

## From the Editor

At last we can see some normality returning. Hopefully, your Trustees will be able to meet in person indoors in June, fingers crossed. And maybe in March 2022, we will be able to hold our AGM in Devizes Town Hall!

This edition of Trust News includes a summary of the Trust's Annual Report and Financial statement. A full version of the Report will be available on our website. We are always looking for people to join the Trustees so please feel free to contact me if you would like to find out more about what is involved.

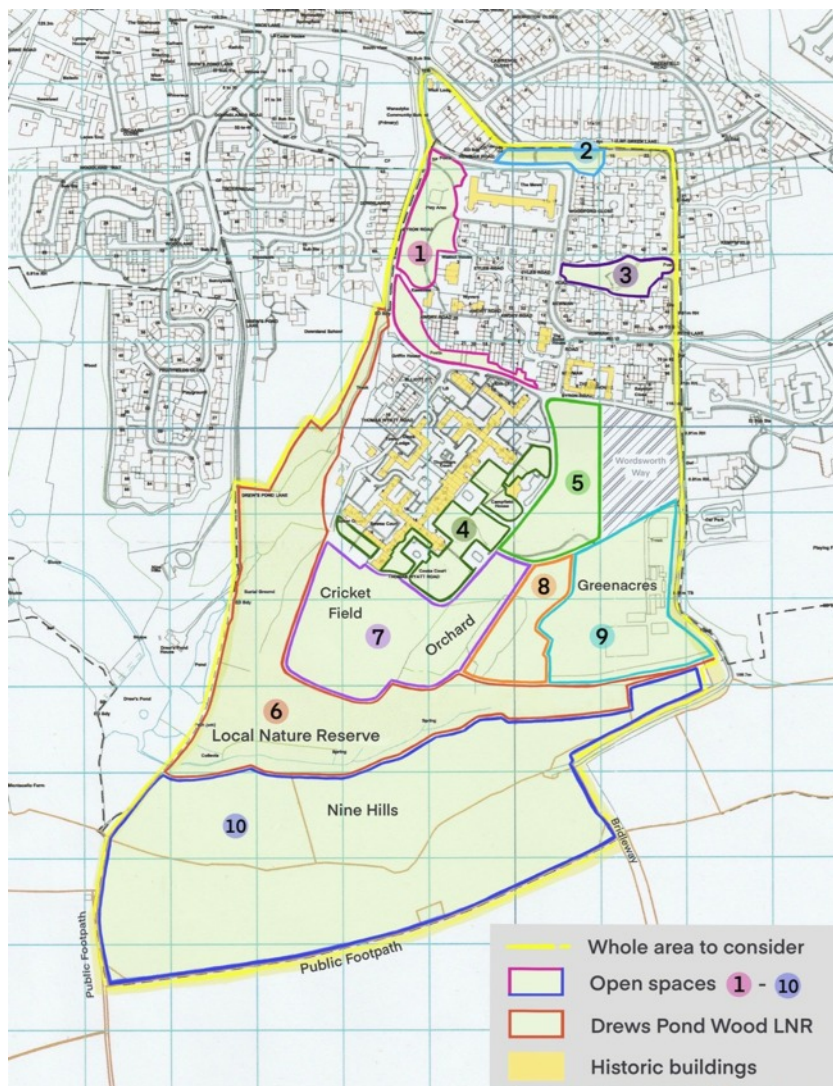
The recent elections have resulted in one of your Trustees, Richard Ormerod, being elected as a Town Councillor for Devizes North ward. We discussed this at our May meeting and could see no reason why this should in any way cause a conflict of interest. Both roles are unpaid and should be complementary. However, if there were to be an occasion where the Trust felt that it disagreed with any actions taken by the Town Council, the Trustees will decide how the situation should be handled with maximum transparency. The Trust has always been and remains a non-political organisation working on behalf of its members for the benefit of Devizes.

