Chairman's Miscellany - TrustNews September 2006

It was encouraging to see that the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sports Select Committee which was set up to consider “Protecting and preserving our heritage”, having assessed all the evidence (including that presented by this Trust), reported in June to attack the Department and the Government for its lack of commitment to our heritage as evidenced by withdrawal of funding from English Heritage and Local Authorities. Whether the Government will pay any attention to this report is another matter.

We continue the pursuit of Heritage Town status. A presentation was arranged for members (as advertised in the last TrustNews) and the invitation extended to members of Winchester Residents Association making for a large and lively audience. It was disappointing that failure of the hired projection equipment put extra demands on Michael Carden, who nevertheless gave an excellent presentation that prompted a lively discussion culminating in wholehearted support for the project. A presentation was also made to Winchester City Council’s senior management team of Officers, some of whom demonstrated a somewhat negative attitude, especially on the need for a master plan for Winchester, the idea of having an eminent ‘design champion’ and a better resourced planning department. Our next step is to make the presentation to the new Cabinet, which we shall be doing on September 13th.

We welcomed in early June a new draft of the Vision for Winchester document produced under the aegis of the Town Forum. The Policy Group submitted the Trust’s comments but has had no response or acknowledgement. We also wrote to the Chair of the Town Forum applauding its use for consultation purposes and asking for information about plans they may have for future discussion topics but again have had no response.

Further progress has also been made on the Bushfield Down project with a successful meeting at St. Cross, followed by a walk around the site. The Master of St. Cross, the Revd Jim Bates and the Porter, Mrs Secker, welcomed 24 ‘stakeholders’ to tea on a beautiful evening in July. There were representatives of Twyford, Badger Farm and Oliver’s Battery Parish Councils (unfortunately Compton & Shawford PC was not represented); also Councillors Lipscomb (Planning Portfolio Holder), Collin and de Peyer from WCC and Councillor Bailey from HCC. We were particularly pleased to welcome several local walkers, representatives of the Winchester Residents Association and Butterfly/ Moth interests represented by Tim Walker.

Our walk was led by John Pilkington who kindly ‘lowered his sights’ for our purposes and demonstrated the importance of Bushfield Down in the setting of Winchester. Now that the threat of development for formal sports use here has been removed and the site is not favoured for Park & Ride, it only remains to persuade the Church Commissioners that it would enhance their reputation and contribute modestly to their funds if the land were to be properly managed for the common good, attracting DEFRA grant aid, and the unsympathetic elements that attract detritus removed.

The Trust took part in the consultation exercise to determine the preferred location of the next Park & Ride site. The weight of economic evidence seems to favour the old

Tarmac site, which also has access advantages. However, the Trust has concerns as to whether all possible measures will be taken to minimise the visual impact.

Of course, the Silver Hill Renaissance has been a primary matter of concern, especially since the submission of the planning application by Thornfield plc in June. Many member hours have been spent in trying to understand the detailed plans and we were pleased to see the long awaited model at the end of July. This enables a better understanding of the development as it relates to its surroundings. The developers and architects have been untiring in their efforts to communicate with the public and the Trust, for which we are grateful, and the Trust Council will be deciding on the detailed comments as this Newsletter is being printed. All comments sent to us by members have been made available to all Trust Council members. The size of the development is, of course, dictated by the requirements of the City Council which are well in excess of the originally agreed brief for the site. As the City Council owns Cossack Lane Car Park on the other side of Friarsgate, could this not be used to spread the load?

This year Nick McPherson, once again, devised and organised a wonderfully interesting programme of Summer Walks on which he reports in this issue. The sad fact is that after 12 years, Nick feels he must bow out, which is understandable but his departure will leave a large hole in Trust activity. It is symptomatic of a malaise from which the Trust is suffering – a volunteering deficit. To carry on the tasks that are essential for effectiveness, there is an increasing need for help. More specifically we need help in the following tasks:

1. Maintaining our archives and records.
2. Publicity on various levels but most importantly making contact with younger residents.
3. Arranging lectures from time to time.
4. Arranging visits to places of interest.
5. One-off events to celebrate our 50th Anniversary next year.

Lastly – you need a new Chairman.

Planning Appraisal Group - TrustNews Sep 06

It has been a busy few months for members of the Trust council and viewing panels, with presentations of several schemes and many evening discussions about the two schemes proposed for the redevelopment of the Friarsgate / Silver Hill site.

