

Trust News



Issue 127 - February 2012

Our Chairman writes

Philippa Morgan has now taken over as editor of Trust News and I am very grateful to her. She is every bit as enthusiastic and energetic as Tony Sedgwick but will have her own ideas, so I look forward to discovering her editorial style. I also thank Tony for the huge amount of work that he has put into Trust news over recent years, transforming it from a simple black and white newsheet to a professional publication in colour.

Our final event of last year was the December social which was held at the Nursteed Centre. A splendid performance by the young group New Faces was the highlight of the evening. A collection for that group raised £86, a mark of how much they were appreciated. The catering was up to its usual high standard, with a few seasonal extras, and we thank those who organised it: John Girvan, Tony and Joan Sedgwick and Inez Skinner.

Last year we made air quality a key concern and that influenced the thinking of Wiltshire Council on its strategy for the future and changes have been made to the Draft Core Strategy, greatly reducing housing targets for instance. The coming year promises to be another active one for the Trust. A final public consultation on the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy begins on 20th February after changes were made in response to last year's consultations and we are trying to influence the formation of a formal Neighbourhood Plan for Devizes and adjacent parishes.

We look forward to the next event, our AGM on Thursday 29th March at the Town Hall. Claire Perry, our MP, is the guest speaker. I hope to see you there.

Ted East

THE INNS OF DEVIZES ARE DISAPPEARING - SHOULD WE BE WORRIED??



The Elm tree (left) and The Royal Oak, both converted into antique shops

'A history of Devizes' by Ralph B. Pugh tells us that nine innkeepers were licensed in Devizes in 1600. By 1766, there were 41 licensed premises in the borough and on the Green. This figure fell to 30 by 1818 and, in 1970, 26. At the time of writing, there are still 19 inns in the Devizes area although the Artichoke is currently closed.

The building now known as the Elm Tree – more on this later – was probably the earliest licensed premises dating from 1512. The Bear Hotel dates from 1600 or thereabouts and the Black Swan has stood in the Market Place since at least 1778. The Castle Hotel was built around 1768 and the Hare and Hounds has existed since 1766. The White Bear was built in 1673.

The history of the inns and how they moved around town is fascinating. The Black Swan, for instance, was originally in New Port in 1580, then appeared at no 22 High Street in 1963 – hence Old Swan Yard – before moving to its current spot in the Market Place in 1778.

Names of Devizes inns which were around in 1818 but no longer exist include: the Anchor, the George, the Borough Arms, the Kings Arms, the Bulls Head, the Hand and Shears, the White Hart, the White

Lion (now Wadworth's training pub), the Barge, the Ship, the Plume of Feathers, the Nags Head, the Boot, the Wellington Arms, the Angel and the Kings Head.

Inns, hotels and pubs are a major part of the history of our town. Many of them are listed buildings and the Bear Hotel was awarded a Civic Buildings Award in 2011 for its appearance and importance to the town.

In the last year, we have seen two inns – the Elm Tree and the Royal Oak – take on a new lease of life as antique shops. The question for the Trust is whether or not this is a good thing? Both buildings had been empty for some months and there always a danger with empty listed buildings that we will have another Assize Courts problem, something we are anxious to avoid.

So while we have no particular wish for Devizes to become a town full of antique shops, we are certainly pleased to see the buildings being brought back to use and cared for by their new owners. The town's history is full of examples of old buildings being re-used and recycled and our role as the Trust for Devizes is to ensure that this is done in a way which recognises the importance of those buildings within the town's history.

Editor's words

As I write this, I feel as if I'm entering the great unknown. In a foolish moment about a year ago, I agreed to take on the Trust News editorial role so that Tony Sedgwick could 'spend some more time with the family'! As the time for the handover approached, I managed to talk my Other Half (otherwise known as Dec) to help with the technical side of the job which turns out to include running the web site. So at least I am not alone.

Tony is going to be a very hard act to follow. He has an enthusiasm and drive which a man a third of his age would find difficult to match. He is passionate about Devizes and has used his technical expertise in the field of parking and traffic to the great benefit of the town. Thanks to his persistence, the Trust has managed to place these issues in the public domain to the extent that Wiltshire Council has made changes in its Core Strategy to reflect the concerns we all have about air pollution and the lack of infrastructure to support continuing housing development in our town.

