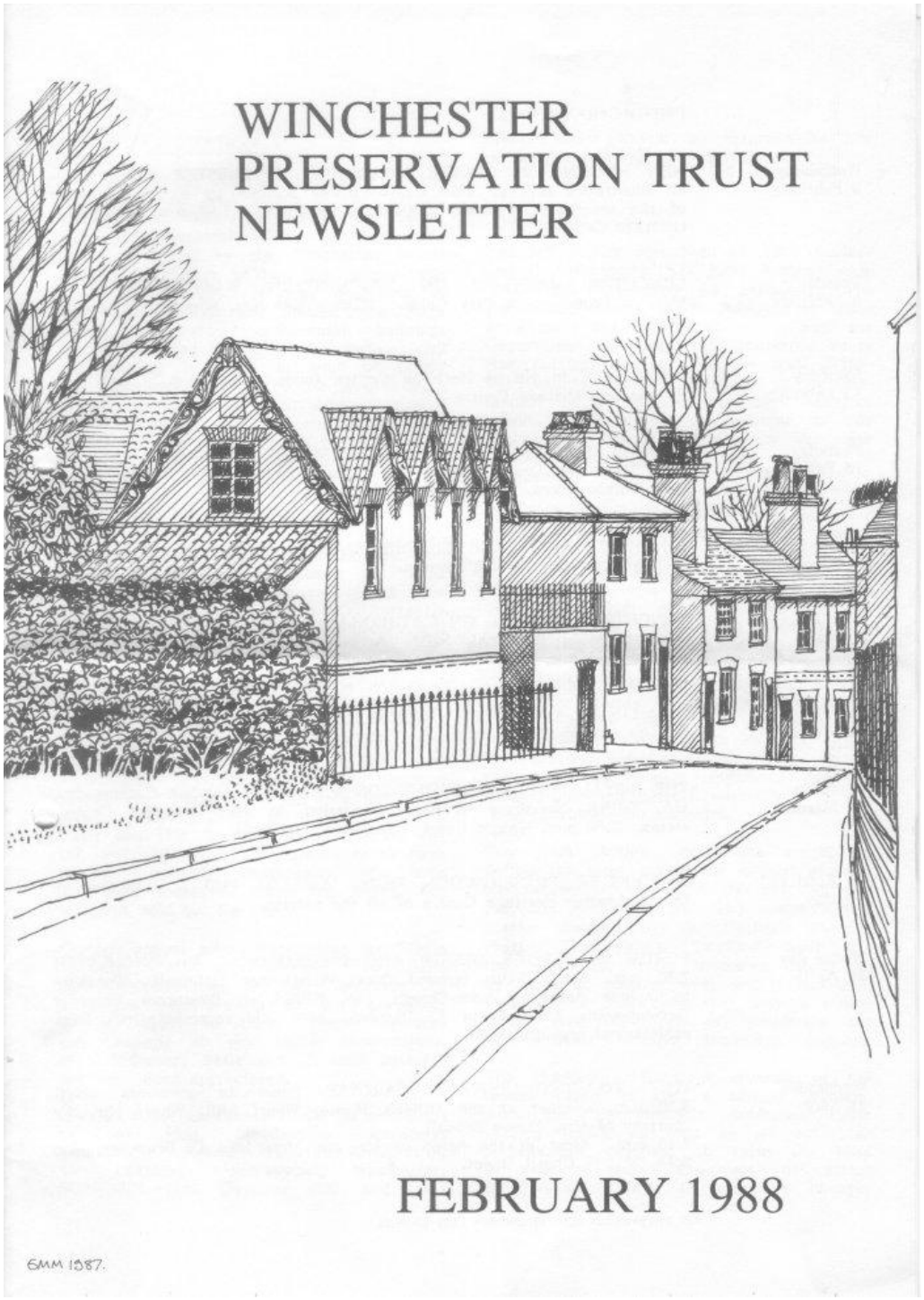
Title Picture - TrustNews February 1988



Drawing by Michael Morris of the upper end of St. John's Street looking south

In the left foreground is the former St. John's National School for Girls and Infants designed by the Winchester architect John Colson. When the school was completed in 1857 it was described as "this noble school and teacher's residence among the most ornamental buildings recently erected in the City". Sadly, today the building is badly in need of repair and redecoration. Its rescue would bring to an architecturally delightful conclusion the once despaired-of restoration of this historic street and add a very charming element to the townscape of the City.

