

From the Editor

The Trust AGM was well attended and we had a wide ranging debate about priorities for 2015/6. Issues discussed included the town's retail offering and how it could be improved, the Assize Courts, the Wharf, traffic congestion and pollution, housing, the state of some of the listed buildings and the need for more trees around town. Your Committee will be looking at all of these areas to identify where we should be putting our effort in the next 12 months. (There has already been some hint of progress on the Assize Courts and we are told that negotiations are ongoing.) Of course, the Trust's role is often limited to commenting and persuading others but we believe that we can be a useful catalyst and we often act in an advisory capacity where others take the lead.

As far as the Neighbourhood Plan is concerned, the Planning Inspector who reviewed the Plan has now produced his Report with a number of recommendations for change. The recommendations do not detract in any way from the substance of the Plan but appear to strengthen it, particularly on housing development. No date has yet been given for the vote to take place but it seems likely that this will happen before the next edition of Trust News so please keep your eyes and ears open. At least 50% of votes need to be in favour of the Plan in order for it to be formally adopted. We are satisfied that the Plan is robust and will result in much better control over housing development.

The new Trust website is now up and running so, if you are an internet user, please take time to register and take part in the on-line debates.

Philippa Morgan

The High Street under Fire!

Our Traffic Advisor puts forward his proposals for ensuring Devizes has a prosperous future.

Many of us were brought up in the days when the High Street was the only place to shop. Out-of-town stores did not exist and the world-wide-web did not even feature in the most outlandish science fiction! High Streets thrived because there was no alternative. Those days are long gone however and the sight of empty shops is commonplace. Whilst it is true that Devizes has escaped many of the worst of the impacts on town centre shopping it is by no means immune and we have our share of empty shops. Online shopping continues to increase its share of total retail spend at an alarming rate.

What can we do to secure the future of our shopping centre? Considerable research has been undertaken on this subject and a major report which examined much of this work has just been published. This report "The pedestrian pound, the business case for better streets and places" highlights a number of factors that are relevant:

- The way people shop has changed – shoppers now wish to experience something different from the large shopping centres. Here the many individual shops in Devizes are very much to our advantage.
- Well-planned improvements to the public space can generate up to 40% extra footfall.
- Investing in streets to provide a positive walking and cycling experience can increase retail sales by up to 30%.
- When public areas are improved, empty premises decline.

How then does this information relate to Devizes? I would suggest in a number of ways.

Firstly, Devizes is not a friendly place for pedestrians. Traffic, both moving and stationary, dominates Sidmouth Street, Maryport Street, High Street and the Market Place. In places pavements are narrow and uneven. Road space is so dominated by motor traffic that many prefer not to cycle.

Secondly, the quality of public space is poor. Not only does the Brittox look tired,

but the system of blocking off one end with wheelie-bins, stacks of cardboard and plastic bags for most of a day each week is, to say the least, an uninviting sight. Facilities for outdoor dining are limited and seats where people can sit and enjoy the town are few and far between. In the town centre, green space is virtually non-existent.

Thirdly, the "Jewel in our Crown", the Market Place is dominated by cars when it could be a real focus for visitors and shoppers alike with ample tables and chairs for outdoor eating and drinking, entertainers and small stalls.

What changes would increase footfall and spend in our town? I have a number of proposals:

Maryport Street - Close it to normal traffic but allow delivery vehicles and those with disabled passengers access and parking. (Traffic flow in Monday Market Street would be reversed to allow vehicles from the car parks to exit onto the Castle Hotel roundabout). Shoppers and cars can share the same space without accidents or, indeed arguments - it is just a question of priority and street design.

An example of this approach is the High Street in Long Eaton where these rules apply. I visit the town regularly, and there is absolutely no conflict between pedestrian and vehicle – it is very clear from the street design that pedestrians have the priority.

The Market Place - We need to "bite the bullet" and make this a place for people to enjoy! The existing road would stay as a service road for the shops and the parking bays adjacent to the fountain would be for disabled only.

High Street - it would be impractical to close the High Street to traffic, but, if parking on the road between the Brittox and Old Swan Yard were to be banned and that area paved with street furniture ensuring that traffic could only move slowly, that would provide another pedestrian link.