I am very much a newcomer to Devizes – we moved here four years ago – but I really feel as if I belong here. There is already a great sense of community but I believe that this is an area in which we can do much more by finding ways to include younger people in our activities. If anyone has any ideas about how we can do that or indeed would like to suggest subjects on which the Trust should focus over the coming year, please contact me or any other of the Committee members.

Philippa

The Localism Act

In December 2010, the Localism Bill was heralded by the Department for Communities and Local Government as “A landmark bill that heralds a ground-breaking shift in power to councils and communities overturning decades of central government control”. The Bill received royal assent on 15th November 2011 so is now the Localism Act 2011.

So, what does the Localism Act mean for our community? A difficult question to answer at the moment as the detail of the how the Act will work has yet to be completed. The Act contains a wide variety of measures in pursuit of the government's aim to decentralise power and pass control over public services to local communities.

A key provision, the community right to challenge, enables community groups – including religious organisations – the right to bid to run services previously operated by local authorities. Local authorities will

have to list “assets of community value”. If these assets are up for sale, there will be a moratorium period of six months, during which time, provided that a local group expresses interest, the asset cannot be sold – giving local groups the opportunity to put together a bid to take over the asset for community benefit. Will this apply to Browfort and Urchfont Manor?

A housing development in Malmesbury is being seen as a test case nationally for the Act. Despite huge resistance from residents' associations, the town council and a rejection at planning level from Wiltshire Council, White Lion Land is taking the application for 77 homes off Park Road to appeal. If the Planning Inspectorate overrules Wiltshire Council's decision, the trial neighbourhood plan, which has been set up as part of the Localism Bill to give communities more planning power, could be seen to be failing.

This is definitely one to watch!

Lights on Quakers Walk



The offending street lamp (left) is just a few feet from Quakers Walk (far right)

A couple of years ago, the Quakers Walk Protection Group fought successfully to prevent the installation of street lamps along the walk, between the new estate and the gates at the southern end. Apart from preventing the urbanisation of an important rural asset, a major reason for this campaign was that bats use the trees as a commuter route between the woods near Roundway Park and the canal.

Even so, the developer has installed lamps along the path between the estate and

Quakers Walk, one of which is on the tree line.

Trust member Dec McSweeney reported this to the council and they have issued a compliance notice to have the lamp removed. We hope this will be done before the bats come out of hibernation!

This goes to show that the council will respond to reports from members of the public, so don't hesitate to contact your councillor if you have any concerns about local development.

Interview - Tony Sedgwick

In our last issue we reported that Tony Sedgwick would be stepping down as editor of the Trust Newsletter and handing over to Philippa Morgan. We asked him a few questions about his time in the editor's chair..

How long have you been Editor of Trust News?

I took over about five years ago and my first publication was Issue 108. That means I will have edited 17 issues by the time I hand it over to you.

What has changed about Trust News since you took over?

It would be fair to say that the newsletter was looking a little dated when I took over. It was a black and white, A5, photocopied document consisting of four pages and was published infrequently. I took the opportunity to modernise the way it was produced, and to make sure it was published on a quarterly basis.

I was fortunate in being able to take advantage of technology to produce a newsletter which now looks and feels like a commercial publication. I have also used it as a means of telling Trust members about the 'hot' issues on which we are campaigning such as air pollution problems, the need for more green space and the protection of Quakers Walk.

Why do you think that Trust News is important?

We have over 350 members with more joining all the time so it is important to let people know what we are doing. Although we hold regular social events, many people do not come to those so their only regular contact with the Trust

is through the newsletter. We post copies to New Zealand and Hong Kong so we do reach around the world!

Now that you are retiring as Editor, what will you be doing in your spare time?

I've recently taken over as Chair of the Devizes Community Area Partnership so that will no doubt consume much of my spare time. As you know, my wife, Joan, has Parkinson's Disease and that means I am having to spend more time helping her with the housework!

What do you think are the important issues for the Trust in 2012?

In my view, the future of Devizes as a prosperous and popular market town is in jeopardy if it is allowed to carry on growing on the same scale as it has in recent years. I fear that the town will lose its character and this issue is right at the heart of the Trust's purpose. Jobs need to be generated so that Devizes isn't just a dormitory town or a town that people retire to. We need young people living and working in the town to keep it alive and vibrant.

The Trust is the biggest organisation of its kind in Devizes and we have shown at our public meetings that people in Devizes are passionate about the town. Ted East is a Chairman who is not afraid to speak up and come forward with ideas. The Trust should continue to take the lead on issues which we feel are important to the future of our lovely town.

