

From the Editor

A belated Happy New Year to all our members. Thank you for continuing to support the Trust and welcome to members who have joined us this year.

Our AGM will be on Thursday 24th March, starting at 7pm in the Assembly Room at the Town Hall. We hope that you will be able to be there but, obviously, we understand if you are unable to do so. The earlyish start is so that Danny Kruger MP can join us as he has another engagement that evening. I have asked him to update us on the Government's planning policy and also to reflect on his time as an MP and junior minister. There will also be time for questions.

In this edition of Trust News, we have included some good news stories. The long awaited Health Centre is now under construction and there is an opportunity to have a say in how it is going to be configured. We have at last seen a coat of paint on the gates of St Mary's. And the very successful Ravilious exhibition at Wiltshire Museum has shown that the Museum can certainly punch above its weight as well as bringing visitors into town, thus benefitting traders.

The Committee's decision to raise our complaint about Wiltshire Council's handling of a recent planning application was not taken lightly. We have seen a number of examples during the last few years of what we consider to be a deterioration in the way that planning applications have been dealt with. This may be due to staff shortage, in which case that needs to be addressed, or possibly a more relaxed attitude to public involvement. We will continue to look carefully at all planning applications which affect Devizes and intervene where we think they might be damaging to our town.

Philippa Morgan

Devizes' New Health Centre

An exciting new development



An artist's impression of the completed Health Centre

The Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) is building a new health centre on Marshall Road, next to the Devizes Treatment Centre and Green Lane Hospital.

Devizes Health Centre will be one of the region's first integrated care centres with several organisations coming together to provide a range of health services from one building.

It is due to open in late summer 2022 and will give additional space for health services in the area, making it easier for patients to access the care they need locally and all under one roof.

The services currently available at Devizes Community Hospital will be moving to the new health centre and the community hospital will close.

Health care professionals from the four local GP surgeries will provide patients with same day or next day medical care, as well as routine blood tests and clinics for things like asthma and diabetes, after being referred by their own GP surgery. Other services will continue at your usual GP surgery as normal.

Royal United Hospitals Bath (RUH) will be providing outpatient services

including maternity, care of the elderly and audiology. Wiltshire Health and Care will provide services including speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and diabetes, amongst others. Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust (AWP) will provide some of its mental health services from the new health centre.

BSW CCG has asked Healthwatch Wiltshire, the independent champion for people using health and care services in Wiltshire, to run this survey on their behalf to help inform how services are provided at the new health centre. You can access the survey online here:

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/DevizesHC

You can also call them on 01225 434218 to complete the survey over the phone, or ask for a paper copy to be sent to you.

The Trust is in favour of the new health centre, but has raised concerns about access by public transport as the area is not currently served by a regular bus service. We will continue to press for a convenient and regular bus service to be provided to reduce the amount of traffic generated by the new building.

St. Mary's Chapel

A short history



St Mary's Chapel in Northgate Street has now been converted into one house and six apartments and is known as St Mary's assembly rooms. However, the chapel has an interesting history dating back to 1776.

Religious meetings of Baptists and Congregationalists took place in Devizes in the 17th Century. By 1763, a group of churchmen in the town were receiving teaching from Richard Baddeley, rector of Hilperton. In 1771 they were taught by Rowland Hill who came to Devizes twice and in that year they came together as a congregation and certified a meeting house.

In 1776 the nucleus of a chapel was built in Northgate Street and called St Mary's Chapel as it was in St Mary's Parish. It was assigned to Calvinist Methodist worship but could have a minister of any denomination. In its earlier years the chapel was served voluntarily by the Revd Robert Sloper. From 1818 The Revd Richard Elliott was the first settled Minister.

The original chapel was small and oblong and in 1790 was enlarged into a square building with other additions over the following years.

With the the union of the Congregational Church in England & Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England in 1972, the United Reformed Church was formed.

In January 1984 the chapel was closed and the congregation joined that of the Methodist Church, forming the now St Andrew's Methodist/United Reformed Church in Long Street.

More information about the Dissenters can be found on our website:

www.trustfordevizes.info/the_dissenters

Shamrock Linens

A fixture in the Brittox, remodelled for the 21st century



Shamrock Linens, which was established in 1957, used Covid as an opportunity to completely refurbish their shop in The Brittox. They re-opened in 11 June 2021 after months of renovations, and the shop now looks very 21st century from outside and inside.

St. Mary's Church Gates

Benefitting from some TLC



The gates, newly painted.

You may remember that the Trust has taken a particular interest in the state of the Grade II listed gates at the two entrances to St Mary's churchyard.

We can now report that the gates on the northerly entrance, as described in the Historic England listing, have been rubbed down and painted.

The work has been carried out by

Community Payback, managed by the Wiltshire Probation Service who work with Wiltshire Council on community projects.

