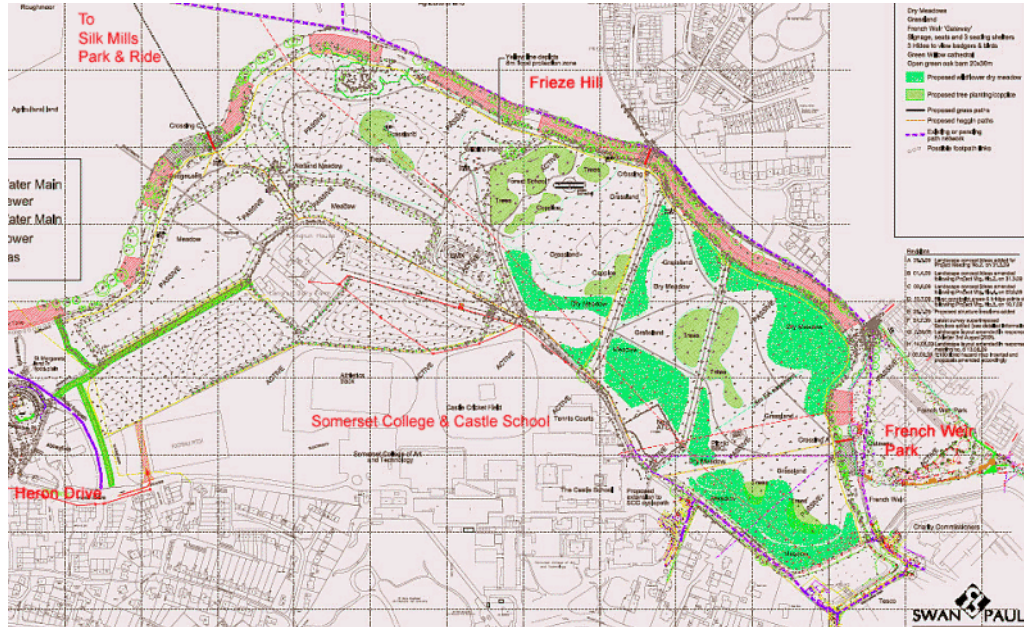




## Longrun Meadows

TDBC application 38/09/0305 seeks to transform the pasture of what was once Longrun Farm into a new and accessible rural open space along the south side of the Tone from French Weir west up to St Margaret's Hospice, and Heron Drive, directly linked by a footpath and cycleway to the Park and Ride.

Part of the land doubles as the flood alleviation scheme that will protect the riverside sites through the town centre to Firepool.



## Planning Group News Brief

The landscaping, designed by local landscape architects, the Swan Paul Partnership, will create 3 pedestrian & cycle bridges over the Tone, and is a major step towards the realization of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

A network of footpaths and cycleways will enable people to get through the meadows fairly directly (for example from the Park

and Ride to the town centre, or from Somerset College across to Frieze Hill) while ensuring that undisturbed areas are retained 'off track' for quiet exploration.

It is intended that the Meadows will include an open barn/shelter, seating shelters, places for barbecues, facilities for a Forest School, wildflower meadows and wildlife hides and even a "green cathedral" – and on a more urban note, a fenced BMX facility.

Note the word *intended* – we will surely want to support it, and the Borough controls all the land involved – but whether all the desired funds can be found, and when, is another question.

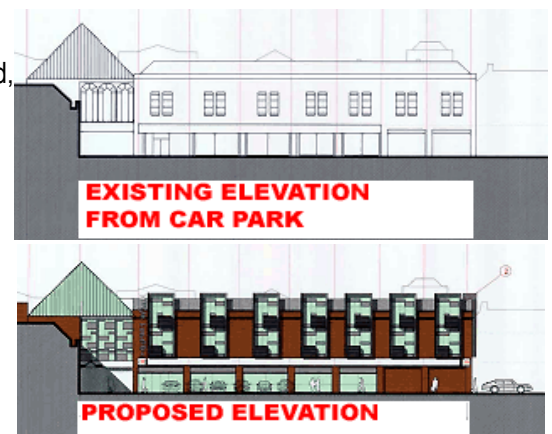
## County Walk

Now that the revamp of the Old Market Centre (now "Orchard") is nearly finished, the owners of County Walk have decided to keep up with the Joneses. Their application 39/09/0279 capitalises on spaces between existing roofs and unused areas over the present shops to create two new shopping floors at the Sainsbury's end of the Walk. This will increase the floor space by 67% and the number of shop units from 16 to 33, giving the whole Walk a makeover.

