Chairman's Miscellany - TrustNews September 2007

As befits the 50th Anniversary year of the Trust, the summer has been busy with events. On June 5 in brilliant sunshine ten generous members opened their gardens and clocked up over 1000 visits from Trust members and their friends. Teas were provided too and the event, organised by Iain and Penny Patton, was appreciated as a great success. The following week saw the start of the programme of Summer Walks with a dual bill at the Cathedral combining the William Walker story with a talk on the stained glass. The walks have taken place each Thursday except for July 26 - the most recent being a visit to the King Alfred bus depot arranged by Chris Webb, where we were welcomed by the Chairman, and a band of enthusiasts who have rescued the buses from as far afield as Ireland and the USA to restore them for the benefit of Winchester (where they turn out on New Year's day to provide bus transport for residents and people from all over the country to enjoy the experience). On June 25, the Trust joined WARG,the Hampshire Record Office and the Winchester Museum Service in mounting an exhibition at the Mayor's Garden Fete in the gardens of Wolvesey Palace. The reception held at the Gurkha museum on July 26 was attended by over 70 members and our President, Sir Peter Ramsbotham,for whom it was also a recognition of his support during the last 10 years.

Over the past 5 months Norman and Ann Roberts have organised the process of inviting entries and judging them for the Trust's Awards. George Ferguson, recent President of the RIBA has kindly acted as Chairman of the Panel of judges and their recommendations will be exhibited at the AGM when members of the Trust will be asked to vote for their choices. The awards will be made on October 30th.

In early June members of the Trust Policy Group met senior City Councillors and officers to discuss future plans for Winchester and the Vision document which is still in need of public debate. The Trust continues to press for an overall conceptual plan for Winchester and its setting that will address the conflicting pressures for development and we await answers.

Another concern is the unkempt and uncared-for appearance of many of our streets and trees. A walk up Romsey Road from the Barracks to the hospital reveals weeds growing in walls and pavements which in turn trap litter and the same applies in St. Peter Street and many others. Trees in Friarsgate behind the Brooks car park are untended as are those in Chilbolton Avenue. Residents in the area bounded by St. Thomas' Street-St.Swithun's St. have long been complaining about the shabby state of the area and we are aware that City and County officers try to address these problems but are unable to act because Councillors do not provide the funds. Throughout the rest of the district Parish Councils are able to deal with such matters but Winchester only has a toothless and powerless Town Forum to care for our neglected City.

Recently Trust members were invited to visit the site of the new Library/Discovery Centre and the progress of work on Ashburton Court, both of which should provide welcome improvements for the City and residents.

In the last issue of TrustNews it was reported that Martin Biddle would be our speaker at the AGM but he is unable to attend. We are extremely fortunate that

Professor Tom Beaumont James of the University of Winchester has agreed to come instead. Since first coming here in 1956 he has been researching the City's history and we are delighted that he has kindly agreed to give the 50th Anniversary lecture.

Patricia Edwards

Planning Appraisal Group - TrustNews Sep 07

Most of the developments mentioned previously have been decided, though two still await their final verdict. These are the 19 dwellings to replace the **Greenacres Special School, Andover Road**, and the proposed replacement garages at **Garage Court, Fivefields Road**, where we felt residential use would be preferable on a city-owned site, being more sustainable than garages.

On **Stockbridge Road** the proposal to demolish **3-5 Burnett Close** for 35 sheltered housing apartments has been refused, and the Waitrose store on the site of the **Alan Honda garage** has been permitted. Following the dismissal of their appeal to build a store on the sites of **Chimneys & 1 Burnett Close**, Aldi have come back with a slightly reduced scheme, to which we have objected, as we had also done to the Waitrose store. Much as Waitrose in Winchester is welcomed, the Trust still considers these are not suitable sites for stores that will attract more vehicles onto the streets of an already traffic-burdened historic town.

There is another proposal for **Lang House, Chilbolton Avenue**. Following the refusal to demolish the house for a block of 14 apartments, the applicants have gone to appeal (we have written in support of WCC's refusal), and have put in a scheme for a similarly-sized and bulky structure with a few minor amendments, to which we have again objected. It is one of the original houses in the road, contributes to the street scene and is structurally sound and we feel it should be retained on both historic and sustainability grounds; also the proposed replacement is too large and cumbersome to be characteristic of the area.

