

Chairman's Report

All organisations benefit from a change of leadership from time to time. Some voluntary organisations set a limit of three years in post for the Chairman. After four years as Chairman, which followed three years as Honorary Secretary, I will not be standing for election again at the AGM in March. I am grateful for the help and support of the membership, especially the Committee members, past and present.

The challenge for the Committee is to find a new Chairman. None of the existing Trustees is in a position to take on the role of Chairman. We need a local person, preferably an existing member of the Trust, with the long-term interests of the community at heart, who is able to be a figurehead and a focus for the Trust.

It is a role with responsibilities, but is not too demanding because the Committee and other Trust members are very willing to take on much of the work. The challenge for the new Chairman is to ensure that the Trust continues to look forward and to be effective.

The Trust faces challenges in meeting its aims. Our past successes include persuading Wiltshire Council to recognise that Devizes needs new infrastructure before yet more housing estates and awakening the Council to the air quality problems of the town centre.

These successes have been achieved by working with other community-minded organisations and with the public. On the other hand, we have not ended the

Our Broken Planning System

Biased and dysfunctional



Part of the Coate Bridge site, currently flooded and now the subject of a potentially costly planning appeal.

For over two decades, Devizes has had housing developments which have not been planned but have been imposed on us by developers who have not been interested in the needs of our community. As a result, we now lack the essential infrastructure needed to cope with the increased population: green spaces, health facilities, local employment, cycle routes, etc. Because Devizes' roads are very congested, we have the kind of air quality problems that normally occur in major towns and cities.

The planning system has complex and obscure rules which produce absurd results. Planning decisions have to meet criteria which bear little relationship to local needs and land speculators dictate what is to be built and where. If the local planning authority refuses permission, the speculator can appeal.

Speculators have deep pockets and employ the best legal advisers to win appeals. They can even be awarded costs, which penalises the council tax payers. That happened

recently for the so-called Care Village at Quakers Walk. To add insult to injury, the land speculators have not laid a brick after more than two years and apparently want to sell the site to realise their gains because of its greatly increased value.

Planning appeals are decided by a planning inspector, appointed by the Government, with a strong bias towards finding reasons for allowing developments. The planning rules contain a presumption in favour of "sustainable" development. That allows the speculators to drive a coach and horses through logical local plans.

"Sustainable" is a nonsense word which implies that we can forecast the future and assumes that there will be no changes to our assumptions and no unexpected or unintended consequences. Forecasts become less accurate as they go further forward because of those uncertainties. What is considered sustainable today can become a liability tomorrow.

blight of the Assize Courts, for example, and battles against rapacious developers continue. There is plenty for the new Chairman and the Committee to consider in the future.

Ted East

Tech News

If you use the internet, you may like to know that the Trust is trialling a new website which will make it easier to post news items and administer memberships.

We expect to "go live" during March or April. During the commissioning period, you may receive test mails which can be safely ignored.

More details in the next edition of Trust News!

Have you joined our Facebook group, by the way? Search for "Trust for Devizes".

Patrick Norton

Patrick Norton, former chairman of the Trust who died in June 2012 (see Trust News No. 129) left the Trust over £3000 in his will.

This money will be used to fund projects around Devizes, such as the Drews Pond Orchard purchase, to which we donated £1000.

Please consider remembering the Trust in your will, as this enables us to contribute to worthy causes in the district.

The Assize Courts

Latest developments



All that remains of the garages

We have been in correspondence with Councillor Sue Evans following the demolition of the garage on land behind the Assize Courts. This would appear to be a useful step forward in providing parking space associated with the development.

Mrs Evans replied as follows:

"The land in question was inherited by Mr Merrett's family (who are not local) However, for many years after it ceased use as a garage the family did not do anything with it. There were sale boards up and it was theoretically on the market but any approaches (and there have been various attempts to contact the family) have met with a negative response. Then in 2012 the

building partially collapsed and we were involved in making sure it was made safe. The building was finally demolished fairly recently.

"Wiltshire Council are keen to ensure that any scheme which comes forward for the site does not prejudice the development of the Assizes Courts. Wiltshire Council have also advised the owners' agent that they may wish to consider liaising with the owners of the Assize Courts (Wiltshire Council have provided contact details etc) If the family do not want to sell and chose instead to pursue an application themselves Wiltshire Council have no remit under which to insist that the site is developed in conjunction with the Assize Courts.

"This site clearly has a commercial value and I very much doubt that the family will wish to sell the site at a price which would make economic sense to purchase for car parking."

While this is a helpful reply, it does not take us any further forward as far as the development of the Assize Courts is concerned. The Trust will continue to do whatever it can to press Wiltshire Council to take a more positive approach to rescuing this historic building.

Our Broken Planning System

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A year ago, a delegation from our area met with Devizes MP Claire Perry and the Housing Minister. The Minister assured us that we could control developments through a local Neighbourhood Plan, provided that the Plan did make provision for houses.

Devizes, Roundway and Bishops Cannings joined forces to create a Plan and quickly identified ample sites to meet our imposed housing quotas. These sites are mostly brownfield and within walking distance of the centre of Devizes to reduce urban sprawl and to minimise traffic. Brown-field sites are ignored by developers because they cost more to build on and reduce profits.

Meanwhile, the Government is delaying the final approval of the new Wiltshire core strategy and our Neighbourhood Plan by various bureaucratic tactics. That has allowed two developers to cynically submit planning applications for large unwanted housing estates on greenfield sites.

Wiltshire Council felt forced to accept one proposal, Lay Wood, along the Horton Road, for fear of having a big bill for developer costs. The other proposal, Coate Bridge, will be the subject of an appeal. We await the outcome with interest and concern.