Some ground floor units will be smaller and set back to make space for stairs and a lift. There will be toilets on the ground and first floors.

Many of the new units will be quite small, so the take-up may be by specialist shops and minor chains, which will bring welcome diversity to Taunton's central retail offering. How viable all this will be at the present time is moot.

Surprisingly, while the height of the south end of the site will increase, it will still not be as high as the glass pyramid that ends the Walk (this will be very little altered), and there will be no sign of the changes from East Street. Features such as the new windows on Blockbuster Video facing the car park will need to be considered, but overall this inward investment seems very welcome.



Comments to Graham Ward at 01823 289605, [planning@tauntoncivic.org.uk](mailto:planning@tauntoncivic.org.uk)

## The job no-one wants, but everyone thinks should be done...

That was Graham Love, our new Town Centre Manager (TCM) describing his job. TCMs are the men in the middle – they need to know about local government, public relations and economic development – a TCM must try to make the town cleaner, safer, and more attractive – things like improving access, getting the parking right (key for trade), advertising and co-ordinating events, security (CCTV, radio links, local policing), adequate seating and a "pleasant atmosphere" – the list goes on and on. Graham's enthusiasm was apparent as he gave us a detailed history of the profession, and explained what Taunton's Business Improvement District (BID) does for the town. Businesses pay a levy which provides for things like additional street cleaning, part funds a community PC and 4 PCSOs, publicity for the town, new signage etc. He admitted that the High Street is "a disgrace", but the council has just signed an exclusivity deal with EPF, who have recently spent £3.5M on updating Orchard, giving them 18 months to develop plans for the new High Street retail area. He wants Taunton to feel safe, look good and feel good, be easy to get around, and shout about how good it is – and he knows that there is a lot to do. He also wants to keep a local feel to Taunton, and avoid the clone town syndrome – but is conflicted because he wants the major national chains represented here.

Questions flew thick and fast: Why weren't people living above shops? How could pavement congestion be eased and the experience of walkers be improved? In reply to question about what to do about our dead night-time economy Graham said that Taunton needed a wider mix of night-time uses, that the shops shut "too exactly", that he saw the Brewhouse etc. as important and wanted Taunton to try for a Purple Flag – an award for being diverse, safe and welcoming at night.

## REVIEWS: Sidmouth Visit

A pleasant beach to sit on? Tasty fish and chips on the front? If you thought that was the extent of Sidmouth's attractions then September's visit was an eye opener – no chance of a gentle meander and an afternoon snooze - careful planning meant a challenging itinerary that involved groups A and B criss-crossing the town, dipping into the delightfully quirky museum and studying the coastline, even visiting a toolshed.



Highlights of the day included tiny cakes with coffee on arrival, Golden Copse in glorious Margaret's Meadow, a memorable walk along the river Sid and a visit to the cricket ground that was the home of Somerset cricket (yes, in Devon).

The Sid Vale Association (membership around 2,500), owns the museum and Margaret's meadow (a local amenity obviously enjoyed by strollers and their dogs), and since receiving a bequest of around £2,000,000, has established a benevolent trust that has pledged £68,000 in grants in 10 months.

This visit was declared by one member as 'the best so far'. Indeed, there was no opportunity to be bored. And all in glorious sunshine (see *letters*).

## S Severn Tidal Power - massive, uncertain, and a lot we don't know

A packed meeting (with 12 of us) at Wiveliscombe Civic Society asked Alyn Jones from Somerset CC lots of questions about this – and the most striking thing to emerge was how much is not yet known.

All the schemes are big, with estimated costs in the £billion (£B) and power output in megawatts (MW). Schemes that would use new technology but might cause less environmental damage were dropped, and the 16 mile barrage from Minehead to Aberthaw (B1) fell out on cost grounds.