The Hampshire County Council made two of the presentations. Given that it is impossible to tear the building down and start again, we agreed with the County's preferred option that re-modelling **Ashburton Court** would be preferable to just repairing it, because this would allow the transformation of an out-of-date building into a sustainable structure that would be better equipped to deal with future environmental problems. While welcoming the top floor removals and internal court-yards, we felt that a more imaginative approach to the external elevations than that proposed was needed, particularly at roof level and at the northern end of the

building; we also wondered whether brick was the best material because it would be unable to erase the heavy character of the original ’60s building. We were considerably less enthusiastic about the schemes for the **Greenacres & Winton House** sites. The structures replacing **Winton House** were ‘bog-standard’ developments and the buildings at **Greenacres** would be most uncharacteristic of the neighbourhood, with a 3-storey ‘landmark’ building sited at the crest of the hill on this important route into the city. The schemes shown later at the public exhibition were little better, as apparently the developer is convinced that people in Winchester will only buy houses with a traditional style. The Trust very much regrets that an influential landowner such as the HCC has not insisted on a higher standard of design for these developments. We now await the application with no great pleasure.

We also had a presentation of the alterations proposed for **57 High Street**, the ex-Hampshire Chronicle offices and print works. The ground floor is to become a restaurant, Zizzi, which is part of the ASK group, with an upper floor of offices in the print works behind the listed High Street building. Another presentation was of the development at **Orchard House, Sarum Road**, which is to be demolished and replaced by a block of six 1-bed and four 2-bed flats. Applications for both these schemes are now with the planners, and will be commented on by the Trust’s viewing panels.

Over the past couple of years the Trust has had many presentations from the developers of the two schemes proposed for the **Friarsgate/Silver Hill** site, both of which have applications wending their ways through the system. The presentations gave the members an overall idea of the two schemes, but the time has now come for in-depth consideration of the nitty-gritty details that are involved. The Trust is therefore extremely grateful to both London & Henley and Thornfield Properties for letting us have copies of their Design Statements, supporting plans and drawings so that we could study and discuss them in more depth than would otherwise be possible. This exercise has been done at con-siderable cost to the evening leisure time of partaking members, who have spent well over 12 hours on the two schemes, and have my heartfelt thanks – and no doubt yours also! The assessment of such huge schemes by our overburdened planning officers presents a major problem, and with no in-house design team it becomes imperative that independent planning panels should contribute well considered opinions.

The London & Henley application for their development on the site of the **Friarsgate Building, Middle Brook Street**, was the first to be considered and our comments have been made to the Planning Office. This scheme relates to one part of the area proposed for redevelopment, the block currently housing the multi-storey car park, Iceland, the old Post Office sorting office, King’s Walk and the shops along Middle Brook Street. The Thornfield Properties application, which covers this block and all the land between Friarsgate and the buildings on the High Street, and to the waterway at the eastern end, was made a month later, and the Trust is still formulating its response. It is, however, clear that a major problem facing all developers is trying to provide buildings that echo the grain of the city and its haphazard development over the years, while also building structures that fulfil today’s requirements for bulk deliveries, car parking, and high-density residential accommodation. This problem seems to have been exacerbated by the City’s requirements for car parking spaces and residential units, which are now greater

than was proposed in the original planning brief for the area. This has resulted in Block A (the building common to both schemes) being tall and having shopfronts that relate to the height of the building and its internal working rather than to the pedestrian, and Tanner Street having no better environment than at present because of the large gaping entrances to service areas and car parks.

An application to demolish **The Day House, Sleepers Hill**, spurred the Trust into providing evidence for its listing. It is an Arts & Crafts house of some character, and saving it is considered worth while by the Conservation Officer concerned.

Good news on the appeal front: the appeal relating to **1 & 3 Westley Close** has been withdrawn, and the proposed demolition of **36 Quarry Road** has been dismissed. Our objections to developments on two corner sites have had mixed results: the 2-storey dwelling attached to **43 Cromwell Road** has been refused, while the 3-bedroom semi-detached dwelling at **1 St Stephen's Road** has been permitted. Win some, lose some!

Shione Carden

Summer Walks 06 - TrustNews Sept 06

The subject of our initial meeting led by the well-known local personality and theatre buff, Phil Yates, was the DNS Railway Line. We met by the Chesil Rectory on Old Station Approach and walked up to the tunnel entrance. Here Phil explained something of the history of the line including its importance during the war, in particular before D-Day. After looking at the tunnel entrance and discussing signalling and engine marshalling and maintenance procedures, we walked along the line of the old track to the railway sheds and former yards at Bar End. We were fascinated to see that one of the original engine sheds was still in use....but not as a railway workshop. Phil related many stories of local and personal interest, making a memorable start to the walking season.

Our second Summer Walk on Thursday 8th June was led by City Archaeologist Graham Scobie, starting at the City Museum to investigate the enigmatic and intriguing subject of "Mediaeval Urban Bounce". Regretfully in my absesnce, Trust members and walkers were entertained by Graham's experienced presentation which had been given to other groups previously this year.