Ted East

Have your say about Devizes

Taking the next steps

In June and September last year, business owners, town councillors, long term residents and newcomers to Devizes were amongst those who attended lively debates about the future of the Devizes and in particular there was a key theme to the suggestions on what could be done to improve the town centre and manage its use for the benefit of all.

There were two issues that stood out which gained universal support: that there is a need to reappoint a Town Centre manager and the need to improve the streetscape of the Market Place and the Brittox.

The Trust is committed to pursue these objectives by bringing together all interested parties to establish a plan to champion some of these issues and lobby for the establishment of a Town Centre Manager.

The Town Centre Manager would coordinate and manage improvements to Devizes Community area within the Town.

Changes and improvements to the the Market Place, The Brittox and The Shambles are seen as key to creating a more visitor-friendly aspect to the town while maintaining the historic character of the town centre.

The Trust will be approaching the Town Council, Wiltshire Council, Devizes Chamber of Commerce retailers & business operators and market traders to seek their support in this. We will keep you informed on progress in the next issue of Trust News.

John Baumber

The Lacock Cup

A notable acquisition

The British Museum and Wiltshire Museum have jointly acquired the Lacock Cup, one of the most significant pieces of secular English medieval silver with support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund and private donations.

Dating from the mid 15th century, the Lacock Cup is an English silver and partially gilded drinking cup which has been owned by the Church of St. Cyriac in Lacock, Wiltshire, and used by its congregation for over 400 years.

It has been on loan to the British Museum since 1963 and until the 1980s continued to return to the church to be used as a chalice for certain religious festivals.

Identical copies of the Cup will be made out of silver by the British Museum's metalworker for the Wiltshire museum and St Cyriac's church, which will once again have a magnificent silver goblet for communion services.



Museum News

SATURDAY LECTURES

Anglo-Saxon Smiths and Myths

2:30 pm, Saturday 1 March 2014
by Professor David Hinton.
Discover more about the Staffordshire Hoard.

Viking Art

2:30 pm Saturday 29 March 2014
by Professor James Graham-Campbell FBA.

Professor Graham-Campbell is Professor Emeritus of Medieval Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London.

CONFERENCE : Archaeology in Wiltshire 2014

9:30 am Saturday 15 March 2014
A Conference exploring recent archaeological work in Wiltshire, including developer-funded work. This builds on last year's very successful conference, attended by over 200 people.

FAMILY EVENT - Wiltshire's World Heritage

11:00 am Saturday 19 April 2014
Celebrate Wiltshire's Heritage with this fun day for all the family. Meet a Saxon Warrior and explore our new Saxon Gallery, listen to stories from prehistory, try costumes, handle artefacts and and take part in fun craft activities.

Daily Telegraph Stonehenge Walks

A walk from Durrington Walls to Stonehenge, led by Museum Director, David Dawson. The walk is featured by Sophie Campbell in her Daily Telegraph Travel section article.

The walks will be at 10:30am on:-
Friday 2 May
Saturday 3 May
Friday 23 May
Saturday 24 May

Bookings and enquiries:
www.wiltshireheritage.org.uk

Or call 01380 727369

A message from the Treasurer

Thank you to those members who have arranged to pay the subscription by standing order. It is necessary to update the amount as time goes by.

The annual subscription per household is £12 for 2014 and quite a number of long established standing orders are for less than this. Please check with your Bank if you think you may need to alter your instructions.

The Trust is grateful to those who add a donation to their annual payment. There may be members whose contribution would be eligible for Gift Aid, but who need to sign one of the Trust's forms so that the relevant amount can be claimed. Please contact me if you need to sign a Gift Aid form or are not sure whether you have done so in the past.

Inez Skinner

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.



www.trustfordevizes.info

Dates for your diary

Annual General Meeting

Assembly Rooms, The Town Hall

20th March 2014 - 7pm for a 7:30pm start

Our AGM is open to members and non-members. Refreshments will be provided.

David Dawson (director, Wiltshire Museum)
will give a talk on Tourism in Devizes.

The Devizes Area Tourism Partnership has been working hard to promote Devizes and to encourage more tourists to visit our town. The talk will outline our bid to become a Coach Friendly Town and how it is being marketed to the travel trade and coach tour organisers. Come along and see how you can help spread the word.

What Matters To You?

Wiltshire Council, Devizes Area Board and the Devizes Community Area Partnership are holding an event called 'What Matters to You'

on Tuesday 4th March, 6:00pm for 6:30pm at the Corn Exchange.

'What Matters to You' promises to be an interesting and important event using the latest detailed information about the Devizes area to help agree on local priorities and actions for the next two years.

Please go along to this event if you can, as it will be our chance as a community to make sure that our voices are heard.

To register for attendance, contact Richard Rogers on 07771 547522
or use this link: <http://tinyurl.com/pr3m5qw>

Devizes & District Neighbourhood Plan

Have your say

The issue of future development of our town is one that most of us have a strong view on.

Whether we like it or not, more houses will be built in Devizes and therefore what is needed is a careful assessment which will ensure that the impact they have is kept to a minimum and that the houses which are built meet the needs of our community.

Bishops Cannings, Devizes & Roundway Parish Councils have come together to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. This Plan will influence future housing developments, protect areas of green spaces, support improvement to our transport strategy

and encourage greater sustainability through encouragement of new employment opportunities and infrastructure.

Devizes and district Parish Councils are seeking the community's views on the first draft of the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan. If you are interested in how additional housing may impact on our town, please take some time to read the documents and leave your comments. Follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/DevizesAP>

or visit the Town Hall for details.

The final date for submitting comments is Monday 4th March 2014.

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