Work is underway to put together a new Neighbourhood Plan and the Trust is working with the town and parish councils to make sure that the new plan covers the wider issues which affect our area. There has been a tendency in the past to focus on housing development but that is just part of what we need to consider. Elsewhere in this issue, we cover the project in the Dreads Pond area but there are also considerations about transport issues, climate change, access to education and employment. Consultation on the new Plan is expected towards the end of the year.

*Philippa Morgan*

## The Dreads Pond Project

*An important part of the local environment*



The Trust is heavily involved in the creation of the revised Neighbourhood Plan which includes a review of local green space. We were asked by the Dreads Pond Project to support them in their proposal that ten areas of land around Dreads Pond should be designated as green space. We were delighted to do so. This campaign is being led by local people, and is an important part of the Trust's objective to retain the character of our town and the benefits of living in it.

There are ten areas of land (see the map above) associated with the old Roundway Hospital including Dreads

Pond Wood Local Nature Reserve. These areas of land are all important for various reasons:

- All the open space connected to the Old Roundway Hospital Asylum grounds including the woods, Orchard, Cricket Field, hills to the south, & Greenacres have a unique sense of place that should not be eroded.
- The land is helpful to the health and wellbeing of Devizes residents, and provides disability-friendly green space. Many people access the Local Nature Reserve and public footpaths on the hills to the south by walking through the Old Hospital grounds. The

*Continued overleaf*

# Drews Pond

*Continued from front page*

grounds themselves are used for gentle recreation, being particularly suited to wheelchair users.

- A wide variety of birds are attracted to the whole area and different species including Goldcrests, Fieldfares, and Flycatchers are seen in the area. Mammals such as deer and fox move between the sites. Amphibians and reptiles including frog, toad, grass snake and slow-worm are also present.

- Rare species of bats are found in and around Drews Pond Wood. Bechstein's bat is of international importance.

- 30 plant species considered to be indicators of high quality Ancient Woodland are present in Drews Pond Wood.

- The historic buildings and land have a special character that tells the story of an important part of the history of Devizes.

For more information about this exciting and worthwhile project, visit their website:

<https://www.joebrindle.uk/drews-pond>

## Could YOU help to write Trust News?

Two of the articles in this edition of Trust News were developed from contributions by our members, and as always we are very grateful for their contributions.

Do you have any information or items which may be of interest to the Trust members? Perhaps a question for one of our experts, or memories of Devizes to share?

Please contact the editor at the address on page 4. We would love to hear from you!

# Devizes 'a town of yobs'

*Philippa Morgan looks back at 'the good old days'*

One of our members recently gifted the Trust some archive material about Devizes which deserves to be in Wiltshire Museum. But before passing it on, I thought it was worth sharing this story with other members as it has turned out to be of wider interest than I had first thought. All will become clear.....

The story starts with an article in the Spectator Magazine on 11 October 2003 written by David Lovibond, who was, at the time, a resident of Devizes. The article was headed 'Town and Out' with the subheading 'In a single generation, drugs and drink have turned Devizes into a place of incoherent rage'.

Mr Lovibond explained how, in his opinion, Devizes had 'in better days' been the 'very archetype of an English market town' and that, following the leaving of the military and the closure of the Assizes, Devizes found itself a 'quaint, sleepy rural place, innocent in its assurance of safety'.

However, according to the author, 'then came the drugs' and the 'suicidal drunkenness'. He talks about 'lawlessness', 'shop windows smashed on Saturday nights' and a town centre which was a 'no-go area every night'.

Apparently, tourists were mugged, there were burn-out cars on the streets, swirling groups of boozed-up teenagers and mini-riots outside the takeaways at closing time.

He also stated that his local 'the ancient and once wonderful pub where General Wolfe had recruited soldiers' was now infested with hopeless men decorated with purple tattoos and looking for trouble. Devizes had apparently slipped into a Hogarthian nightmare!

The Gazette & Herald soon responded to this with an article headlined 'Town's fury over article's 'yob' status' which had apparently 'ruffled more than a few feathers' including those of the late Tony Duck. Tony had been quoted

in the original article and had written to the Editor of the Spectator, one Boris Johnson, to complain.

