



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.

Wednesday, September 9th: there are still places available on the Sidmouth trip. Having taken the tour, I can recommend it — varied, interesting, but not physically taxing.

Thursday, September 17th: Graham Love, Taunton Town Centre Manager.

The tour of the Aspect development in Corporation Street has been postponed.

Thursday, October 22nd*: Tom Coleman will talk about West Country farmhouses. ***On the fourth Thursday, not as previously advertised.**

Monday October 19th at 7.30 pm at Wiveliscombe Community Centre: a talk arranged by Wivvy CS about the likely impact of the Severn Barrage.

Thursday, November 19th: 'Christmas in the Workhouse' – an illustrated talk by Pat Hase, with an exhibition of local workhouse material and pictures.

There will be no meeting in December

YOUR NEW FORMAT NEWSLETTER

As you can see, we have taken on board suggestions that the Civic Sense would look better as a folded sheet of A3 paper, rather than two stapled A4 sheets. However, this has required a change of printer: ADK Ltd, the company that has printed the full colour, bi-monthly newsletter ever since Andrew Knutt designed the September-October 2004 issue, does not have the facility to print and fold A3. We are indebted to Andrew and his team for all the hard work they have put into helping to keep you abreast of the news.

You may also note a change in the design, as the composite picture of Taunton that backed the title for the past five years is outdated – the Cricket Club's West Stand now gives us a very different view behind the bridge.

LIVING STREETS
 PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

Four members who had expressed interest in implementing a Living Streets campaign in Taunton met to discuss what form our involvement is likely to take. Felicity Hebditch agreed to head the group until it is on a more regular footing, and there was tentative agreement on a few targets for action, such as decluttering Town Centre streets and considering traffic hotspots where it is unpleasant or dangerous to walk or to cross. Subsequently Fran, Graham, Wenna Gilbraith, Felicity and Max Hebditch took an experimental audit of the area around the Market House, taking photographs and note of damaged paving, etc. These will be marked onto a large scale map, with the intention of adding North and East Streets (and further afield) in the future.



places where we live, work and play' unless or until we have a clear mandate from a majority of our members. Despite Joshua Hart's eloquence and enthusiasm, some members are vehemently opposed to such a low limit. Others acknowledge that for safety's sake the campaign is laudable, but that modern cars are very difficult to drive at low speeds.

Even the core of Joshua Hart's thesis, neighbourliness (or the incidence of connections between those living in the same street), struck a few curmudgeonly responses from those who have no wish to get closer to people with whom the only thing they have in common is a postcode. And understandably, not everyone would be delighted if children could suddenly play in the road outside their house. That nostalgic folk memory of the time when street cricket involved a wicket chalked on someone's wall rarely includes livid householders at

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The group is aware, however, that enthusiasm must be tempered with caution: for instance, we are unable to launch a campaign for a 20 mph speed limit in 'all

Castle Green

The Planning Group has commented on the application put in by Taunton Deane. We are broadly supportive of the proposal, but have concerns over the unresolved consequences of both removing the Car Park behind the Municipal Buildings (which affects the Registry Office and patrons of the Mecca) and the bus and coach stops in Castle Way (mainly used by Stagecoach). No one yet knows where the stops will go, although Corporation Street seems to be the bookies' choice.

We strongly disliked the proposal for a concrete, steel and glass bridge to cross the Castle's Moat Garden down to Goodland gardens, and objected to that and some details of the proposed edging to the Moat Garden, on the grounds that the proposals harmed the setting of a listed building.



Planning Group News Brief



Since then SANHS, as owners of the Castle and the Wyndham Hall have expressed serious concerns over the impact of the proposals and access and security issues, English Heritage has noted that Scheduled Monument approval is also required, and called for a more extensive impact assessment, while Natural England, Somerset Environment Records Centre, Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Council's own Nature Conservation officers have all maintained that the ecological assessments are inadequate in a number of ways and must be improved before a properly lawful decision can be made. All this seems to make approval by the end of September unlikely.

David Wilson Homes

It is perhaps a sign that the housing market is reviving that this developer has put in these two reserved matters applications on sites that already have outline approval for housing.



119 Houses at Langford Mead, Norton Fitzwarren (25/09/0016)

This is a small wedge shaped estate, mostly market housing, on what was the Norton Fitzwarren trading estate, immediately to the south of the Cross Keys roundabout. It is a



low height development with are four 3-storey blocks (in blue on the left) and the rest 2 (brown) and 2½-storey (green) houses. Single storey garages (red) make up what is now an unusual level of parking spaces – about 2 per dwelling. While the development is dense there is a good range of house sizes – one of the 4 bed ones is shown on the right. We may comment on materials and layout details, and the overall density and site exploitation are high, but overall this seems to be a bit better than some recent housing schemes.



