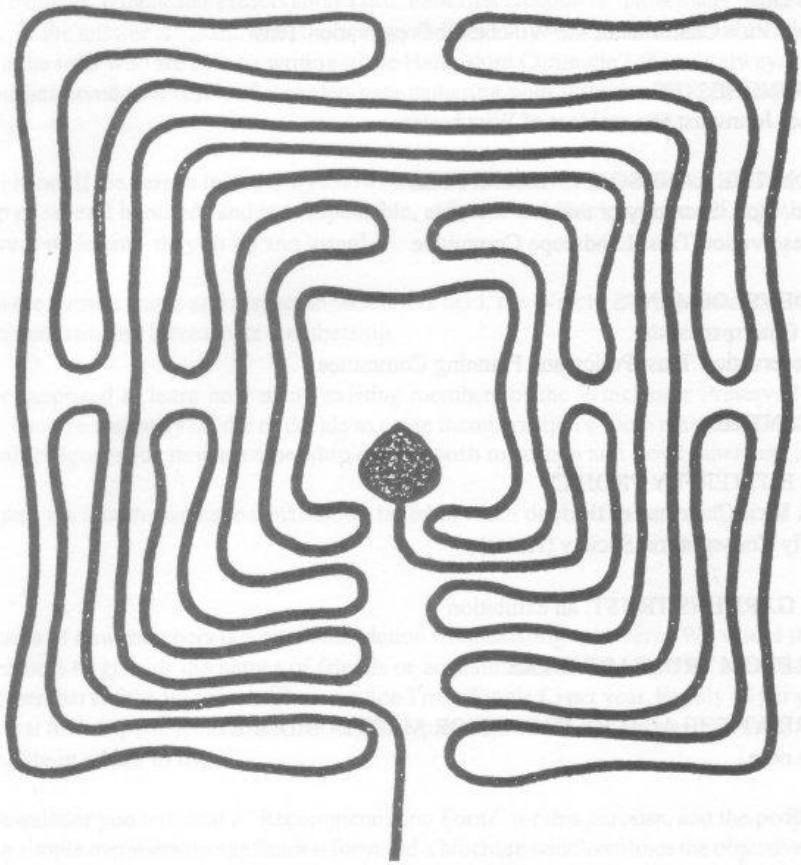
Title Picture - TrustNews August 1990

WINCHESTER PRESERVATION TRUST NEWSLETTER





AUGUST 1990

The design is the first of four illustrations by Michael Carden for his article, The Mizmaze Puzzle

We need your help to get more members for the Trust - TrustNews August 1990

An essential task of the Winchester Preservation Trust is to represent our likes, dislikes and proposals for improvement of the Winchester environment to those in authority, whether it is to the Winchester City Council, the Hampshire County Council, the Inspector at an Official Enquiry, the Government, or some other authority or organisation who can help us. When these authorities receive observations, complaints or suggestions from the Winchester Preservation Trust, their first reaction is "How many people does the Trust represent?". If the answer is " well, there's me and - er - my wife, and Mr. Smith and - er - those two people down the road who are always writing to the Hampshire Chronicle", there is always a suspicion that the comment has come as a result of a garden-gate gathering with little expertise or understanding of the problem.

On the other hand, if the person in authority knows that the Winchester Preservation Trust has an increasing membership of several hundreds and is a responsible, efficient and financially sound organisation, then the reaction is very different - they sit up and listen!

To maintain the current status and respect in which it is held, the Winchester Preservation Trust must work very hard to maintain and increase its membership.

You may be surprised to learn how many existing members of the Winchester Preservation Trust leave Winchester, become seriously ill, die or decide to cease membership for some reason each month. We need to reach **double figures for new membership each month** to sustain and slowly increase our numbers.

During the past six months we have consistently failed to reach double figures - and this is worrying.

Action

The best source of new members is a recommendation from existing members. We would therefore ask all existing members to give us the names of friends or acquaintances who might be interested in becoming subscribing members of the Winchester Preservation Trust (Single £3 per year, Family £4 per year) especially if you think that their experience or expertise might help us improve Winchester as a pleasant, interesting and progressive City in which to live.

With this Newsletter you will find a "Recommendation Form" for this purpose, and the people you propose will be sent a simple membership application form and a brochure which outlines the objectives and activities of the Winchester Preservation Trust.