The gates adjoining the Castle Hotel will have to be removed and taken away for refurbishment when the St Mary's Project starts, so they will not be repainted until then. Hopefully not too much longer!

John Girvan triggers a rescue operation at the Bear Hotel

The Story Of The Bell Bracket



The bell, as seen on a tile at the hotel



The bracket, before restoration...



... and after being fixed

The Trust has been instrumental in saving an old coachman's bell mechanism at the rear of the Corn Exchange and used by the stage coachmen calling at the Bear Hotel.

John Girvan noticed that the bracket for this bell was falling off the wall, and alerted the Trust who informed the Town Council.

The bell itself is now lost, but an early illustration was discovered by John on a pictorial tile at the hotel.

It shows the bell in place with its bell pull.

The bracket without the bell exists with the remains of the pull rod complete with connecting wire through a conduit tube leading back to the hotel rear entrance.

Also three existing bell cranks are still in situ. Thanks to Devizes Town Council for fixing it firmly back on the wall.

Museum News

A selection of forthcoming events

The hugely successful Ravilious exhibition at the Museum has now closed. During the four months that it was open, the Museum welcomed 12,000 visitors. Volunteers put in more than 4,000 hours on top of the enormous effort by Museum staff. The feedback from visitors was extremely positive and will have brought many people to Devizes, thus benefitting the economy of our town.

In May, a new exhibition based on Thomas Hardy and his novels will be starting. This will be one of four exhibitions hosted by the Wessex Museums (Dorset Museum, Poole Museum, Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum).

More information on this in the next edition of Trust News.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ONLINE LECTURE: Staging the World of Stonehenge

3rd March 2022 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

LECTURE - How to build Stonehenge

10th March 2022 7:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Lecture Hall, Wiltshire Museum

ONLINE TALK : Bremhill Parish - a community history

14th March 2022 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

ONLINE LECTURE - The Marlborough Bucket: Connexions and Context in the iron age of Southern Britain

31st March 2022 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

CONFERENCE: Industrial Archaeology

15th October 2022, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
Devizes Town Hall

For more details go online

<https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/events/>

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



Brownstone House on New Park Street, now occupied by Devizes-based company Renelec, is a Grade I listed building dating from 1720.

Its brick wall, which runs from the rear of the house along New Park Road to St Mary's Cottages, is separately listed and was recently showing some signs of age.

We are pleased to see that Renelec has now rebuilt the two arches next to the rear entrance to the building. Well done.



www.trustfordevizes.info

Dates for your diary

The Trust AGM will be held on Thursday 24th March at 7pm in the Assembly Room at the Town Hall. The meeting will start with our speaker Danny Kruger MP. Trust business will follow.

If you have any questions for our MP, please bring them with you and hopefully we can make the most of this opportunity.

We are always looking for new committee members, so if you are interested in finding out more about what is involved, please contact us at info@trustfordevizes.info

The Trust Takes Wiltshire Council to The Ombudsman

Procedures were not followed

Wiltshire Council's handling of a recent planning application at the rear of Lansdowne House has led the Trust to make a series of complaints, first to Wiltshire Council and now to the Local Government Ombudsman

Our complaint relates to the way in which the Council's 'call-in' procedure was dealt with. The normal process is for the appropriate local councillor to advise the Planning Department that it wants a planning application to be brought before the Planning Committee, in this case, the Eastern Area Planning Committee. This allows anyone who wishes to support or object to the application to speak for three minutes.

Examples of two recent applications discussed by the Committee demonstrate that this can result in the application being allowed or rejected against the advice of Officers.

In this case, the application was not called in and we were not able to set out our reasons why the application should not be allowed. It was approved without discussion by the Committee.

When we enquired why the call-in had been cancelled, we were told that the Officer had agreed with the Councillor that there was no reason why the application should be refused. When we questioned this with the Councillor, he

told us that he had not agreed to that.

At the end of November, 2021, we submitted a complaint to Wiltshire Council through their internal complaints process. Not satisfied with the result, we then requested that the complaint should be taken to the second stage which involved a more thorough investigation. As a result, two out of three of the points that we had put forward were upheld and the third was partially upheld.

However, the redress that we were offered was an apology from the officer concerned and that the matter should be raised for consideration at Director level in order to avoid such situations happening in future. This was in no way good enough so we moved on to the next stage.

We are now awaiting the outcome of our complaint to the Ombudsman. We have asked that Wiltshire Council should make a commitment to improve the transparency and clarity of call-ins, perhaps to require written records, including reasons.

They should also amend their Community Involvement policy to include a statement about the call-in process and how it works as it is currently opaque. We live in hope!

Go paperless!

Did you know that you can receive your Trust News by email? Your digital copy will arrive as a PDF document on publication day, no need to wait for the postal service.

To change your requirements, log in to the Trust website and edit your profile, setting "Soft TN" to "Y". Or contact the Trust by email at info@trustfordevizes.info

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