Covenanted Subscriptions - TrustNews February 1988

Although subscriptions do not become due until 1st May, covenant forms are being circulated with this Newsletter in the hope that many of those members who currently pay by cheque or banker's order will transfer to this method of payment.

The advantage to the Trust is that our Treasurer is able to reclaim from the Inland Revenue the Income Tax at standard rate which a covenanting member has already paid on the money subscribed to the Trust. Your only commitment is to continue paying your normal sub for the next four years; the Trust's income receives a boost and this in turn helps to stave off the evil day when subscription rates have to be increased. Incidentally, subs have not been increased since the 1970s, but we can't hold out for ever!

Current annual subscription rates are Single £3 and Family or Household (two adults plus children under 21) £4. The rate for Corporate Members is £8 but covenants do not apply to them. Some members are choosing to pay higher subscriptions on a voluntary basis and all such gestures are very much appreciated.

Queries about covenants should be addressed to our Hon. Membership Secretary, Commander Bertie Tower, R.N.(Ret'd), The Cottage, Woodmancott, Winchester, S021 3BL (Tel. Dummer 429), and completed forms should be returned to him or delivered to the Heritage Centre.

Motorway Inquiry - TrustNews February 1988

The M3 Inquiry re-opened on 12th January and the Winchester M3 Joint Action Group (JAG) has presented its evidence. The JAG case, which the Trust supports, takes as a basis the unacceptability of both the Department of Transport's preferred route (the cutting) and any of the west-of-the-hill (valley) routes. There is an environmental barrier in the Winchester corridor which ought to be as insistent as any geographical barrier and demands the same commitment of effort and money to surmount.

The case against the valley route has been made before and accepted by the Department of Transport, and it has recently been reinforced by St. Cross residents and Winchester College. The Trust made its own views clear at the earlier part of the Inquiry in 1985. The case against the cutting route has been made forcefully in the resumed Inquiry by the Countryside Commission. It was a pity that their dismay at what was threatened by the cutting should have tempted them to espouse a valley route as alternative. Fortunately, however, their case for a route on the By-pass alignment was ill-thought-out and almost certainly will not have convinced the Inspector.

The Joint Action Group has sought to define the most acceptable overall package environmentally for the section between Bar End and Compton. The environmental

barrier formed by St. Catherine's Hill, Plague Pits Valley, Twyford Down and the Winchester water meadows cannot be by-passed to east or west and it has been clear for a long time that only a tunnel would give any hope of completing the M3 without massive landscape damage.

The Hockley - Compton crossing of the Itchen Valley is also a serious problem, with the Department's preferred route putting traffic on top of a very high embankment designed to raise the road in order to reduce the depth of cutting in Twyford Down, to allow a cheaper over-crossing of the railway and to dispose of waste from the cutting.

The tunnel solution provides a level road from Bar End, through St. Catherine's Hill, under Plague Pits Valley and through Twyford Down, across the valley and under the railway.

The undoubted landscape and amenity benefits of such an alternative, compared with the preferred route, are offset by the additional and considerable costs of tunnel and underline crossing of the railway. The costs, however, have been exaggerated by the Department and the City Council is satisfied that they are not an unreasonable price to pay. JAG's consulting engineers also advise much lower costs than the Department's estimates, and taken as part of the Bar End - Bassett Scheme they are by no means exceptional. There are many road schemes with a greater cost per mile. The motorists' costs for the Bar End - Compton section are also significantly reduced by virtue of the straightness and levelness of the JAG scheme.