76 Houses at Hyde Lane, Creech St Michael (14/09/0024)

This site is bordered by Hyde Lane to the north and east, and touches Creech St Michael at its southeast corner near the primary school (see below). Hyde Lane (in red) goes over the motorway to the northwest. The recreation ground is across Hyde Lane to the north, and the proposed new medical centre is immediately to the south. As shown on the right the layout provides an improved route to Creech from Monkton Heathfield, cutting out the narrow dogleg of Hyde Lane.



The original outline permission was for 76 two-storey dwellings, but now it is proposed to upgrade 4 dwellings to 2½ storeys. Another (full) application (14/09/0025) for 4 houses brings the site total to 80.

The developer claims the estate satisfies the Building For Life assessment criteria. The housing is 50% affordable, 50% market.



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

New Library at King's College

What would you make of a building described as having facades that are “finished in brick and are punted but at limited incident so as to avoid any privacy issues” (sic) with a ground floor that “is grounded in one corner and is then pealed (sic) away to form the entrance to the building”? This is the architects’ description of the new Library proposed for King’s College. Hopefully they will be more careful with the design detail than their English! Elsewhere the text is somewhat flowery, and the meaning is – well, obscure to those of us who are not professional marketing architects.

It involves some demolition of the existing listed school building adjacent to the Headmaster’s house, but while clearly being a modern building the choice of materials does give it a sympathetic relationship to the main school building.

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the end of their tethers over noise and damage. There is far more to this campaign than meets the eye!

Yet Living Streets has a solid, 80 year history and so, on balance, we feel our link to it could be of benefit to Taunton. We need the views of all our members, and we may give over one of our meetings to a very important discussion of what it is we wish to campaign for or against. We could mount a Civic Soc display with a Living Streets focus at the Library, perhaps man a stall by a crossing or busy pedestrian area to gauge pedestrian usage and needs. In the meantime, we would like to perform more street audits in the town centre and hope that this activity will appeal to other members.

If you would like to be involved, please contact Felicity: 01823 251856.

Two cities, one copper

When Mike Rowland was 7 he witnessed a murder in Bath, and helped to identify the killer. Later, as a rookie cop, he served with one of the arresting officers. For 35 years Bath and Bristol were his patch, and so ingrained is his knowledge of the two cities that acting as tour guide is a perfect way to augment his pension. Now he’s telling people like us stories about the tourists he guides, the criminals he chased and his mates in the force. What a happy man! And he makes others happy too, judging by the smiles on the faces of the audience at the August meeting.

Dedicating half an hour to each city, he ignored the tedious bits of history by cantering through it in a series of memorable anecdotes that ranged from ancient origins to Harry Patch – Bath was supposedly a marsh to which a leprous prince was banished, but by following the example of a pig that also had leprosy, Prince Bladud rolled in the mud, was cured, and later as king of the Britons, moved his court there; Bath’s twelfth-century abbey sports a rebus, a

visual joke or puzzle involving a mitre, an olive tree and a crown for Bishop Oliver King; Bath was home to Dorothea Jordan, mistress of William IV, an alliance producing 10 children from which Adam Hart-Davis and David Cameron are descended; Bristol has the equivalent of the leaning tower of Pisa; there are dolphins at the base of the statue of Bristol slave and sugar merchant, Edward Colston (of hall fame) after a dolphin supposedly plugged a hole in a damaged, uninsured ship; Clifton’s Royal York Crescent is the longest existing Georgian terrace whilst Queen’s Square is the largest Georgian Square; Temple Meads Station was the first purpose-built rail terminus in the world...

Mike larded his talk with his own likes and dislikes, refreshingly non-PC on occasions, and left us vastly more knowledgeable about Bath and Bristol almost without us realising it.

As more than 40 people attended, can we assume that taking a break in July and holding a meeting in August is convenient for members? Please let us know what you think.

HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR HERITAGE?

Committee member Elizabeth Tansley and her husband Allan attended a consultation at St James’ Church Hall run by the Somerset Heritage Centre [SHC]. Elizabeth writes:

We saw slides of the buildings presently under construction: two buildings separated by a wide strip of paved way, which can serve as either an outdoors exhibition area on Open Days, a second car park, or can ultimately be built over if the Centre were to be expanded. The museum’s reserve collection will be stored in one of the buildings and conservation can also be carried out there. The Record Office’s archive/store is big enough for the next twenty years. The Reception area will have tables and chairs for researchers to eat their packed lunches/snacks from vending machines. Parking in the designated car park is double that at the present Somerset Record Office (but was criticised by some as being woefully inadequate.) The Somerset Studies Library [SSL] and the search room of

the Record Office will share the same open plan space, with the two areas separated by what was represented on the artist’s illustration by two free-standing columns but was referred to as a screen. All visitors will have to have an identity pass, even to the SSL and there was criticism that much of the SSL book collection is to be kept under lock and key, in the manner of the record office. Upstairs will be a room that can accommodate 40 chairs for a lecture.

