

## From the Editor

Another year comes to a close and it's time to reflect on highlights of 2016 as well as look forward to what 2017 has in store.

The Trust has had a busy year. Two new Trustees – John Hawthorne and Ian Sharp – have joined the Committee to replace David Dawson and John Baumber. We have been actively involved in a number of planning issues and we are working with Devizes Town Council on a project to review the state of street signs. We have had two highly entertaining members' meetings, one of which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. And, most importantly, there has been some exciting news about the possibility of the Assize Courts becoming the new home for Wiltshire Museum, subject, of course, to the acquisition of the building by The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust.

2017 is the Trust's Golden Anniversary. Looking back to 1967 when the Trust was formed, it is difficult to imagine how people managed without computers, the internet, mobile phones and so on. How on earth did the protesters against the Crammer Wall manage to get 3500 signatures in a matter of days? Well they did manage it and, as a result, the hated wall was quickly taken down. Power to the people!

In 2017, we will be looking back over the past 50 years with a series of Trust News articles based on material held at the History Centre in Chippenham. Something to look forward to I'm sure.

Your Committee would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Please join us for our Christmas Social evening on December 9th. More details on Page 4.

*Philippa Morgan*

## The Quakers Walk saga - a new twist

*The Trust highlights irregularities in the planning process*



*An early postcard of Quakers Walk*

The Planning Inspectorate's Inquiry into the granting of outline permission for a development of 123 houses on land off Quakers Walk was always going to be unusual. The application had been made by the owners of the land, the Merchant Venturers. Approval for the planning application had been granted by Wiltshire Council. Therefore both the land owner and the planning authority were in favour of the development. Subsequent to the application being approved, the Secretary of State had decided to review Wiltshire Council's decision in the light of the Devizes and District Neighbourhood Plan and the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Hence the Planning Inquiry.

The Merchant Venturers were represented at the Inquiry by a QC, supported by an expert from Savills, their estate agents, and seven others. In contrast, Wiltshire Council was represented by one Planning Officer and an in-house barrister. The QC immediately announced that on the previous day Wiltshire Council had given his clients outline permission to build sixty-five dwellings on part of the land in question. He further stated that, in due course, another application would be submitted for further units on the remaining land.

Arguments against the original application were outlined by Simon Fisher, Deputy Town Clerk, who declined to be bullied or tricked by the QC into making contradictory statements. John Kirkman of the CPRE gave his own

forensic analysis of the arguments. The Trust had made a written submission.

One of the major arguments against any development along London Road is the effect on traffic flow and air quality. During the above exchanges it was revealed that Wiltshire Council had failed to mention to the Inspector the recently completed development of 172 houses and a care home on the Bureau West site and that the Lay Wood site would add another 130 dwellings. These figures were dragged unwillingly from Wiltshire Council planners. They claimed that they were not relevant as the permissions had been granted prior to the full adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Although the Inquiry itself was very brief, the Inspector had been presented with a mountain of documents running literally to thousands of pages. It will undoubtedly be weeks, if not months, before his conclusions are published.

*Since the Inquiry, the Trust has discovered that the letter sent to Wiltshire Council advising them that the Secretary of State had called in this application contained an instruction to the effect that the Council should not grant planning permission, without specific authorisation, for any development on that land until the Secretary of State has issued his decision. The Trust has drawn the attention of what seems to be a breach of this instruction to all the relevant authorities. The result of our intervention is not known at the time of writing.*

## The Trust Members' meeting

On 21st October, more than forty members and friends had an enjoyable and informative evening when they were addressed by Julian Orbach who is editing the new South West edition of Pevsners County Guides.

The first Wiltshire edition was published in 1963 and was, as were all the counties, entirely the work of Professor Pevsner himself, carried out in his holidays and spare time. Every village and settlement was included, although the constraints of size and time meant that entries were fairly cursory.

In 1975 a new series was commissioned, edited by individual editors acting on a regional basis. As before every community was covered but now in more detail. Examples of modern architecture were included.

Now, Yale University Press will publish an updated version and Julian is responsible for the South West Region. Wiltshire should be published in 2017/2018. Julian has asked for the county to be covered in two volumes: so far that plea has fallen on deaf ears.