JAG originally proposed that the Department should examine a tunnel scheme with the Hockley slip roads as in the preferred route, or without the Hockley slips at all. The slips could not be retained within the tunnel without it being too wide, and the traffic consequences of removing them were felt to be too severe or problematical for the Inspector to be persuadable.

JAG eventually asked for a variation of a scheme first proposed by the Landscape Institute, where the Hockley slips move across the Itchen Valley, with the northbound slip coming over the railway from a small roundabout south of Bushfield and the southbound slip exiting via a carriageway of the old A33 using the existing bridge to go under the railway to a second small roundabout, allowing connection to Bushfield.

The connection from Twyford, Colden Common, etc. to Winchester or to the Motorway is made via a simple (unconnected) bridge over the Motorway as it emerges from the tunnel at Hockley, then via St. Cross Bridge Road and thence to St. Cross Road or to Bushfield.

The underline railway crossing will undoubtedly be more expensive than the overline crossing of the preferred route, but not as problematical as British Rail have made out. The problem lies in BR's desire to maintain a third track in this area, but a small movement northwards of the alignment of the Motorway (closer to the viaduct and further from the southern Site of Special Scientific Interest) will allow the railway crossing to be over two tracks only.

Much is made by the Department and its apologists in the County Council of the delays caused by the JAG alternatives, to the ludicrous extent that a 1.5km tunnel with easy access at each end is predicted to take longer to build than the 40kms of Channel Tunnel. Certainly the tunnel will take longer than the cutting, but not inordinately so.

Despite the mythology, there is no economic or accident saving case to be made for an urgent completion of the M3. A simple interim bridging of the Twyford to Winchester road at Hockley relieves the only major bottleneck (and incidentally achieves most of the economic benefit of the complete Motorway scheme). In any case, it is not improbable that, given a scheme like JAG's which can command widespread acceptance, the Bar End - Compton section will be completed before the Compton - Bassett section, concerning which an appeal has been registered in the High Court.

Chris Gillham

Development Control Committee - TrustNews February 1988

From time to time, as we examine the weekly list of planning applications, our Committee notices definite trends in development. Such trends can become a major preoccupation as we try to decide whether or not they are desirable; whether or not they are avoidable.

In recent years we have seen the proliferation of offices in the Central Conservation Area with its increasing demand for car parking spaces; and more recently still the growth of sheltered accommodation, both public and private.

One of our chief concerns today is the constant pressure on the remaining green spaces within the City. Against this, it is a continual struggle to retain such breathing spaces; small gardens with their trees and view of the sky bringing shafts of sunlight into the streets and preserving much of the character of Winchester.

On the larger scale, we find demands to develop our few remaining open spaces, perhaps when school playing fields are no longer required. Recent applications have been for close housing development on the YMCA ground off Stockbridge Road - since withdrawn - and at Queen's Mead School and King's School, both on the Romsey Road.

An equally alarming part of this trend is the recent attempts to develop, contrary to our approved Local Plan, countryside at the edge of Winchester, giving rise to fears that we may no longer live in a city in the country, but finally in the midst of urban sprawl. An attempt to build in the countryside at Sarum Farm has been rejected by the Secretary of State for the Environment following an Appeal Inquiry at which the Trust supported the City Council's original refusal of planning permission. Significantly, after losing this appeal, Trafalgar House publicly accused the Planning Department of a "negative attitude". Another application to develop Manor Farm at Pitt is opposed by a considerable weight of local objection. The developers, Leading

Leisure, have already stated publicly that, in case of refusal it intends to appeal to the Secretary of State - thus showing extraordinary insensitivity to local opinion.

George Burnett

Collection of Slide Transparencies - TrustNews February 1988

Members will recall an earlier notice regarding the intention to establish a collection of slides of Winchester buildings and events to be made available on loan for educational purposes.

I am very grateful to those people who have hunted through their own collections and sent us pictures. However, unfortunately, the response overall has been poor and as yet there are not enough to organise a bank or system.

May I again appeal for help and suggest that if any readers of this Newsletter have any half-used films in their cameras left over from holidays, how about finishing them off with a few shots of points of interest in the City?