Another evening of glorious weather on 15th June took us to the fledgling University of Winchester for a walk led by Chris Higgins, Director of Estates. He met us at the old West Downs entrance and proceeded to give us a concise history of the place and of its academic heritage. We admired the way the existing school buildings had been preserved and integrated, both functionally and architecturally into the new university campus. There was much to see, both in terms of new, modern, relatively low cost student accommodation and existing art-deco/Edwardian design. The existing Masters' House in the midst of renovation, made an exciting contrast and counterpoint to the award-winning student accommodation.

Architecture Week was celebrated with Keith Leaman, who asked David Gregory and Andrew Lowe to lead us on a short tour of several modern houses and house designs with which they had been involved and which would be interesting to discuss and compare. Starting with David Gregory's semi-detached scheme on North Walls, we were fortunate enough to be able to get access to one of the units and given an on-site explanation by the architect. The limitations and difficulties of this particular site were clearly described and how a possible future development would be entertained. We followed Andrew Lowe into central Winchester where we viewed some award-winning schemes, King's Head Yard, the old chocolate factory site, St Clement Street Dolphin Yard, past the large steel- framed townhouse development on the site of Minstrels, proceeding upwards to the Peninsular Barracks residential redevelopment, where the walk finished in front of the King's House and the formality of the fountain pool and court and its coniferous lines of planting. On reflection, Winchester possesses more than its fair share of outstanding modern domestic design.

The fifth Summer Walk was led by Trust Vice-Chairman, Michael Carden. As in previous years and by popular request, we had a fascinating tour of the Hospital and Chapel of St.Cross. Walkers were treated to an in-depth tour, led by Michael, one of the experts on this ancient and surviving Romanesque building complex. The atmosphere and sense of history emanating from this unique group of precious buildings is truly magical. Once again we were blessed by wonderful sunshine.

For Walk Six on 6th July Richard Baker, architect and planner at Eastleigh Borough Council,presented a fascinating exposition of one of our major preoccupations – Shopping and Shop Design. Richard was able to speak of how much things had changed in the last 25 years. Starting from the Heritage Centre we rapidly skirted The Brooks Shopping Centre, emerging into the High Street, one of the oldest strips of shopping activity in the country. We were treated to a detailed analysis of the traditional shop unit and shop front and how this had evolved from individual owner-occupiers taking advantage of the "footfall" next to their town centre accommodation. We covered most of the length of the High Street up as far as the Westgate enjoying an interesting debate.

Our seventh excursion was led by Huw Thomas, who has done an extraordinary amount of research on the character and composition of Winchester's High Street. It was quite appropriate that this walk should follow Richard Baker's measured and quietly reasoned approach. We were led to consider the "Ghost of Winchester's High Street" and the many Walkers anticipating some fun and games were not disappointed. Huw had prepared a large number of "before" and "after" photocopied photographs of the High Street and areas adjoining. Many of these were aerial views and people had fun identifying which buildings were familiar friends and which were forgotten echoes of a once well-known past. Huw's principal theme was the completely different scale of the disappeared High Street and the unacceptable bulk of the Silver Hill Renaissance proposals. Unfortunately there was not a great deal of time available to debate such issues, but Trust walkers were showered with wonderful photographic material and went home inundated by the wealth of information made available.

For the eighth walk we met on 20th July outside the Porter's Lodge in College Street and were met by Dr.Geoff Day, Fellows and Eccles Librarian and the College Archivist, Suzanne Foster.The subject of the evening's meeting was "Unknown Winchester College" and some fascinating insights were gained by much of what was disclosed. At this point I must salute the last minute organisational skills of Dr.Day and the Winchester College team. The extremely large number of visitors at this one particular time and the nature of the rooms and spaces we were to see, had made it necessary at the very last minute to divide into 3 groups and some additional College Guides were recruited for the occasion.

We were able to visit the Warden's Lodging and all the ancient rooms next door over the main College Arch. Some of William of Wykeham's original filing cabinets, complete with linenfold panelling were in evidence and had not been materially changed since the College had received its Charter, which itself was on view. The importance of the original charter was explained and how, at certain moments of the College's history, the Fellows had been forced to invoke it, sometimes defying a royal demand. We were entertained to much background and "insider" information on certain momentous historical events. After a narrow climb to the Muniment Tower, the evening ended in the Eccles Library, where several large botanical illustrations relating to Captain Cook's expedition to Australia and New Zealand were on display.

David Brock of English Heritage met the assembled Trust walkers at the Grange, Northington on 27th July, on another balmy evening. As in previous years, David had prepared some interesting sequential notes which helped to explain the complicated architectural history of the "ruined" mansion. There were also notes relating to the "hidden landscape" which surrounded the Grange and was thus integral to it. We divided into groups to view the ruined house and were able to see most of the principal rooms including the amazing grand staircase. A leap of the imagination was required if one was to envisage the full spatial glory of Sambrook's original design, including the breathtaking effect of the staircase chandelier. After we had walked around the Grange and seen its setting in the landscape and its relationship to the exciting new opera building, we were able to descend to the basement below. From here we entered the new auditorium past scenery props and the signs of recent Thespian activity. The lights were then switched on and we were left to admire the ingenious architecture of the auditorium which emerged.