One of the current editorial problems is not so much what to include as what to leave out. Some of the previous entries have disappeared under roadworks or other forms of development. Many of the examples of modern design now look sadly dated or have been demolished or abandoned and now stand empty and vandalised. This is particularly the case in Swindon: no surprises there! Schools, especially, have not stood the test of time.

The survey of Devizes is yet to be undertaken but Julian, who is now based in Bradford-on-Avon, has promised to return and give a further talk to the Trust when it is completed.

Something for us all to look forward to.

*Tony Duck*

# The Battle of Coate Bridge

*Tony Sedgwick recounts the Trust's involvement in a successful campaign*



*Protestors assemble to fight the Coate Bridge Development. Tony Sedgwick is 6th from the left.*

The rapid expansion of the town in the period from the 1990s brought with it a considerable increase in traffic, so much so that jams became the norm. With seemingly no end to growth the Trustees decided that there was a very real danger that further development would change the whole character of the town. They resolved to fight to keep the character of Devizes that endeared so many to it.

The first public manifestation of his policy was a Public Meeting in June 2011 to protest at the lack of any policy to stop increasing air pollution which already exceeded legal limits in seven places in the town. The meeting was an unqualified success, putting considerable pressure on Wiltshire Council to take into account any traffic increase arising from a proposed development and the resultant rise in air pollutants. It did not deter developers from coming forward however.

Development of land to the east of Coate Bridge was first mooted in 2011. The proposal was for a large development (around 350 homes), on a green field site and outside the boundaries set by Kennet Council for development. The vast majority of traffic generated from the development would use the London Road corridor, the most congested of our roads. Despite strong initial opposition and the fact that it ticked none of the boxes for a desirable development, the developers, Mactaggart and Mickel, launched a full

public consultation late the following year. In so doing they made it obvious that local opinion was not going to stop, what to them, would be very profitable development.

The Trust had learned two things from fighting previous applications: (a) that we needed a protest group that was widely representative and (b), that it was important to make clear the power and depth of opposition as early in the planning cycle as possible. To this end we teamed up with the Devizes Community Area Partnership (DCAP) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and enjoyed the public support of a number of Town and Roundway Councillors, Laura Mayes, Wiltshire Councillor for Roundway and our MP Clare Perry. If that didn't convince Mactaggart and Mickel that the development was not wanted, nothing would!

This overwhelming show of rejection by the people of Devizes was completely ignored and a formal application for planning permission was filed on 24th January 2013. The protest groups had not stopped at the rally, however and, on the very day that the application was made members of the Trust, DCAP, Roundway Parish Council, Devizes Town Council and Wiltshire County Council were meeting the Planning Minister in London. While we were not allowed to discuss any particular application, we were able to state our case that Devizes could not continue to take further developments at the



# The Battle of Coate Bridge

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current rate. In this we were strongly supported by Clare Perry who had kindly arranged the meeting. We came away confident that our case was now understood at the highest level.

The planning application came before the committee in September and was refused. This, in itself was a landmark; most applications from professional developers were signed off with little hesitation. So the first skirmish to us! As expected, however, the developers decided to appeal which meant the whole issue would be decided by a Planning Inspector.

There were considerable problems facing the Council at this appeal hearing. The planning legislation and regulations were in a fluid state, the totally new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had come into force the previous year and this favoured developments by default. Quite how this was to work and much of the detail was still to be tested. Furthermore whilst Wiltshire Council had embarked on a Core Strategy for the whole County this was far from complete and they had to rely on the policies of the now defunct Kennet Council. In short, the inspector's decision was likely to be based on what comparative weight he gave to the Kennet Plan and the NPPF.

Faced with such a confused situation and given the high cost of defending the appeal, Wiltshire Planners advised the Council not to defend the decision and let the developer win by default. Much to their credit our local politicians proved to be made of sterner stuff and not only did the Council contest the appeal but they retained a QC to help them do so. This act signalled that the battle was still very much alive. Our case was further strengthened when our local MP played her part by ensuring that whatever the Inspector's decision, it would be subject to review by the Secretary of State.

The NPPF stipulated that where a local community prepared a Neighbourhood Plan detailing where they preferred new developments to take

place and providing the housing numbers in this plan accorded to those allocated in the Core Strategy, such a plan would have to be taken into account in any planning application.

In common with all other communities, Devizes did not have that plan, but work started in December 2011 with Devizes, Roundway and Bishops Cannings working together. The housing provision was determined at a number of workshops where the relative merits of each site was discussed and a priority given to it. Coate Bridge came bottom!