The town's MP at the time was Michael Ancram, who was also horrified to read the article, as was Town and County Councillor Margaret Taylor. Mr Lovibond said that he was sorry if he had offended anyone, but that had received two letters of support.

Someone else who was upset by the article was Ailsa Cuttall, who was then landlord of the Lamb Inn, the ancient pub referred to by Mr Lovibond. Ailsa wrote to Mr Lovibond asking for an apology as well as to the Press Complaints Commission and to Boris Johnson.

The editor, who is now, of course, our Prime Minister, replied to Ailsa apologising for any offence and also promised to visit the Lamb Inn should he ever be in Devizes. As that letter was dated 5th December, 2003, we can probably assume that he has forgotten that promise by now!

**THE  
SPECTATOR**

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5 December 2003

Ailsa M Cuttall  
The Lamb Inn  
20 St John Street  
Devizes  
Wiltshire SN10 1BT

Dear Mrs Cuttall,

Thank you so much for your nice letter and very kind invitation. I promise to visit the Lamb Inn, should I ever be in Devizes.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Boris Johnson  
Editor

The original copies of these letters are part of the archive material given to the Trust by Ailsa.

The full version of the article and associated papers can be seen on the Trust's website.



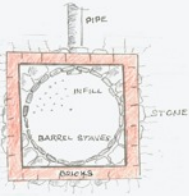
# A Barrel Pit in Avon Rd.

*An interesting discovery*

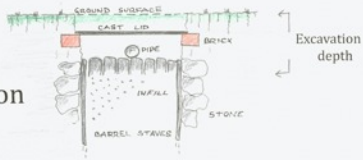
Barrel Pit

Avon Road Devizes

Plan



Section



Diagrammatic drawing from photographs  
John Girvan April 2021



*The excavation  
photos: John Girvan*

Not many of us will have heard of or seen a pit latrine but in 2013, it was estimated that pit latrines were used by around 1.77 billion people, mostly in developing countries. Before Thomas Crapper patented and sold the WC, most people in the UK will have used some type of outdoor latrine for their daily movement.

Whilst digging in his garden in Avon Road, this pit was uncovered by one of our newest members, Mike McClelland.

The cast iron cover with 'H Ash Devizes' embossed on it, was about 6 inches below ground level. It is set on a row of bricks and it seems likely that this cover was set in place when the present house was built in 1925. The cover can be seen being held above the hole in a vertical position in two of the photos.

The round hole below that - around 6 inches further down - is constructed

of stone lined with wood. The wood is barrel shaped and about 18 inches in diameter. The individual slats of the (assumed) barrel are clearly visible in the photos. The hole is filled to the top with some non-descript matter which could be night-soil but looks more like a fine tilth or sand. It is fairly friable.

Not visible in the photos is a clay soil-pipe which feeds in to the hole just below the bricks but above the barrel shaped hole itself. This enters from the north side of the hole (i.e. from the slope above). This would seem to suggest that at some point there was a drain of some description feeding into the hole thus utilising it as some sort of cess-pit.

We're not quite sure what Mike expected to find but this is an interesting insight into how people used to live.

## Museum News

*A selection of forthcoming events*

The Museum re-opened on 20th May. It is initially opening 3 days a week, 10-5 (closed between 1-2), before gradually increasing opening days.

### ONLINE LECTURE:

**Eric Ravilious: Downland Man**

10th June, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

### EXHIBITIONS

**Ways of seeing Wiltshire**, 20th May - 31st August

The Wiltshire landscape from chalk hill figures to prehistoric remains - artworks from the Museum's collection.

**Eric Ravilious: Downland Man**, 25th September - 30th January 2022

A groundbreaking exhibition of the celebrated artist Eric Ravilious showcasing the beautiful Wiltshire and Sussex Downlands.

**Wildlife in the Red: Wildflower meadows**, 20th October 2020 - 30th September 2021

Wildlife in the Red presents a range of natural history objects and environmental issues.