Donations please to me, C/o. Winchester Heritage Centre, 52/54 Upper Brook Street, and if there are any queries as to what may be suitable subjects do not hesitate to telephone me on Winchester 63420 and I shall be delighted to help.

Harold Sturges

Winchester Heritage Centre - TrustNews February 1988

The start of the New Year seems an appropriate time to take stock of what has been achieved and what other objectives should be aimed for in the coming year.

The Centre has had some mixed fortune during the year 1987. Unfortunately, more targets were missed than hit during the year.

On the credit side, the Audio/Visual production was created, and since its introduction at Easter it has continued to receive very many laudatory comments

(some from surprising quarters), but it has failed to make the impact expected in terms of numbers of visitors to the Centre. This, in turn, has meant that we have fallen well short of our financial targets for the year and will again need to look to the Trust to make good the shortfall.

Total numbers during the year were up to those of previous years but the looked-for increase did not materialise. The Brooks Dig, the masking of the Centre by hoardings, the opening of a new "Heritage Shop" which confuses people, have all worked to our disadvantage. However, some new thoughts are in train for improving this year's figures.

On the positive side, the numbers of schools and children using the Centre have leapt up. Other organisations and authorities who have taken the trouble to travel to Winchester (in some cases from long distances), have all been most impressed and in some cases have expressed a certain envy. This must be good for Winchester.

Administratively the Centre has benefitted from the enormous amount of time and effort contributed by the Hon. Manager, Alan Cooke, and his Assistant, Ray Eaglen. Thanks are also due to the other members of the Management Committee and to the volunteer Stewards for their invaluable services. With the closure of the Centre for the Winter break, Alan Cooke departed for a long stay in Australia, and with reluctance resigned as Hon. Manager. Ray Eaglen is standing-in until March, but cannot take on the responsibilities after that. As a matter of some urgency therefore, we need someone to take Alan Cooke's place, and I use this opportunity to make a plea for a volunteer.

Ken Johns

The Brooks - TrustNews February 1988

Introduction

The exhibition was all that we could have asked of it, and the presentation to Trust members no more of a sales pitch than could be expected. The plans, perspectives and models were examples of good communication; we were also impressed by the sincerity of the architects in their earnest desire to do a good job and to use the best of materials.

Unfortunately, the scheme remains inescapably flawed by the brief, which was designed to give Winchester the best possible financial return rather than the best possible redevelopment in human terms. Of course the brief also called for quality of design and finish, but subject to the overriding requirements of parking and marketable floor space.

The result is an ingenious scheme of very high quality, little to do with Winchester, but in all other respects answering the brief with great skill. Much of what we find to criticise is therefore a product of the brief, and though hopefully improveable, this

scheme can never achieve the character which would have been possible had the whole thing been approached with different criteria.

For this reason the Trust's judgment is that the proposed Brooks Development is a tragically lost opportunity rather than a disaster. The traffic congestion will be considerably worse, when it could have been greatly eased, and the shops will be more of those which already dominate the centre, when they could have been what we actually want. The best parts of the scheme will be very good of their kind, but paid for by some grim areas, when it could all have been a credit to Winchester.

Had there been a period of public debate on the details of the brief a very different scheme could have emerged. Rut it is too late for fundamental changes. Let us hope the Council will make really good use of our £8.5 million in other fields, and let us all see what may still be done by the architects to make this as good a scheme as is now possible.

Interior

Given the parameters of the brief, we believe this is a very good solution. It has nothing to do with Winchester as we know it, but that need be no misfortune because Winchester's character has been built up over generations by endless injections of new character, and these arcades look good enough to qualify as worthy of Winchester's future. True, the alleys and courts are not outdoor areas like all the rest of Winchester, but neither are they indoor like so many recent bland shopping centres. This scheme has the potential to carry on the great tradition of Victorian covered markets, with their balconied spaces, glass roofs with elegant iron columns, and disciplined use of external materials for all other surfaces. Moreover, the concept has been turned to even greater advantage by extending part of the concourse down into the two car park decks. This not only adds an exciting element with its elegant central lifts and stairs, but will relieve the parking areas from the usual subterranean gloom and mean, half-concealed pedestrian access routes.