The proposed demolition of the **Stanmore Hotel, Stanmore Lan**, for a 65-bed nursing home has been withdrawn, following planning concerns that there is insufficient proof that its continued use as a hotel/public house would not be economically viable, and that the proposed development could appear over-dominant and out of keeping with the area.

An application reported in the last TrustNews as causing local concern was the proposal to convert 40 Cheriton Road into four 2- bedroom apartments and to build a new 2-storey building to accommodate four 2- bedroom apartments. This has been refused because the planners felt the scale, design and layout would detract from the house and its setting, as well as from the street scene.

The application to convert **Chestnut Mead, Kingsgate Road**, into three houses, with two new houses at the rear, has been refused because it was felt the height, scale, massing and position of the new dwellings would be visually intrusive and out of character with the Conservation Area.

Two other applications have been permitted: the demolition of the listed **Royal Observer Corps HQ, Worthy Road** (to which we had no objection for the reasons given in the November 2006 TrustNews), and the conversion of the **Prince of Wales, 26 Hyde Street** (see our last TrustNews).

A decision has also been reached on a building that has been causing concern to local residents: the October 2006 proposal to change **7 St Cross Road** from commercial to residential use, with the building being converted into two maisonettes, has been granted. When commenting, the Trust had welcomed that attention was being given to this much neglected building, but since then nothing has happened - apart from the general deterioration of the building that is all too apparent. It seems that the delay was caused by the need to provide valid reasons for not continuing commercial use of the property and the question whether it should be listed, together with a lack of interest by the owner, who no doubt felt a property that had been empty for about six years was reason enough for the change of use.

We objected to an ill-considered proposal to demolish **The Croft, 3 Badger Farm Road**, for four 2-bedroom and four 3-bedroom houses in two blocks, apparently designed without any thought being given to how the unimaginative layout would be landscaped or how the residents could drive into or out of the site safely from this busy road. This scheme has been refused.

We also objected to the proposal to build five 2-bed and five 3-bed dwellings at **10A Stoney Lane**, a difficult site with what appears to be inadequate access. Two parking spaces per dwelling seemed high for the area, and we felt that something more sympathetic than the over-fussy design proposed was needed. A decision on this proposal has still to be made.

Another objection was to the demolition of **17 Bereweeke Road**, a substantial Victorian house set in generous garden surroundings, for five 2-bedroom flats, one 2-bedroom house, one 3-bedroom house, two 4-bedroom houses and three 5-bedroom houses. Given present Government guidelines the Trust has to accept that this site is ripe for development but not that a structurally sound building should be demolished without supporting evidence. No such evidence was given in the Design Statement, although it was said that later additions (some made in the 1920s, which might perhaps have historic value) have detracted from its character. The Trust feels most strongly that it is not sustainable to demolish structures capable of conversion, as was not apparently considered in this instance. It also considered the ‘pick-&-mix’ flavour of the styles of the new dwellings would not be in sympathy with the character of the neighbourhood and that the proposed density of 40 dwellings per hectare would be inappropriate for the area.

40 King’s Avenue, a site with a long planning history (see our November 2006 TrustNews), seems to have had another change of ownership. Following the many application refusals and appeal dismissals for extensions and new dwellings on this sensitive site, another proposal for a single storey side and rear extension has been made. Although more sympathetic than previous schemes, we were still concerned that a very undesirable precedent would be set and objected.

Members will no doubt be glad to know that skating in the Inner Close of the Cathedral has again been granted over the Christmas period.

Shione Carden

Winchester's Street Scene - TrustNews Sep 2007

Winchester's street scene has many blemishes. Apart from the proliferation of traffic signs, inappropriate fascia boards and shop fronts, the deplorable state of the pavements throughout the City looks awful. To these detractors must be added a number of buildings and areas whose state of repair, upkeep or decoration is a disgrace. Here are some photographs of some of the blemishes that need attention. They do not do justice to the reality of the situation,but highlight some of the problems. The whole of St George's Street presents a dire and dismal aspect. The rears of some buildings which front on to the High Street are in many cases sadly in need of attention, particularly some of the areas where the rubbish bins stand. Some are depicted below.