5 out of 10 schemes were selected for further work:

B4 – Shoots Barrage, near the Severn bridges, £3.2B, 1 MW.

B5 – Beachley Barrage – small, upstream of the bridges, £2.3B, 0.6 MW

L2 – Fleming Lagoon – a Welsh shore impoundment between Newport and the Severn bridges, £4B, 1.3 MW

L3d – Bridgwater Bay Lagoon – between Hinkley Point and Weston-super-Mare, £3.8B, 1.3 MW.

B3 – Cardiff-Weston Barrage – Brean Down to Lavernock Point, £20.9B, 8.6 MW.

The current hole in the public finances may make the Cardiff-Weston barrage, until now the favourite, unaffordable by the time of the next consultation in 2010. The government has started to change position, as it now says that as all the schemes deliver much less power per pound invested than wind or other renewable sources it may be wiser to spend time developing the new wave & tidal power technologies (that it originally refused to shortlist) rather than make a massive investment right now in something that will take between 8 and 15 years to build, and also require a local upgrade of the National Grid. Issues identified by Somerset CC include:

- ❖ No assessment of effects on the drainage of the Tone and Parrett, even for the Bridgwater Bay Lagoon scheme, or of flood effects.
- ❖ No adequate work as yet on changes in coastal erosion or on sediment build-up and ways to mitigate it.
- ❖ Substantial effects on wildlife habitats – affecting sea creatures and birds.
- ❖ All schemes need to be subsidised. Cardiff-Weston will require public money – other shortlisted schemes could be built privately.
- ❖ Any scheme would have to have a productive life of 120 years.
- ❖ No requirement identified for a road or rail link across a barrage.
- ❖ SCC wants the Minehead to Aberthaw scheme looked at again, as it may provide Somerset with good flood defences.

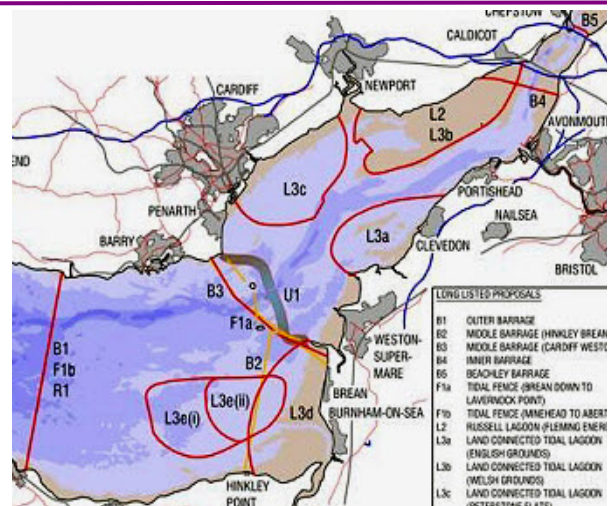
## Tom Coleman

Tom Coleman, tall, rangy, with a bushy grey beard and a voice that reached to the back of the room, brought a slide-show of some of the most interesting medieval domestic architecture outside of the National Trust.

'West Country Farmhouses' seemed to be a misnomer as Tom began with pictures of caves, bronze age roundhouses and the earliest excavated farmhouse ...in the Orkneys. But the photography was memorable - shots Tom had taken of massive crucks, moulded ceilings and painted screens, smoked-blackened timbers and thatch.

Meanwhile, he gave us bits of information that stuck like cob to lathes: medieval longhouses are tall to allow the smoke from the central hearth to rise, leaving around 8 feet of clear(er) air below; before chimneys, thatches rarely caught fire because there was no oxygen in the smoke layer to feed rising sparks; chimneys were symbols of affluence, therefore placed where they were most obvious, not where they were most needed, and likewise porches with rooms above too small for real use; itinerant artists painted screens that divided the animals from the family and kept out some of the draughts from the opposing central front and back doors.

After the break, Jim Nichol in conversation with Tom revealed some interesting facts about his own medieval farmhouse.



## YOUR LETTERS

Thank you for the visit to Sidmouth. We know how much work goes into organising these things. The walk along the river was so lovely and, of course, we were blessed with glorious weather. David and I now realise there is more to the town than the shopping area and the esplanade! Thank you very much.

