street parking restrictions forcing commuters to use paying car parks or, better still, encouraging people to walk, cycle or use public transport instead, this reducing peak-hour congestion and air pollution.

With an ageing population and increasing health problems, we need to consider the number of disabled parking spaces and the needs of those with mobility issues.

Of course, parking has a cost attached to it for the provider as well as the motorist. Car parks are valuable real estate. They attract business rates, they need maintaining and parking regulations need to be enforced if they are to be effective. So any reduction in car parking charges will have to be met from elsewhere, i.e. council tax.

In weighing the arguments, it has to be appreciated that Wiltshire Council uses the surplus income from parking charges to subsidise rural bus services. There are already plans to reduce these services and any reduction in income could lead to a further cuts.

By now you will have got the message that this is a complicated issue which needs some intelligent thought. We need your views, so please come along to the meeting on 6 June prepared to contribute to the debate. Bring your completed questionnaire with you so as this will enable us to gather the information we need to support our views when we put them to the Council.

We look forward to seeing you then.

Heritage Open Day

Saturday 13th September 2014

Following the great success of our first Devizes Heritage Open Day in 2013, the Trust will again be organising the scheme this year.

Buildings which will be opening are four local churches – St Mary's, St John's, St James' and St Joseph's – as well as the Town Lock Up and the Masonic Hall. We are hoping to include Wyndhams in St Joseph's Place in this year's scheme, but we are unable to confirm this at the moment.

Wyndhams is currently the home of Wiltshire charity Community First but as some of you will know, was a convent school in earlier times. If any members have information about or photographs of the school, we would be pleased to receive them.

Signs of improvement



As part of the drive to encourage tourism in Devizes, the Town Council and the Devizes Community Area Board have revamped the fingerposts which are located in key points in the centre of Town. Here is the new sign on the south side of the Market Place.

Our New Address

Please note our new postal address:

The Trust for Devizes,
Manor Farm House,
63 High Street,
Worton,
Devizes,
SN10 5RU

John Piper

Philippa Morgan on a distinguished artist with a Devizes connection



The stained glass window

picture: Philippa Morgan

John Egerton Christmas Piper (1903 – 1992) was one of the foremost English artists of the 20th Century. He moved from being an abstract painter in the 1930s and early 1940s to become a more naturalistic artist with a particular interest in churches and monuments in the English countryside.

As a teenager, Piper developed an interest in prehistoric sites, Sarsen stones and Silbury Hill and he joined the Wiltshire Archaeological Society (now WAHNS). This relationship was to continue throughout his life. He worked with John Betjeman and others to produce the series of Shell Guides which started in 1934 and continued in 1984, by which time half the British isles had been covered.

However, Piper was not involved in the early editions of the Shell Guide to Wiltshire and it was not until the third edition, published in 1967 that he collaborated with J H Cheetham to produce an updated picture of the county. This version of the Guide includes photographs of Long Street, Brownston House in New Park Street and the Market Place, amazingly almost car-less! Devizes is described as "A medley of streets and architectural styles and a place in which it is a pleasure to walk". Apparently in 1967 there were "some new shopping developments by men from London" but the Guide says that "the old country-town bustle does not seem to be greatly altered".

Devizes also features in an earlier book by Piper 'Buildings and Prospects', first published in 1948. This is a collection of text and pictures about places and buildings which Piper had explored and which had inspired his interest in English Romantic painting. The chapter called 'Letter from Devizes' starts with the

sentence "When the east wind of March blows day after day Devizes is one of the coldest places in England" but goes on to say that there are "bakers' shops for morning coffee, one of them with a fine view of the Market Place and here the east wind can be forgotten". Not much has changed then! Piper was clearly very fond of the Museum where "besides a magnificent topographical library and collection of local prints and watercolours is to be found the Stourhead collection of antiquities". He warned of the dangers of moving the museums treasures to a "great central location". We can only speculate at how pleased he would be with the new galleries and other recent developments at the Museum.

