

CIVIC SOCIETY EVENTS

Meetings usually take place at the Library Meetings Room on the third Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. More details on page 4.

Thursday 13th May at 2 pm: Norton Manor - only for those of you who have already booked. This tour is now full.

Thursday 20th May: 'From Carthorse to Computers: the story of farming in the 20th century'. An illustrated talk by [Colin Pady](#).

Saturday 5th June at 2 pm: A guided tour of Glastonbury.

Thursday 17th June: Award winning architect [Stan Bolt](#). His work at Mirldown is shown below.



There will be no meeting in July.

The card that accompanies this edition [for **paid up members only**] has the diary for the year until March 2011, plus details of the committee. Please keep it for future reference.

No Surprises at the AGM

It is with sadness that I have to report the results of our AGM: the committee remains as last year – less one: my appreciation to Graham and Paula Ward, Roger Gilbraith and Elizabeth Tansley for standing again. However, there is no getting away from it, a committee of 5 members is too small and given that I, and one or two others, intend to stand down next year, it is clear that the Society faces the need to change the way it operates.

We feel that the time has come to concentrate on growing the active membership, especially as we have hopes that the Civic Voice will give the civic society movement a lot of much-needed publicity, far more than the Civic Trust ever did.

The consequence will be that we will not be able to spend so much time on other things, such as the programme or newsletters – so if you would like to organise a talk or a visit, or write an article, please do! (But check dates and requirements with Graham or me first.)

This edition of the Civic Sense has two reports from

other contributors – a welcome and refreshing change. The Planning Group still flourishes and looks forward to an interesting year as developers begin to shrug off the recession - Project Taunton may start coming along quite rapidly as the year goes on. If so that may give the Society more of its core work to do – and a higher profile.

A debate on the merits of joining Civic Voice (the phoenix from the ashes of the Civic Trust) and/or SWACS (the old Outer South West meeting of civic societies) came down in favour of the former, and we have now paid our subscription to Civic Voice.

The get together after business was as jolly as usual, with Stephen Major's quiz engaging everyone. Acting sommelier Derek Beard wielded the bottles with aplomb and Paula Ward took charge of the raffle. The evening made a small profit.

Member of



A year ago, following an offer from the Taunton & Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to the Civic Society, Stephen Major and I were invited to become members of a Design Panel being set up at Musgrove Park Hospital. This is a very brief summary of what has happened since.

The hospital is at something of a crossroads. With a third of its buildings needing repair or replacement (many dating back to the 1940's) and a number of major new schemes in the pipeline, including a new Surgical Ward Block (see the next item), a more coherent and strategic approach to the way the hospital develops in the future is needed. The (only too obviously) ad hoc way in which things have happened is now to be avoided and consistent, high quality, design standards will be sought.

Panel members include the Chair of the Trust, Projects Director for Strategic Projects, Capital Projects Manager, Arts Coordinator, a Musgrove Partner and others from time to time. The intention is to include more non-Trust members. It's hard to judge just what our role really is: one trust member described it to me as mainly keeping a watching brief.

Initial design workshops were arranged with outside consultants to examine masterplan options to try and develop a strategy for future development. This produced lively discussion and, with many of the parameters already firmly established on site, it soon became clear that compromise was inevitable. It was quickly realised that the new Surgical Ward Block was going to act as a catalyst for the way the hospital develops in the future. Much early design work on this scheme had already taken place, with its location established and extensive demolition of old buildings earmarked, but broader issues still remained. One outcome of this masterplanning exercise has been the incorporation of an internal 'street' alongside the ward block. As a unifying element, this will link up with the route through the Queen's and Duchess buildings and form part of an important new entrance from Wellington Road.



The architects, BDP Partnership, have since attended a number of Panel meetings to present detailed scheme proposals and address masterplanning issues. The breadth of research, knowledge and experience brought to bear by both client body and architects has been commendable. At one such presentation at BDP's offices in Bristol, we also enjoyed a walkabout of the city centre as a bit of light relief.

Day visits to two new hospitals made for interesting comparisons. One was the impressive NHS Bristol Cardiac Centre and Children's Hospital, the other an almost-completed private hospital on the outskirts of Bath with patient accommodation like a 5 star hotel.

The Trust has produced a Design Vision document which highlights for the first time its objectives. This includes recognition of the importance of a comprehensive landscape strategy, one aim being to 'put the park back into Musgrove Park'. The location of the new helipad outside A&E may not help in this regard perhaps, but it's still too early to judge. Sadly the Eisenhower Tree by the Old Building is likely to be lost to the new ward block but hopefully it will be memorialised as some form of artwork.

The opportunity to be a part of this initiative, however small, has proved an interesting experience which has shown another side of the NHS. With so many hoops for its managers to jump through it's surprising that anything of real merit can survive the course and get built: committees are not, after all, noted for their design abilities. Planning for the future is an ongoing challenge, with goal posts continually being moved for a whole host of reasons. But with an exciting scheme now (hopefully) about to start on site, coupled with attempts being made to create a long-term, coherent strategy for the way the hospital develops, there must be grounds for optimism.