Wiltshire Core Strategy - the latest

A second draft of the Wiltshire core strategy has now been discussed by Wiltshire Council Cabinet and moved on to the next consultation stage. The size of the document is daunting but it is conveniently divided by Community Areas and the Devizes Area Strategy only takes up six pages of the wider document.

There have been revisions to the original document as it refers to Devizes and these can be summarised as follows:

- The provision of additional housing for the period up to 2026 is now 610 in total, with 405 homes in Devizes Town and 205 in the villages. The overall requirement has stayed the same but the number of houses completed during 2006 – 10 has been adjusted up and there is therefore a reduction in the figure for additional housing. This is welcome as we were anticipating that the number might be increased.
- The issues of traffic and air quality have been recognised as major issues for Devizes and the need to tackle these problems has been addressed
- The possibility of a railway station for Devizes has now been included in the document
- The cultural heritage of the town is highlighted with a recognition to address the problems of the Assize Courts and the Wharf
- There is a recognition of the need to ensure that the infrastructure is able to cope with any future developments.

These are all issues on which the Trust has campaigned over the last few years and we feel that we have been instrumental in ensuring that they have been taken into account in the Core Strategy. We will continue to be vigilant in keeping the pressure on to ensure that there is no back sliding by politicians. We note that some local politicians wish to take all the credit for these beneficial changes, even though they initially opposed the Trust!

*Philippa craves your indulgence while she settles in to the editor's chair
- and needs your help!*

If you have any contributions to Trust News - articles, photographs, ideas or suggestions - please send them to us at the address on the back page.

A message from the Treasurer

I should like to thank the members of the Trust who have paid their annual subscription by standing order, cash or cheque already, and have remembered to raise the amount to £10. Some of you have added a donation to that and the Trust appreciates your generosity.

The subscription may be increased to £12 per household in 2013 as all our costs are rising. We have a considerable bill four times a year for the printing and postage of the newsletter, copies of which go to members in Hong Kong, New Zealand and Spain as well as to all our local supporters.

If you are paying by cash or cheque later in the year I shall be pleased to accept this at our social events or by post to **4 Badgers Close, Pans Lane, Devizes**. Should you need to check anything to do with your subscription my phone number is **01380 725466**.

Thank you again for your support

Inez Skinner.

STOP PRESS

The developers building the houses on Quakers Walk initially proposed to tarmac over the walk, turning it from the idyllic walk it is today to an urban footpath.

The Quakers Walk Protection Group and the Trust successfully overturned this proposal. Now it has reared its head again with the application to build a retirement village. So we will fight again!

Dates for your diary

The Trust's Annual General Meeting will be on **Thursday 29th March at 7pm for 7:30pm in the Assembly Rooms at the Town Hall**. The speaker this year will be Claire Perry, MP, so get there early to make sure you have a seat. Mrs Perry has agreed to take questions so have your questions prepared!

The next Trust Social will be on **Friday 29th June at 7pm at the Museum**. The speaker will be Ray Rogers who will be talking about the geological aspects of the buildings of Devizes.

Other dates for Socials are **Friday 14th September** which will include a talk about the restoration of Avebury Manor; and our Christmas Social, which this year takes place on **Friday 7th December**.

Make sure these dates go into your diary now!

Planning News

There are various planning applications in the pipeline at the moment, all of which are of key importance to the future of the Devizes landscape

The development of land to the east of Quakers Walk as a Care Village is awaiting determination by Wiltshire Council. The closing date for comments was mid-December 2011. The application will be called in for discussion by the Eastern Area Planning Committee on March 15th at Brownfort. Keep your eye out for this one.

The application by McCarthy and Stone to build 39 retirement apartments on the old gas work site at the Wharf was turned down on appeal by the Planning Inspector in December 2011. The Inspector based his ruling on the height of the apartments'

eastern block, which he said would be excessive and harm the character and appearance of the Kennet and Avon Canal area. He did not accept the objections concerning the noise from the Brewery or the lack of parking. This leaves open the possibility that McCarthy and Stone will submit a revised application with a reduction in the height. If this should happen, the Trust will continue to oppose the development which we consider is inappropriate.

The application to develop the Assize Courts is awaiting determination by Wiltshire Council. The Trust supports the application as we believe it will result in the Assize Court being restored and brought back into use. We await Wiltshire council's decision with interest.

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