Couch Lane - together with Snuff Street this constitutes the main walking route

Continued overleaf

Albion Place

A new look



Work is progressing on the repaving of Albion Place in Sidmouth Street following the felling of the two very overgrown trees which have been dominating the area for the last few years.

While all this is going on, the pyramid commissioned by the Trust has been put into storage until it can be re-sited nearer to Handel House. This will create an outdoor performance space, a useful addition to the Market Place and the Green during events such as the August Street Festival.

Albion Place will be officially 'opened' on July 11th as part of the Sidmouth Street Festival. The road will be closed for the day and there will be family activities as well as food and drink available.



The High Street under Fire!

continued

between the Wharf and the Market Place. Linking them should be a priority so Couch Lane should be closed to through traffic.

Whilst many will agree that these proposals in themselves will improve the ambiance of the town, others will argue that to remove parking spaces and stop cars driving down our roads is commercial suicide. But is it? The report produces some interesting and surprising facts.

The research concluded that creating pedestrian areas does not deter shoppers, rather the contrary: shoppers like traffic free areas and spend more time and money there.

It also found that, contrary to popular opinion, walkers and cyclists spend more per month in retail shops than motorists do.

But what about the reduction in parking spaces? Will that drive customers away? The answer to that is no! The car parks in Devizes are not full, even on Market Day. The large number of short stay on-street spaces means that a space can always be found. Also the creation of a short-term car park at the town end of Station Road means that there will be more spaces within easy reach of the Market Place than there is at the moment. The West Central Car Park will also become short stay, increasing the number of available spaces there too.

Whenever radical solutions are put forward there are many who are fearful of the results. Nothing suggested here has not been successfully implemented elsewhere.

Should we go for it? If the experiences of the places cited in the report are typical, we could expect an increase in footfall of up to 40% and up to 30% increase in trade. Doing nothing will condemn us to a decline in both footfall and trade, with the inevitable results.

It is time to be bold!

Tony Sedgwick

'The pedestrian pound, the business case for better streets and places', produced by Just Economics and commissioned by Living Streets (www.livingstreets.org.uk) on which this article is based can be found on our web site:

www.trustfordevizes.info

If you would like to have your say, you can do so in the discussion forum on the members' area of the website.

It must be stressed that the opinions in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Trustees either individually or as a whole.



Tony's proposals. What do you think? Go to our website and join the discussion

Our New Web Site is up and running - take a look!

Museum News

A selection of forthcoming events

4:00 pm, Thursday, 28 May, 2015

OWN CAR OUTING: Turner's Wessex

A guided tour of Turner's viewpoints in Salisbury Cathedral and Close, followed by a private view of the blockbuster Turner exhibition at Salisbury Museum.

OWN CAR OUTING: Fonthill Bishop

6:00 pm, Tuesday, 16 June, 2015

An evening walk of 3-1/2 to 4 miles (about two hours) looking at the geology, scenery and village of the area, led by Isobel Geddes.

8:00 pm, Wednesday, 17 June, 2015

DEVIZES FESTIVAL LECTURE: Magna Carta: 1215-2015

This June marks 800 years since the creation of Magna Carta. Medieval historian and author of *The Arrow of Sherwood*, Lauren Johnson will examine the creation, mutation and survival of this totemic text.

7:30 pm, Thursday, 25 June, 2015

FILM SHOW: Tyburnia with the Dead Rat Orchestra

A film exploring the parallels between contemporary and historical views of crime and execution at Tyburn Prison. Live music accompaniment.

8:00 am, Saturday, 27 June, 2015

COACH OUTING: Dulwich Picture Gallery

An all day outing to the Dulwich Picture Gallery to include a guided tour of the Ravilious exhibition. There will also be an opportunity to visit the Horniman Museum and Gardens.

2:00 pm, Sunday, 12 July, 2015

CIVIL WAR WALK

Devizes in the Civil War: the anniversary of the Battle of Roundway. A guided walk led by Robin Hodges.

2:00 pm, Saturday, 25 July, 2015

OWN CAR OUTING: Frome Town Walk

A guided afternoon walk around this fascinating and historic market town.

2:00 pm, Saturday, 08 August, 2015

AFTERNOON WALK: Lockeridge and Fyfield - geology, scenery and village walk led by Isobel Geddes

An afternoon walk in the Kennet Valley, including a visit to the field of sarsen stones at Lockeridge Dene, a look at building materials used in the local houses and a strenuous walk.