There are some points of worry here, however, like the awkward positioning of some of the columns, which the Trust will take up in detail with the planners.

Exterior

The design suffers from the architects' dilemma of not wanting to be accused of committing the sin of pastiche, while at the same time trying to make a huge building look like an agglomeration of small buildings. One day a brave architect will admit that to do even this is pastiche and go the whole way or not at all. The Brooks scheme is apologetically neither one thing nor the other, and therefore lacks conviction. There is too much to deal with in this article, but it does not need an architect to spot that: the tower is a tack-on nonsense in its present form; to strive for variety and yet repeat the same bay windows (with their quirky inverted-comma-windows above) in three different elevational contexts is illogical; to use flint as if it were an oversize mortar joint is an insult in flint country.

The roof is also worrying. A degree of regimentation is unavoidable and not necessarily a bad thing, but it would be better to introduce variety by changes in

height or by other features than to make a change from tile to slate over the residential area, which somehow accentuates both the regimentation and the incongruity of finding bungalows scattered on the top of a building. Rather they need every means to become more a part of it. Might it not also be possible to give them an access from the shopping area, via a small roof garden from which the public could have views of the Cathedral?

Townscape

Walking around the scheme we believe that the creation of a linear market in Middle Brook Street could be very successful. It looks crowded, but London street markets suggest that this may be no bad thing. The fountains and simulated brook will not do, however. Winchester is definitely not a place for fountains as Queen Elizabeth Court and St. George's Street have proved, and a paved apology for a real brook would hardly be noticed. More thought is needed to give us some real running water.

St. George's Street, apart from its southeast corner, is a failure, and we doubt if any tinkering will make it better. The Trust will press for a change to a pentice elevation which would not only give some character to this dreary part of St. George's Street, but also make more sense of Casson's initiative further up the hill and, most importantly, break down the "separate territory" nature of the internal shopping area. A pentice approach would soften the distinction between indoor and outdoor shopping and provide a little continuity with the existing shopping area.

Upper Brook Street starts badly with a road engineer's paradise at the corner. We hope that our enlightened City Engineer will at least manage to do away with standard kerbs, and that the architects, when they put their minds to it, will find something more inspiring than a bicycle rack to fill the improbable extra width of pavement. Further along the street matters get even worse, with the looming presence of the cavernous delivery area continuing around the corner into the Friarsgate extension, which is otherwise entirely devoted to car park entrance and exit.

This whole area is where all the ills of the brief come to a head, and where there is no avoiding the consequences of this type of development. Nevertheless, we feel that some improvement here is essential. Friarsgate and Upper Brook Street cannot be allowed to deteriorate into a snarl of traffic, oil and cardboard boxes. The caverns are an inescapable part of this scheme: busy and noisy during the day, dark and dangerous (or floodlit and ugly) at night. Architecturally, the huge arched entrances, with strange Damoclese windows above, will not help to ease the scale down towards the small houses north of the site. This is especially so if Ladbrokes intend to re-develop the adjoining area as housing.

We do not know the answer, but suggest that a jettied overhang or continuous balcony might help the scale, and that intensification of the planting, particularly with trees on both sides of Friarsgate, and perhaps a pedestrian bridge and landscaped island at he corner, might give scope to create something positive and pleasing, rather than mere S.L.O.A.P. (space left over after planning).

End Piece

There are various technical matters which concern us, such as the water table, the ventilation system, fire escape and night security. For these things, and for the eventual standards of materials and craftsmanship, we rely heavily on the local authorities. In the case of the Brooks development there must be no damaging economies when problems arise, no no-go areas and no artificial stone paving.

Michael Carden

Winchester Carnival - TrustNews February 1988

Ever since the revival of the Carnival in Mayor Bidgood's time, the Trust has helped with its organisation and with the distribution of proceeds to various charities. It has also donated a trophy.