Sandy and David Davies

What a wonderful day, thanks to the Sid Vale Association and to those who organised it from Taunton.

E Tansley

### Living Streets or Street Pride?

Tony Burton of the CSI announced details of the new civic society *Street Pride* campaign for 2010. This follows the intense interest from civic societies across the country during the recent debate on the future of the movement.

"The campaign will promote the importance of civilised streets and public spaces and highlight the damage being caused by poor pavements and intrusive, poorly designed and unnecessary signs, posts, bollards, guardrails. Among other things the campaign will include a toolkit for civic societies and others to identify streets which need action to remove clutter and a number of campaign workshops around the country. The campaign builds on the work already being done by civic societies in Stamford, Salisbury, Oxford and elsewhere and complements the work of the charity, Living Streets. We are being supported by English Heritage in this campaign".

Found in *The London Paper*, 7th Sept.:

"The West End will be the latest part of London to be given "naked streets" if plans backed by the mayor go ahead. Traffic lights, white lines, signs and kerbs could be removed from Oxford Street and Regent Street to try to make drivers concentrate more and cut down accidents. The concept reduced accidents in Kensington High Street by 44% and is also being installed by the South Kensington museums."

On the other hand, Guide Dogs for the blind has launched a petition to keep kerbs, for obvious reasons.

## The Diary in Detail

**Thursday November 19th: Pat Hase** - "It's Christmas Day in the Workhouse....." Familiar words, but what were the conditions in which some of our more unfortunate ancestors found themselves? Why was Rebecca Hase in Axbridge Workhouse in 1878?



What happened next?

Concentrating on the inmates of the Workhouse rather than the administration, this talk is based on information found in official documents enhanced by additional data taken from family history sources. And how did they really celebrate Christmas Day...?

**Thursday, January 21st:** TDBC's Ralph Willoughby-Foster and Mark Green will give us the latest news on, amongst other things, the current position re Project Taunton.

**Thursday February 25th: [NB the 4th Thursday, not the date on your green programme]**

**100 Years of Practice:** Jon Upsher, who joined Stone + Partners in 1988, and became a partner in 2002, will present some of the remarkable buildings that the practice have designed, from residential to commercial, and particularly the public health and education sectors.

### *A Christmas Invitation to Sing*

*You are cordially invited to join the Mayor and Mayoress, the Unitarian congregation and friends at a Candle-lit Carol Service, 7.30pm on Monday, 14th December, at Mary Street Unitarian Chapel, Taunton (next to the Royal British Legion - park in the usual car park).*

## Own our Future [cont. from page 1]

I implore those of you that can to log on to [www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk](http://www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk), and click on to 'Own the Future'. If you want to read the report in paper form, you can request a copy from the website, or 'phone **0151 708 9920** (or as a last resort ring Graham on 01823 289605).

Your Chairman, Fran Pitt

### We are asked for feedback on:

1. Whether the principles of the movement (collective, networked, independent, federal) and a new national body (campaigning, responsive, light footed, grass-roots) are sound.
2. The balance of priorities for the work of the new national body between representing the movement, supporting societies and helping societies network together.
3. How civic societies can best network and share experience - including the proposals to build this around clusters of civic societies and thematic issues rather than Government regions.
4. Defining the common thread uniting the civic society movement - founded on the importance of place, pride, identity and community.
5. The balance between securing independence for the movement and funding it through contributions from individual civic societies on a per capita membership basis.

### In Brief

Somerset County Council has produced an excellent booklet, **Somerset Heritage Service Annual Review 2008/09**, which is very colourful and interesting, covering a lot more than the museum project and the new heritage centre. Go to the [somerset.gov.uk](http://somerset.gov.uk) website (archives, heritage, or museums), or to request a hard copy, ring 01823 362843

**SW Association of Civic Societies** Robin Cassell, Graham Ward and Fran Pitt went to Launceston in October, to the quarterly SWACS meeting, where discussion was mainly about the emerging CSI. There were 14 delegates, representing 8 societies. Views differed a lot, from parochial to visionary.