We split into three for the purposes of the consultation. Did we want seminars, tours, walks, Open Days etc? A small number had attended the Record Office’s courses, thought they were excellent and wanted more of the same. Someone asked if more staff would be employed but that seemed unlikely: the Centre’s staff could use technology in place of visits e.g. video-conferencing so that they didn’t have to spread themselves so thinly.

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Heritage consultation continued from p3

The SHC's representatives naturally made much of the fact that the centre was uniting the separate SRO and SSL, as well as bringing some of the museum's services to the new Centre.

The second consultation seemed to get the group talking about transport and access. One man who clearly walks a lot and looked fit, said that it was a 12 minute brisk walk from the Park and Ride to the Centre, and that the wind on the bridge over the railway track could be fierce. It was thought likely by the SHC's representative that the normal bus route would be diverted through the site. Certainly dissatisfaction was expressed by those who presently come to Taunton by rail about the siting of the Centre and the lack of a bus service to its front door.

The last group was about Information Services. How was the public to be informed of special events at the SHC? What did we want to be informed about? We were given paper to write down search terms for the internet browser (eg "Somerset Heritage Centre") and nobody threw up their hands in horror, which suggested that most have some acquaintance with computers. The SHC thought that they would be getting a lottery grant for the new website that is required, so they were very pleased about that.

The building work is currently on time and the projected date of opening the Centre is September 2010.

Thurs. October 29th, at 3pm: tours at 20 minutes intervals for 4 groups of 5 people only, of the Beacon Centre, Musgrove Park Hospital's new cancer treatment block.

Tours last 40 minutes. We expect to have an opportunity to ask John Atree, Strategic Projects Manager, questions about the building and this PFI project. It will be interesting to learn if the staff think the building is successful.

As numbers are limited and Musgrove wants names, please ring **Fran, 01823 337188 or Graham 01823 289605** ASAP, to secure a place on one of the tours.

The Diary in Detail

Wednesday, September 9th:
the Sidmouth tour as guests of the Sid Vale Association (SVA).

For those of you who may have mislaid the itinerary, **the Berrys coach will leave Tangier coach park at 9am**, to arrive in Sidmouth at latest 10.30am. Refreshments will be provided and then we split into two groups to explore, from either end, Margaret's Meadow and the Byes along the River Sid. After lunch (bring a picnic, or try a sea front café), we have a guided tour of Regency Sidmouth, a visit to the town's museum and an explanation of the Jurassic coastline as we take a seafront stroll. We board the coach at 4.45, arriving in Taunton shortly after 6pm.

Places are still available as we go to press, but as there are only a few days between the delivery of your Civic Sense and the event itself, if you would like to make a last minute booking ring Fran, 01823 337188 or Graham 01823 289605 and pay your £10 fee on the coach.

The fee includes a donation to our hosts who really do put themselves out to make visitors welcome.

Thurs. November 19th: Pat Hase — Christmas in the Workhouse.

It's our turn to host the joint meeting with Wellington Museum and Historical Society, and we will also invite members from Bridgwater and Wiveliscombe CSs to attend.

There will be an exhibition of local workhouse-related photographs and material, some brought along by speaker Pat Hase, but with much contributed by us and our guests.

Aside from her interest in Victorian social history, Pat is a keen genealogist and gives talks on researching family history. She has a quick wit and a wicked sense of humour—it is a joy to be in the audience at one of her talks.

Thursday September 17th: Graham Love, the new Town Centre Manager...

Town Centre Management aims to support the vibrancy and vitality of towns. The town centre company is helping Taunton realise its potential and natural role as a prosperous location for business and investment. Mr Love sees it as a community effort by the partnership of local businesses and the public sector.

This partnership initiative grew to form the Taunton Town Centre Company in 1996. In 2007 the company led an initiative to designate Taunton town centre as a Business Improvement District and embark on a five year programme of improvements directed by the local business community. Graham became Chief Executive last April.

With retail centres losing trade across the country, find out what plans and tactics Graham has to keep Taunton Town Centre vibrant and alive.

Thurs. October 22nd [NB the 4th Thursday, not the date on your green programme]:

Tom Coleman — 'West Country Farmhouses'. Farmer Tom wasn't very interested in his old farmhouse 'until the day he ripped away an old skirting board at the 16th-century property and opened up a treasure trove of history.'

'That moment led him to thoroughly investigate the building's past and develop a love of historical dwellings which sees him now give talks to scores of local people and groups in the South West.'

[Mid Devon Gazette 03/02/2009]

Tom's illustrated talk sounds as scrumptious as apple pie—come and hear him lift the lid on these most evocative dwellings and discover the fruit beneath.

In Brief

St Modwen at Firepool

We understand that an initial design submission is due in early October.

The Civic Societies Initiative [CSI] are holding an Open Forum in Exeter in September, to discuss what should replace the Civic Trust. Committee members will attend.