If you want to know how the story continues, come to the talk by Ian Boswall, the Trust's Strategic Projects Director, in February 2011.



Proposed Theatre and Surgical wards

- Proposed Buildings
- Linear Park
- Lines of Tree Planting
- Key Spaces
- Interior Pedestrian Movement
- Entrance
- Eisenhower Tree radius

Planning Group News Brief – current applications

Surgical Wards (38/10/0062) & Theatre Block (/0061)

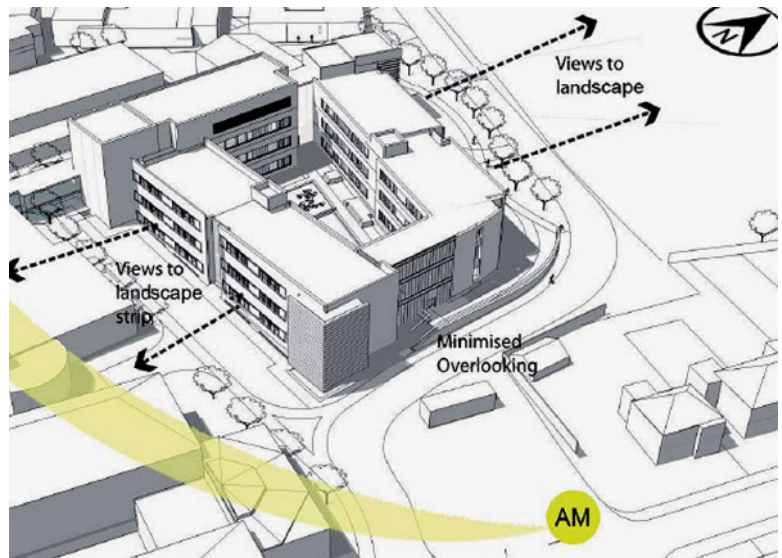
Musgrove Park Hospital has made two applications - full for the Wards block, and outline for the Theatre block. The picture (right) shows part of the arc of the sun around the blocks (the Theatre is at the back) and their relationship to the Queen's Building and the end of Ashley Road. They replace the entrance to the Old Building and the car park in front including the Eisenhower tree. Astonishingly, that isn't protected, and there are protests about its loss.

Design objectives include creating a building that satisfies the functional requirements of a hospital and

- creates a therapeutic environment which is attractive, welcoming, easy to understand and allows views for patients out to surrounding open spaces,
- is highly efficient in terms of layout and built form,
- is sufficiently flexible to enable adaptation to future changes in models of care and technologies,
- is of high quality architectural style, appropriate scale and materials, to ensure the development is well integrated with the surrounding community.

On that last point, the Hospital carried out an extensive community consultation, and has sought to minimise the impact of the new buildings, but they will be pretty obtrusive for those on the even number side of the end of Ashley Road.

The pictures from these applications on the previous page show how it incorporates the internal street idea, and the creation of green areas within the dense hospital complex.



Midas want their Tangier development on the cheap (38/10/0107 & 0108)

Planning permissions for the Midas development on the waterfront at Tangier will expire in July and December this year, so Midas are seeking an extension. No changes to the design we thought was so bad – but they are seeking to renegotiate their S106 planning obligations and get out of paying several millions into TDBC and SCC coffers – just when public funds are being squeezed.

They want to reduce the amount of housing that has to be affordable by 20%, to avoid education charges on 44 properties, to pay nothing towards leisure and play facilities – and say that since the Third Way has started, obviously no money is now needed for that, so their contribution of £800,000 should be forgotten about. Altogether it looks as if they are trying to avoid paying about £5M, perhaps more. Should we stand for this?

Hunts Court (38/10/0110LB) Loungers are the latest restaurant to think of occupying Hunts Court, and have made an application for a ground level side door from the Cider Press Garden. The building seems to be subject to an endless stream of applications for small changes, mostly harmful to its character.

Tesco Expansion Tesco wants to expand its main Castle Street store by 47% to include a new, larger café, more car parking spaces, and a wider range of products and local food (with “improved product availability”). They say that footpath and cycle links will be improved and the store’s carbon emissions reduced by 44%. 90 jobs may be created.

Planners have said that the present store is “significantly overtrading” but turned down a previous application on the grounds that it was mainly for “comparison goods” (i.e. clothes, housewares, electrical, media goods etc) and would constitute undue competition for the town centre. However this time the Town Centre Manager, Graham Love, has said that he doesn't see it affecting trade in the town centre badly.

Go along to the public exhibitions at the store on Friday, May 14, from 2-7pm and Saturday, May 15, from 10am-3pm: comment – and let us know what you think.