Sadly, due to lack of support last year (over the years the number of floats in the procession had declined from 98 to 5), the Committee decided not to continue in 1988 and the remaining monies were given to charity.

The Trust will again be involved with the tug-of-war over the Itchen - an established and popular feature of Carnival Day. Any offers for a team from the Trust will be carefully considered!

Chris Webb

Hampshire Chronicle - TrustNews February 1988

This much-respected local weekly newspaper is now publishing a monthly contribution from the Trust under the WPT logo. Our article appears on the second Friday in the month (i.e. in the week following the monthly Trust Council Meeting) and is therefore usually more up-to-date than the Newsletter can be.

St. Thomas Street Booklet - TrustNews February 1988

Launched in January, this booklet is the fifth in the Winchester Street series published by the Trust, and the most appealing in its appearance.

It differs from its predecessors in that it provides much more information about previous inhabitants of the buildings described.

The text is by Frank Chippindale and the line drawings are by Keith Leaman. Help and advice given by members and others is acknowledged inside the back cover. Special thanks are also due to George Burnett, who collected a substantial sum towards the cost of production in the form of contributions from businesses in St. Thomas Street and from its Residents' Association.

The price from Winchester booksellers is 90p. For those members who can bear to wait until the Heritage Centre reopens on 1st March, the special members' discount price (obtainable there but nowhere else) will be 70p.

Programme - TrustNews February 1988

Wednesday 3 February 7.30 p.m.
New Housing in Culver Road for Winchester College - an illustrated talk on this award-winning scheme by a representative of the architects, Plincke, Leaman & Browning.
Winchester Heritage Centre.

Tuesday 9 February 12.45 - 1.45 p.m.
Lunchtime Lecture on Winchester's Waterways - by Mrs. A. Proudman, a City Guide.
Winchester Heritage Centre.

Saturday 13 February 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Book Sale in aid of Heritage Centre funds.
Winchester Heritage Centre.

Thursday 18 February 7.30 p.m.
*Council for the Protection of Rural England - a talk it the "Time for Design" series by Richard Bate, Senior Planner.
Walton Room, Winchester Guildhall.

Tuesday 1 March
Winchester Heritage Centre, 52/54 Upper Brook Street, re-opens to the public for the 1988 season.

Tuesday 8 March 12.45 - 1.45 p.m.
Lunchtime Lecture on Cathedral Problems - by Mrs. Corinne Bennett, MBE, BA(Arch), RIBA, Architect to the Dean and Chapter.
Winchester Heritage Centre.

Tuesday 15 March 7.30 p.m.
New Local Authority Housing in Wales Street - an illustrated talk by the architect.
Winchester Heritage Centre.

Thursday 17 March 7.30 p.m.
*The Royal Fine ART COMMISSION - a talk by Sherban Cantacuzino, MA, FRIBA, Secretary to the Commission, in the "Time for Designy series.
Walton Room, Winchester Guildhall.

12 April to 15 May
Winchester Preservation Trust Awards 1987 - Exhibition in the Winchester Heritage Centre of all the entries.

Wednesday 20 April 7.30 p.m.
Forum on Office Design and Development in Winchester
Saxon Suite (ground floor), Winchester Guildhall.
Speakers to include Andrew Lyndon-Skeggs, MA, FRICS, of Westbrook Property Developments Ltd., Colin F. Badcock, MA, and representatives from professional organisations.

Wednesday 25 May 6.00 p.m.
Visit to Two Private Gardens (open to members only)
Meet at the Miller's House, Wharf Mill, Wharf Hill , by courtesy of Mrs. Eileen Bendall.

Wednesday 25 May 7.30 p.m.
Visit to Two Private Gardens (open to members only)
Meet at the home of Mr. and Mtrs John C. Browning, The Soke, No. 12 Chesil Street.

*In conjunction with Winchester City Council.

Newsletter contributions should be sent to Mrs. Gill Graham, Hon. Secretary, Winchester Preservation Trust, Highways End, Highways Road, Compton, Winchester, S021 2DF. (Win. 713072).