Behind the Royal Oak



St George's Street looking west



Passage off Upper Brook Street



Rear of Café Nero



UGH!

Apart from St Georges Street, there are other buildings and places which need attention. A few are shown below.



Stairwell, Friarsgate Car Park



Side door to BLUES, Southgate Street



Door case No.11, Southgate Street



BT building, Upper Brook Street



Unsightly silhouettes, The Cathedral



Unsightly extension, West Hill Cemetery



The fine front elevation of No. 47 High Street (left) above the fascia boards is a mess. The window frames are sadly in need of re-decoration and there is an ugly tangle of wires running along the bottom sill.

In addition the BT building looks as if it has not been cleaned since the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1956. And the exterior of The Brooks is also beginning to look dirty and uncared for. All the above seriously detract from the street scene and require urgent attention.

Robin Merton

Motorway Madness - TrustNews Sep 07

You can always tell when there is a problem on the motorway. St Cross Road and Andover Road get jammed up solid. When the M3 around Winchester was completed in 1993 it seemed as though these problems were over – and for a few years they were, but now we are back to levels of congestion around Winchester at least as bad as in the early 1990s.

Traffic levels have nearly doubled since the 1980's. The M3 is working at capacity and Junction 9 at Winnall is overloaded for much of the day. Two other things have changed. Firstly, fatal accidents (or "crashes" in new police terminology) are not considered blameless and are treated as crime scenes. Forensic investigations usually take hours and the whole carriageway is closed until the work is complete and all evidence and wreckage is cleared away. Secondly the advent of satnav and other driver information means drivers seek their own way around congestion.

Recently the Trust was invited to give its views on M3 incident management to a meeting of the City Council's Environment Scrutiny Panel. We reminded the Panel that in the late 80's diversion routes were established around Winchester where motorists were encouraged to follow signed routes designated by black and orange squares, circles and diamonds. Only one of these routes remains, the diamond route from junction 11 via Badger Farm, Romsey Rd, Chilbolton Ave, Harestock Lane to the A34 at Three Maids Hill. The police could not confirm whether these signs are currently used in emergencies. We stressed that every effort should be made to prevent motorway traffic diverting through the city's one way system.

The police and the Highway Agency spokesmen stated that volumes of traffic on the M3 and A34 are now such that, whatever they do, gridlock will result if these roads have to be closed. At present this seems to occur at least once a month but we pointed out that severe congestion, particularly on the A34 southbound, occurs almost every day in the evening peak and especially on Fridays. This arises because of the lack of capacity of the Winnall Roundabout which has now become a notorious bottleneck on the trunk road system. In these circumstances a fair amount of traffic leaves the A34 at Three Maids Hill and tries to find its way through the city. The Trust urged the City Council to continue to press the government to improve the Winnall junction to reduce congestion and thus reduce the amount of traffic diverting through the city. In the mean time, well signed diversion routes should be established to prevent traffic which has been diverted off the motorway from entering the city centre.

David Marklew

Winchester Excavations & Winchester Studies - TrustNews Sep 07

Since 2002, the Winchester Excavations Committee has driven through a project, which The Times in its Millennium edition of 3 January 2000 described as one of the ten most important British archaeological excavations worldwide of the 20th Century.

And over the last decade the Committee's Research Unit has been preparing the vast amount of data for publication by Oxford University Press in the volumes Winchester Studies. With eight volumes published to universal acclaim, one in production, two more close to completion, and others to follow, the work is in a much admired intellectual, but desperate financial, situation.

We set out to study the origins and development of the city over 2000 years, from the Iron Age, through Roman, Anglo - Saxon, and Medieval periods, to Victorian times. This was the beginning of urban archaeology in Europe, the first time archaeology had been used to look at a major city throughout its life and across its social range.

Brought into play has been the whole range of evidence, from archaeology and architectural history, written sources, and the environmental sciences - an innovatory approach which is only now being matched elsewhere. Work in the field was carried out over eleven summer seasons by 2000 student volunteers from twenty-five

countries. Volunteers have also contributed throughout the writing up, and today no-one is paid except for drawing, word-processing, and copy-editing. The influence of the project has been wide: for example, the archaeology of the towns of France as a modern research discipline was created by a French student trained at Winchester.