Fast forward to 1980 and John Piper was commissioned by Bonar Sykes, then President of WAHNS, to produce a stained glass window for the picture gallery which he established in the Museum. The funds to pay for the window came from various sources including the Guinness Trust. It was eventually installed in June 1982 when Lord Eccles, former Minister for the Arts, unveiled the window. In his speech he said "Piper's window offers a memorable symbol of Wiltshire. The colours are beautiful and the pattern enchanting. To me, it is a fine work and you can see why I am so delighted to be given a chance to commend it to you".

If you haven't yet seen the stained glass window, visit the Museum and take a look in the Picture Gallery. You can also see the related cartoon in the Lecture Hall.

Sources of information for this article – 'Wiltshire – A Shell Guide' by JH Cheetham & John Piper (Faber and Faber Ltd, 1968) ; 'Buildings and Prospects' by John Piper (The Architectural Press, First published 1948); 'John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art' by Frances Spalding (Oxford University Press, 2011); Wiltshire Heritage Museum

Coate Bridge Development

John Baumber describes the appeal hearing

In February 2014, Wiltshire Council's Planning Committee rejected the application for the building of 350 homes near Coate Bridge. McTaggart & Mickel appealed against this decision and, in April 2014, an appeal hearing was held at the Corn Exchange.

As is normal practice, the hearing was open to the public and organisations and individuals were able to make their view known to the Planning Inspector. The Trust was therefore able to express the reasons for its opposition to the proposal. One of our concerns is the problem with air pollution in Devizes. Levels of NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide) in excess of the legal maximum have been recorded at seven monitoring points in the town.

This concern has been heightened recently by the increasing body of research indicating that the health implications are greater than originally thought. High levels of air pollution can damage our health for life as well as shortening the life expectancy for those with cardiac and bronchial problems. There has been little action at local and national government level to address these problems and the EU will impose fines where levels of pollution are exceeded.

The appellants made a late submission on air quality issues in which they contended that there would be no adverse effects from this development. The Inspector invited written comments to be submitted on this. The Trust's response recognises that, whilst the appellant argues traffic generated by the proposed development will have negligible effect on air pollution, it will inevitably bring another 450 cars (based on Government figures) into the Devizes. This will lead to additional journeys and

through town in the morning and afternoon peaks, all of which will contribute to the overall pollution.

The Trust is also concerned about the fact that this application is outside the neighbourhood plan which is currently being developed in line with Wiltshire Council's core strategy. There is a clear indication that all parties are working together to meet the needs of the local and broader communities by having a Core Strategy and Neighbourhood plan that fulfils the Government's requirements. On this basis, the overwhelming public and local government agreement to reject this application is clear. Hopefully, the consistent and well argued objections will be understood by the Inspector. This is a significant test case for local democracy based on sound argument.

In a statement to Parliament on 6 March 2014, Nick Boles, Planning Minister stated the Government's commitment to "reforming the planning system to make it simpler, clearer and easier for people to use, allowing local communities to shape where development should and should not go. Planning should not be the exclusive preserve of lawyers, developers or town hall officials."

As a result of lobbying by the Trust and other local organisations, Claire Perry MP has arranged for the appeal to be 'called in' by Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. He will make the final decision on the appeal and his decision will be made known in August 2014. If the appellant's view on the Neighbourhood Plan is upheld we will have effectively been prevented from having any meaningful input into how our town develops. Let's hope that good sense prevails.

Civic Awards

Recognition for our own John Girvan



Local historian and Trust stalwart John Girvan was presented with a Local Volunteering award for his work in saving the WWII pillbox at Rotherstone, and organizing repairs to arrest the deterioration. It is now listed Grade II by English Heritage, and the Trust fitted a stainless steel plaque on its entrance gate.

The work was financed by a grant from Devizes Area Board, with contributions from the Canal & River Trust and the Trust for Devizes.