**Industrial Archaeology Conference 2021**, 23rd October, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm, Devizes Town Hall

There are various outings and walks taking place during the summer. For further details, go to the museum's website.

**Bookings and enquiries:**  
[www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk](http://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk)

Or call 01380 727369

**You can now search the  
Museum's Collections  
database online**

[www.wiltshireheritagecollections.org.uk](http://www.wiltshireheritagecollections.org.uk)

# A Threat To The High Street

*Controversial new laws are proposed*

The Covid pandemic has resulted in changes to people's working and shopping habits which have meant the closure of many shops, particularly chain stores such as Debenhams. While this has not had a major impact on Devizes, we now have a number of empty shops and former banks which leave gaps in the town centre.

The Government is introducing new permitted development rights in England to allow change of use from commercial, business and service uses (Class E) to a residential use (Class C3) without requiring planning permission. The Government hopes that this move will give new life to buildings left vacant as a result and help to deliver more homes. The new rights will come into force from 1 August 2021.

There will be some limitations on this - a building must have been vacant for a continuous period for at least three months and the right is not applicable to listed buildings - but nevertheless the Trust is concerned that this might lead to the reduction in retail premises in the town centre. We will continue to monitor this closely during our monthly meetings.

A further change which we do welcome is that, from 6 April 2021, the internal area of any new home can be no smaller than 37 square metres. This equates to just under 400 sq. ft. This was introduced because some recent conversions of offices into 'apartments' which are below that very low threshold.

Further changes to planning laws will result from the planning reforms which were announced in the Queen's Speech on 12th May. We will report on those in the next Trust News.

## Dates for your diary

Devizes Heritage Open Day will be on Saturday 11th September this year. Hopefully, local people and visitors will be able to visit various buildings in Devizes, subject of course to Covid-related restrictions.

The Committee will be considering whether it will be possible to hold a Christmas social this year. We will update you in the next Trust News.

## The Trust for Devizes Annual Report for 2020

*A summary*

The Committee members during 2019, were:

Mark Boden, David Dawson, James Flood (Hon. Treasurer), John Girvan, Philippa Morgan (acting Hon. Secretary), Richard Ormerod, Ian Sharp, Inez Skinner, Angela Tait (resigned in September 2020)

The Trust is a wholly voluntary organisation without any statutory powers but it is effective because it represents the combined voices of a large number of people.

The Trust has a membership of around 260 people and continues to campaign and influence develop-

ments. We work with other Devizes-based organisations to safeguard, improve and develop our town.

### ACTIVITIES DURING 2020

The Trust's activities during 2020 were affected from early March by the Covid pandemic which curtailed activities. However, the Trustees quickly adapted by holding online meetings, and conducting business by email.

Most of the Trust's activities in 2020 have been reported to members in our regular newsletter Trust News. Back numbers of Trust News can be viewed on the Trust web site .

ANALYSIS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE TRUST DURING 2019-20					
	2020	2019		2020	2019
INCOME			EXPENDITURE		
SUBS/DONATIONS	1,868.00	1,927.00	NEWSLETTER	675.00	843.50
SOCIAL EVENTS		163.62	SOCIAL EVENTS	40.86	127.85
GIFT AID	625.11	0.00	INSURANCE	483.28	452.01
TOWN TRAIL	50.00	62.50	WEBSITE	43.06	43.06
OTHERS	0.00	0.00	POSTAGE/STATIONERY	402.36	389.63
			PUBLIC MEETINGS	0.00	122.00
			HERITAGE TRAIL	1,316.54	100.00
			TOWN TRAIL	90.00	320.00
TOTALS	2,543.11	2,153.12		3,051.10	2,423.05
OPENING BALANCE	7,911.31	8,181.24			
INCOME	2,543.11	2,153.12			
EXPENDITURE	3,051.10	2,423.05			
CLOSING BALANCE	7,403.32	7,911.31			
EXCESS EXP	507.99	269.93			

*The Trust in figures*

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The Trust is a Registered Charity No 259653



www.trustfordevizes.info