Initial support came from the Gulbenkian Foundation, and subsequently from many other great trusts and foundations, from the British Academy, and the learned societies. Over the years central government and the local authorities have been our principal supporters but changes in funding regimes and pressure on local government finances make this no longer possible.

The situation is now at breaking point. We were a pioneer operation. No-one knew how long is would take to publish so large a project; we are and old project, striving for completion; and I am no longer eligible, because retired from university and college, to apply for all the larger grants which might be available. Last year the Leverhulme Trust awarded me an Emeritus Fellowship to complete work on our largest volume, The Angle-Saxon Minsters of Winchester, but none of their funds can be used for overheads, especially for the rent of our office in Oxford.

Our absolute priority is to keep that office over the next five years, without which work will simply stop. The rent, charges, and utilities are currently £12640 pa and rates (with charity rebate) are £1080, a total of just under £14,000. In practice, to continue without the constant financial crisis of the last few years, we need to find £20,000 a year.

Martin Biddle

Winchester A fair City by Jeffrey Smith FRICS - TrustNews Sep 2007

This delightful and interest packed little book characterises Jeffrey Smith's passionate and sustained interest in our City over the past 50 years. He is the sole surviving member of those who founded the Winchester Preservation Trust in 1957 to oppose the policy of the time for 'slum clearance' that was being implemented with zeal by the City Council.

Jeffrey was a member of the City Council until local government reorganisation in 1973 and Mayor in 1966. Jeffrey was instrumental in generating funds for the rescue and restoration of buildings by organising auctions of pictures and making generous personal gifts. The first such building to benefit was St. Peter's, Chesil Street and later the Heritage Centre in Upper Brook Street where the City Council removed the roof tiles to hasten its demise whilst the Trust was applying to get it listed. He paid for the recovering of the roof and the listing was successful so he raised further funds to assist in the restoration and establishment of the Heritage Centre.

The illustrations in the book demonstrate Jeffrey's interest in the wealth of art depicting Winchester and illustrating the charm it wields over those who continue to value its unique character and setting, both of which are constantly under threat from current development pressures. The book has been published by Jeffrey at his own

expense to raise funds once again - this time to assist in the restoration of Hockley Viaduct which is the proper responsibility of the City Council.

Jeffrey is a very worthy Vice-President of the Trust and has over 50 years contributed so much to its work and continues to do so. The book is available from St. George's Bookshop, St. George's Street and from the Heritage Centre, 32 Upper Brook Street.

Patricia Edwards

WANTED ! - TrustNews Sep 07

Can you help with any of these activities?
Occasional visits to places of interest
Planning Advisory Group Assistant
Publicity
Membership Coordinator
Occasional displays at the Heritage Centre
Landscape / Arboricultural advice
Arranging lectures / educational projects
Fundraising
If you would like further information, please contact :
Chairman - Patricia Edwards
Secretary - Dr Vicky Feldman
32 Middle Brook Street, Winchester SO23 8DG Tel. 01962 851664
secretary@cityofwinchestertrust.co.uk

Annual General Meeting - TrustNews Sep 07

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 28th September 2007 at 7pm in St. John's House, The Broadway. Disabled access via Busket Lane entrance
PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE

Following the meeting Professor Tom Beaumont James, MA, PhD, FSA, FSA(Scot) FRHist.S will speak about *"Winchester in the Trust's lifetime 1957-2007: Fifty years of researching the city's past"*

Oxford Visit - TrustNews Sep 07

With the assistance of the Oxford Civic Society, we are planning a day trip to Oxford for members and their friends one day in October. The programme will include a visit to Oxford Castle, where the old prison has become a hotel, and to a major college, possible Christ Church, which includes Oxford Cathedral, or New College with its magnificent chapel and strong links to Winchester. The likely cost will be £15-20 each, open to members and friends. If you are interested, please contact Vicky Feldman at the Heritage Centre.

New Members - TrustNews Sep 07

Welcome to our new members:

Mr R. Whinney
Dr Judith Chawner
James Lunn-Rockliffe
Mr & Mrs John Martin & Clare Andrew
Mr & Mrs Etherington
Mrs Ronni Davis
Dr C. & Mrs M. Martyn
Dr & Mrs Hutchison