Well done John!

Museum News

Forthcoming events

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES: Victorian and Georgian themed crafts

11:00 am, Wednesday, 28 May, 2014

Victorian and Georgian themed crafts linked to the Devizes Gallery. Activities include quilling, rag rugs and making masks.

YOUNG WANHS: history of writing

10:15 am, Saturday, 07 June, 2014

Please note change of date from 14 June.

Young WANHS is a Saturday morning club for 7 to 14 year olds interested in archaeology and history.

EVENING WALK: Upper By Brook Valley

6:30 pm, Tuesday, 17 June, 2014

An own car outing to see water mills, building stone and fossils, with Isobel Geddes.

Behind The Scenes at the Museum: a member only event

4:30 pm, Sunday, 06 July, 2014

Much of the work of the Society and its Museum takes place away from the public gaze. This afternoon event will give members the opportunity to see and hear about what happens behind the scenes.

AFTERNOON WALK: Vale of Wardour

2:00 pm, Saturday, 09 August, 2014

Explore the landscape of the Nadder Valley with Isobel Geddes.

RAILWAY CONFERENCE

9:30 am, Saturday, 22 November, 2014

An all day event with lectures on the archaeology of railways, the early day of the Great Western Railway, Jordanese railways and more.

Bookings and enquiries:

www.wiltshireheritage.org.uk

Or call 01380 727369

Financial matters

At the 2014 AGM, Ted East made a presentation of a donation of € 500 to the Drew's Pond Nature Reserve Fund. The cheque was received on behalf of the Fund by Mr. Stuart Hislop who referred to the damage the reserve had experienced in the winter storms and said that the gift will be a considerable help in the restoration work which is already under way. This was in addition to an earlier donation of £1000 towards the purchase of the Drews Pond Orchard.

Other expenditure during 2013/14 included £773.30 towards the restoration of the Pillbox on the canal towpath, £75 for our entry in the Devizes Festival brochure and £100 towards the town's CCTV system.

The largest item of expenditure remains Trust News. We hope you think it's worth it!

Are you online?

Would you prefer to receive your Trust News by email?

Printing and posting the Trust News is one of the major costs incurred by the Trust.

If you would be happy to receive your copy of Trust News by email, it would help to reduce our outgoings, saving paper as well as the time spent by our volunteers stuffing envelopes!

To register for this service, please send an email to

info@trustfordevizes.info.

Dates for your diary

Evening Meeting -Devizes Town Hall

Friday 6th June 2014, 7.00p.m.

Car Parking; a key factor in the life of a town

Business owners, town councillors, long term residents and newcomers to Devizes were amongst those who attended a lively debate about the future of the Devizes Market Place held by the Trust for Devizes on Friday 13th September. Car Parking loomed large in this discussion.

In view of the fact that Wiltshire Council is reviewing its parking policy, the Trust wishes to give the people of Devizes and opportunity for their voices to be heard.

There will be contributions from John Baumber of the Trust For Devizes, Tony Sedgwick of DCAP, Philip Whitehead, the Wiltshire Council portfolio holder for Highways, and David Dawson, director of Wiltshire Heritage Museum. Table discussions and a Q&A will follow.

We hope all Trust members will be involved. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the Trust in time for the meeting, or bring it with you if you are attending.

Further copies of the questionnaire are available on the Trust website; www.trustfordevizes.info.

Lights On The Green



*Above, the Green in March. Right, as it is now.
Pictures: Philippa Morgan*

As part of the improvements to the cycle way and footpath on the Green, work started in March 2014 on the project to resurface and widen the footpath and to install lights.

This followed a lengthy consultation process and is funded partly by developer contributions. The type of

light installed is a heritage style lantern with LED technology which will be economical to run.

Despite the state of the Green as the work progressed, the grass has quickly grown back as can be seen in the before and after pictures.

Trust News is published by:

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www.trustfordevizes.info