Continued overleaf



THE TRUST FOR DEVIZES

Home News About us Our Activities Get Involved Photo Gallery Members Area



Welcome to The Trust for Devizes

We hope you find the information you are looking for. If you think we can help you can contact us through the "Contact Us" page. Devizes has a fine history, much of

warp, but we do recognise that change has to be carefully and sensitively managed if our heritage is to be preserved. We are proud of our town and want visitors

A screen shot of the Trust's new home page

The Trust has a new and improved web site. If you haven't seen it go to www.trustfordevizes.info

Apart from the fact that it contains more information, such as our activity programme, it also has a members' only area where we can both tell you and ask you about issues that we do not want in the public domain. But the best part for many of us is the discussion forum: this allows all our members to take part in an on-line discussion on whatever topic interests them - you can add your contribution to an existing discussion or start your own. At the moment we have two on the go, the future of the Assize Courts and the importance of Green Spaces in our town. You may well want to start one when you have read this issue!

Our experience of debates at our quarterly meetings has shown how valuable members' views are in formulating our policy. This on-line

feature means such contributions are no longer confined to such meetings. We can discuss more and more members can contribute.

Many of you have already registered as members. If we have your current email address you will have received an invitation. If you haven't responded or if we haven't sent you an invitation go to the website and click on "Get Involved" on the top bar and then on "Contact us". Fill in your details and ask to register and we will send you an invitation. Once you get that, click on the link and select a user name and password - in the words of the meerkat, "SIMPLES!".

We do keep the site up-to-date so do get into the habit of looking at it regularly.

A technical hitch means that our email address is not available at the moment. While we are investigating, please use the "contact us" link as described above.

Museum News

continued

Monday, 05 October, 2015

SOCIETY TRIP TO POMPEII, HERCULANEUM AND CLASSICAL CAMPANIA

The Society has arranged for Andante Travel of Salisbury to organise a private trip for the members of WANHS, Salisbury and Dorchester Museums.

Bookings and enquiries:

www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk

Or call 01380 727369

A note from the Treasurer

Can you gift-aid your subscription?

I need to update the list of members who are eligible to reclaim tax on their subscriptions and donations. You will find a form enclosed with your newsletter and I should be grateful if the person who is the taxpayer in the household would complete this and return it to me as soon as possible.

When the Trust makes a claim for Gift Aid it results in several hundred pounds coming into our account. There are a few projects that we have in mind to implement in the coming months so any addition to our funds by this method will be welcome.

Thank you again to all members who have a standing order in place for their annual subscription. Should you need a form to enable you to set up an arrangement with your Bank, I will be happy to send you one. If you receive your newsletter by e-mail you can download the form from our website, or mail me at

inezskinner@aol.com and I will post a form to you.

Inez Skinner



www.trustfordevizes.info

A date for your diary

Traffic Congestion and Air Pollution

Town Hall - 7.30 Friday 26th June

In 2011 the Trust highlighted the dangers to health for those breathing in Devizes air, polluted as it is by traffic fumes and called for urgent action. A lot has happened since, yet pollution levels in the town are still above the limits imposed by the EU and, earlier this year, the Supreme Court ordered the Government to put forward a detailed plan for correcting this by the end of the year.

This meeting will provide an update on the current levels of pollution and on Wiltshire Council's programme for reducing these levels.

The audience will have an opportunity to engage in discussion groups to come up with things we can do ourselves to reduce pollution and what measures they want the Council to implement.

Public Health England estimate that 29,000 die prematurely each year through breathing in polluted air. This is an opportunity for you to influence future policy on this vital issue.

Do come along and encourage friends and neighbours to attend.

Hugh Burn 1921-2015



We report with sadness the death of Hugh Burn, a stalwart on the Trust Committee as Committee Secretary. He was passionate about Devizes, having been born in the town in 1921 and lived with his parents in 37 Market Place with his two older brothers. His father was a jeweller, watchmaker and optician trading as Leon V Burn.

Hugh moved away from Devizes to pursue his career as a municipal

engineer but, on retirement, returned to Devizes with his wife Hilary in 1996. He was instrumental in saving the Trust when it was without a chairman. He encouraged Major John Page to take on the role and he proved to be an excellent chairman who raised the Trust's profile.

Our condolences go to his wife, four children, eight grandchildren and two great grand-children.

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