As things turned out Clare Perry's foresight proved essential. At the appeal the inspector rejected the Council's case and overturned the decision. The development could go ahead – first, however it had to pass the scrutiny of the Secretary of State. After due consideration, he gave much more weight to the advanced state of Wiltshire's Core Strategy and the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan than the inspector and upheld the Council's decision to refuse permission.

Local rejoicing soon evaporated when Mactaggart and Mickel announced their request for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's decision. However, by now we appreciated that time was on our side, the longer a decision was delayed the stronger would be our arguments using the Core Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan. The Courts rejected the request for a Judicial Review and sent the case back for a new public hearing. This took place in April 2016 and by then both the Core Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan were approved. These carried the day, both with the Inspector and with the Secretary of State.

So on 22 September 2016, nearly four years after our original protest and many many hours of work by a number of dedicated individuals, the battle to save Devizes from yet more urban sprawl was finally won.

## Museum News

*A selection of forthcoming events*

### LECTURE: Roman Antikythera Shipwreck

2:30 pm, Saturday, 03 December, 2016

Searching, finding, survey and excavation. By Phil Short. Booking essential.

### LECTURE SERIES: Introduction to Archaeological Techniques

7:00 pm, Wednesday, 18 January, 2017

Led by Bob Clarke and Emma Elton. An interactive lecture series that will introduce the background to archaeology and look in detail at landscapes and townscapes, surveying, research, excavation and recording, finds analysis and dating.

Series of 7 lectures commencing, Wednesday 18th January, 7pm - 9pm, with one field trip on Saturday 4th March.

### EXHIBITIONS

#### Commemorating the Battle of the Somme

August until November 2016

Guest curated by Richard Broadhead

#### Fantastic Fossils

August 2016 – early 2017

A fun exhibition for all the family

#### Yesterdays: Wiltshire photographs

10:00 am, Thursday, 15 December, 2016

To mark the 200th anniversary of the Gazette & Herald.

An exhibition of Wiltshire photographs, to accompany the recently published book. Curated by Diane Vose and Trevor Porter and dedicated to late Gazette & Herald photographer Colin Kearley, who collated Wiltshire Photographers Archive. Book for sale in the Museum Shop.

#### OEXMANN ART COMPETITION

10:00 am, Monday, 06 March, 2017

Born in or living in Wiltshire? Then why not enter the Oexmann Art Competition - entries welcome from all ages and prizes awarded.

The object of the competition is to encourage and promote Wiltshire artists and is open to everyone born or living in Wiltshire (Wiltshire Museum reserves the right to ask prize-winners for proof of birthplace or residence).

Entries may be of any subject matter and can be in any two dimensional medium i.e. painting, drawing, collage

# Museum News

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and printmaking but not computer generated. Entries must be original work and the judges will not consider works that reveal copying, plagiarism or use of photography.

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)

## Write for Trust News!

We are always on the lookout for interesting articles about Devizes and its history. Do you have something to offer?

Perhaps you have a question that our local experts can answer, or a comment on one of our stories.

Write to the editor at the address below.

## Are you online?

Did you know you can opt 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!

You can update your preferences online at our website - simply log in, go to My Profile, select Edit Member and set "Soft TN" to "Y" - or you can send an email to the editor at the address below.



[www.trustfordevizes.info](http://www.trustfordevizes.info)

## Dates for your diary

The 2016 Christmas Social will be on Friday 9th December at the Museum, 7pm for a prompt 7:30 start. We will be showing some historic films of Devizes. There will also be a tabletop quiz and the usual refreshments.

## Seen Around Town

*Can you shed some light on these photographs?*



An anonymous correspondent recently sent us four photographs, depicting a zebra and a Bactrian camel grazing on the Green!

The photos came with no covering note, so we can't say when they were taken or what brought these unusual creatures to Devizes.

In the background one photo shows the Volunteer Arms, and we can see the Texaco garage which occupied the KwikFit site in times gone by. The cars also provide hints as to the date of the photos.

But if you have any information about this event, please get in touch.

And thank you to our nameless donor!



## Where in Devizes?

This attractive terrace is something of a hidden gem in central Devizes. Can you guess where it is?

*Answer: Morris Lane, which runs between Hare & Hounds St and Long St.*

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