And Finally... St Modwen are hosting a public consultation at the recently refurbished Auction House at Firepool on **Wednesday May 12, for one of the first parts of the Firepool redevelopment - 110,000 sq ft of offices and apartments on what is now Priory Bridge Road car park. An outline planning application is expected very soon.**

Comments to Graham Ward at 01823 289605, planning@tauntoncivic.org.uk

Good Things at the Castle

Eighteen of us gathered for our second visit to Taunton Museum. It was a beautiful evening, in stark contrast to our first visit, which was marked by thunder, lightning and torrential rain!

The evening sun highlighted the different atmospheres in the various areas of the museum. Colour schemes are already taking shape, setting the tone for the various types of exhibits: dark and sombre in the area devoted to the times of the Monmouth Rebellion, light and airy in the turret room where visitors can sit and reflect on what they have seen. The entrance foyer is taking shape and already it feels light and spacious.

Once again, the tour was led by the museum's Tom Mayberry and Martin Blake of Pollards: apparently, Pollards had been the main contractor 75 years earlier when the museum was updated in the 1930s. During the present renovation (a much bigger project than the previous one), a lot of archaeology has been revealed, especially beneath the floor of the Great Hall. A new mezzanine floor has been constructed, which recaptures the Hall's appearance as a court room, which was its function in the 18th century. Great care is being taken to ensure that the correct materials are being used in the restoration of the fabric.

The museum plans to reopen in the spring of 2011 after specialist contractors have completed the final fitting out. The museum team who accompanied us on the tour explained in detail how this was to be achieved. Their enthusiasm for the project is very obvious.

We would just like to say a big thank you on behalf of the Civic Society for a most interesting and informative tour to all those who helped make it so.

Richard & Constance Booth.

The Diary in Detail

Thursday 13th May at 2 pm: A Visit to Norton Manor, which now serves as the Officers' Mess in Norton Manor Camp. This visit is restricted to those who have already applied and whose details have been passed to base security.

On arrival ask for directions to the Officers' Mess. You will be met by Colour Sergeant Alfie Orton and Jenny the Mess Manager.

Thursday 20th May: 'From Cart-horse to Computers' - South East Devon farmer and historian, Colin Pady, has made quite a name for himself in nature conservation and with local walks and talks on all things rural, so we can expect an entertaining evening.

Saturday 5th June from 2 pm: A conducted tour of Glastonbury by John Brunsdon, thrice Mayor of Glastonbury and Chair of Glastonbury Conservation Society. (Meet at the Rural Life Museum car park).

Thursday 17th June: Stan Bolt turned his back on the big city to set up in Devon, his home county. Even so, his work has attracted attention and earned him a reputation as a 'top notch' architect. The Telegraph's Angela Pertusini said that "Stan Bolt's contemporary homes ... push the envelope in terms of design and desirability", while in the Sunday Times Hugh Pearman has called his modern houses "Sophisticated regionalism".

A Civic Voice Benefit

For the first year that we are a member of Civic Voice, any of our individual members can have a free day access pass to any National Trust property during normal opening hours (subject to a small number of restrictions). The pass is transferable and can be given to a friend if you are already a member of the National Trust.

Ring Graham Ward on 289605 for details.

Streetwise Girls Get Locked In!

The reason for the late arrival of SCC speakers Emma Cockburn and Hannah Fountain at the April meeting was not revealed at the time, but I shall tell on them: having waited after work at County Hall, they went from exit to exit, trying to find the one door that wasn't locked and alarmed. I'm afraid that their day didn't get much better when they got to us. They had a nerve-wracking time as their talks were frequently interrupted by comments and questions from the audience - I must admit that I joined in at one point, when they touched on one of my pet subjects. Under the circumstances, they survived admirably.

Emma gave us the results of the public consultation on the pedestrianisation of North Street (over 600 responses). Improvements were strongly favoured but people were worried about details such as the treatment of St James Street and Hammet Street, access to the Congregational church, and had concerns over disabled access. Many cited the narrowness of East Street as a greater problem.

Hannah talked about street audits. They need to be taken in all conditions - peak times, after dark, in bad weather and different seasons, and the study should include links, routes, crossings, clutter, and public spaces - and the usage of the street. There is a common phrase - "everyone knows this is the problem" - which cannot be taken at face value. The authorities need evidence: has the problem been officially reported, has a count been taken, or opinions surveyed? Is it, indeed, a real problem, and what should be its priority? There is, of course, always a money consideration.

Both talks showed how difficult it was to balance conflicting demands - and that was exemplified by strong views - for example, on the behaviour of cyclists and pedestrians - coming from the audience.

With our Living Streets subgroup presently dormant, the subject needs to be raised again. Perhaps the interest of some of you at the meeting was engaged enough to want to get the group going again - it certainly seemed to generate real passion! If so, please give me a ring on 01823 337188 and I will see if I can get a meeting together.

Fran Pitt