The final walk was led by the legendary Andrew Rutter RIBA, former City Conservation Officer, who demonstrated cases where proposals for potentially disastrous developments were averted. He started at Avalon House and the site behind presently occupied by flats and the multi-storey car park, where there were plans for a far more aggressive development, coupled with the development on the Chesil Street car-park of a large hotel looking something like an ocean liner. This led to the saga of the three-quarter ring road that would have laid waste to North Walls and Eastgate Street without really being able to remove through traffic from the town centre. These and many other development horrors were refused and, as anyone involved with the City Council at the time would know, much of the good advice which led to their refusal came from Andrew, though he would never make this claim.

Thanks are due to all those people who volunteered their time and expertise to act as Walk Leaders. Finally, thanks are due to the many "Regulars" who, fair weather or

foul, gathered outside the Heritage Centre or agreed venue to make these events such a success – and so enjoyable.

Nick McPherson

Electronic mail - TrustNews Sep 2006

It would help us to keep you better informed if those with e-mail would send us their addresses. The best way to do this is by e-mailing the Trust to: secretary@cityoffwinchestertrust.co.uk

We will not disclose the information to any third party.

Diary Dates - TrustNews Sep 2006

Trust Annual General Meeting Monday 25th September at 7.0 pm at the Guildhall – Speaker David Brock – English Heritage –"Conservation Issues – The Grange and Silver Hill".

Publications - TrustNews Sep 2006

Neighbourhood Studies:

No. 1 Fulflood
No. 2 St. Cross & Its Surroundings
No. 3 Oram's Arbour & St. James's Lane
A Peaceful Place to Rest – Westhill Cemetery

All the above available from The Heritage Centre. Price £3 + postage

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Lack of Civic Pride...or does anyone care? - TrustNews Sep 2006

- ...Oh, yet
- Stands the clock at ten to three
- And is there honey still for tea?

No, Rupert Brooke was not referring to Winchester's Brooks clock on St George's Street which after many weeks, still stands with its hands at three o'clock!

Just walk around the corner and look at the map of Winchester on the wall of Marks & Spencers and observe the non-existent street linking Parchment Street! Why have our planners not told us about this new street? On asking a Council Officer at the

Town Forum on Transport, I was told the map had been put up by a commercial organisation and “it was nothing to do with us pal.”

Then just walk to the railway station (sorry, we are supposed to call it a train station now, this sudden change in our language was started by Radio Solent a few years ago) and try and read the ‘chopped’ version of a map of Winchester in the information panel provided by South West trains. According to the map, Stockbridge Road goes over the railway line. My letter to South West Trains in London, was referred to the local manager based not in Winchester but in Eastleigh and, regardless of the error being pointed out, the same error was still repeated in the new panel. The original map was undertaken by the printers of the eagerly awaited Historic Town Atlas of Winchester, the new one being ‘chopped’ is not attributable.

Even in Peninsula Barracks the new signs giving details of historic interest, spell Wellington with one ‘l’. One wonders, who checks and proof reads these details before signing off the invoice?

At the turn of the century, the Winchester Improvement Society was set up to help publicise the City; perhaps such a body should be resurrected.

Oh, and by the way, I was given the book “Grumpy Old Men” but gave up reading it after two chapters when I realised I agreed with everything written!.

Chris Webb

Reinstatement at Last - TrustNews Sept 06



A joyful occasion took place on July 27th when The Mayor of Winchester, Councillor Sue Nelmes, performed the official opening of the splendid replacement iron railings around the gardens of a Victorian terrace of 5 houses in Eastgate Street. On a perfect sunny day, the Mayor untied the bows of red ribbon attached to each gateway before repairing to the Heritage Centre for refreshments and short speeches.

The Trust welcomed County Councillors Glen, Knight and Peskett (Local divisional Councillor) Simon Cramp, Environment Dept. HCC, Eloise Appleby and Hazel Brushett, WCC, Huw Thomas RIBA, designer Nick Bourne RIBA and Michael Carden MBE, RIBA who managed the project, Tony Cohen, Britannia Metals, David Everest and Allen Brown Everest and Trust Hon. Treasurer who juggled successfully with the finances. Sadly it looks as though this is the last project to be grant aided from City or County funds. On a more positive note we hope that the developers responsible for the mean, spindly railings decorating the terrace on the opposite side of Eastgate Street will hang their heads in shame!