Antony Skinner

The Mizmaze Puzzle - TrustNews August 1990

Some thoughts on the origin of the maze on St. Catherine's Hill

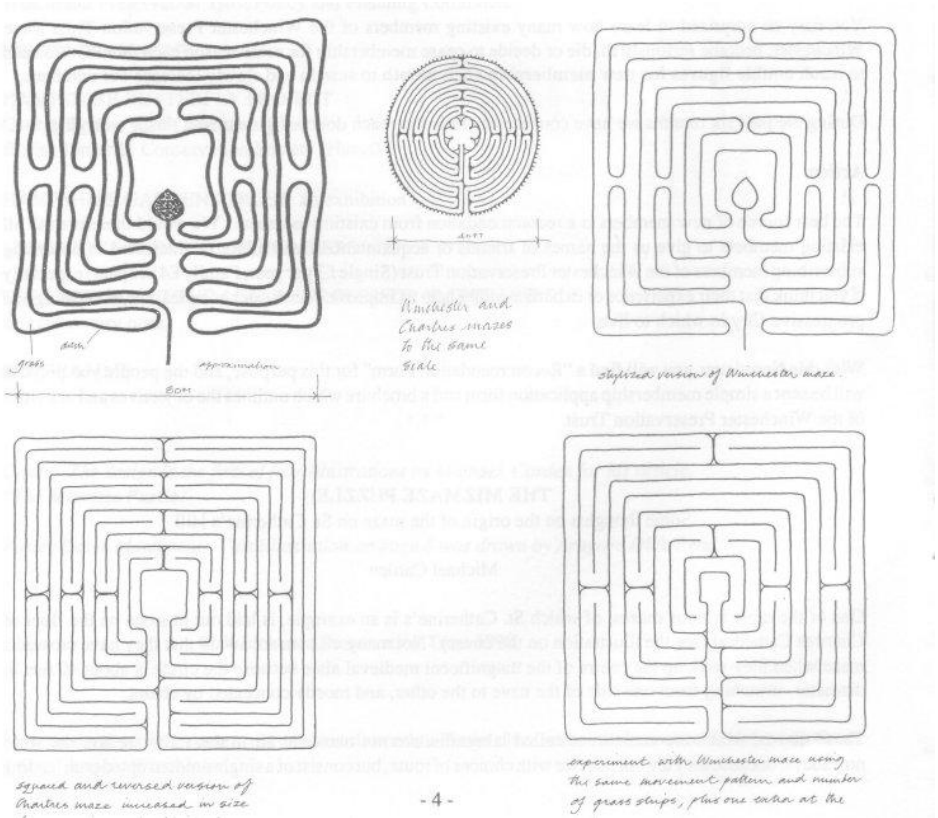
One of the most famous mazes, of which St. Catherine's is an example, is laid out in stone on the floor of Chartres Cathedral (see the illustration on the cover). Not many visitors are aware that they have crossed a maze when they walk up the centre of the magnificent medieval aisle because the circle is about 40 feet in diameter, stretching from one side of the nave to the other, and mostly concealed by chairs.

These mazes, which are sometimes called labrynths, are not mazes at all in the sense we use the word nowadays, because they are not puzzles with choices of route, but consist of a single uninterrupted path leading inevitably from the entrance to the centre. I believe that they are all of the same basic design too, whether the simple "mizmaze" cut in the turf of St. Catherine's Hill above Winchester, or the great maze at Chartres, or the oldest known version scratched onto the stone wall of an 11 th Century chapel in Italy.

This very early example has a Latin inscription describing it as the labrynth designed by Daedalus for King Minos of Crete. I do not know how this affects other people but it makes the hairs stand up on the back of my neck to think that the pattern I shuffled around in the rough grass with my children could be the very same which was known to King Minos thousands of years ago in a world I had looked upon as legend. The consistent pattern is not the only link either, for it seems that until it was taken for munitions during the Napoleonic wars there was a bronze plate at the centre of the Chartres maze depicting a minotaur!

My few examples are a fraction of the number which once existed, and there may be many more than I know of around today. I have heard that Amiens Cathedral had a similar paved maze in the 18th Century (removed because it encouraged children to play in the cathedral, I believe), and I am told that at Braemar in the New Forest there is another turf maze; these were once, it seems, scattered widely throughout the countryside of England.

What were they all for? Maybe someone has researched and explained them in detail, but I can only pass on one or two certainties and some sketchy conjecture. Obviously the mazes had religious significance, Christian at least in the cathedrals and probably a mixture of christian and pre-christian in the countryside.



Winchester and Chartres Mazes

The pre-christian symbolism is probably to do with the sun and the moon as there appear to be links with the calendar in the layout of the mazes, as there are in stone circles and in ancient games like hopscotch. The christian purpose may have been to create a ritual pilgrimage for those who could not travel to the holy land, so that they might progress on their knees and in prayer (each corner serving like a bead in a rosary), until they reached Jerusalem - as the centre was sometimes called. One is reminded of Sir James Jeans' remark that to travel hopefully is more important than to arrive. Some say that the return journey was also important, culminating in the blaze of light from the rose window at Chartres, which it is claimed has a mathematical relationship with the maze.

Such theories can seem conclusive, with mathematical measurement turning into proof. It is confusing, then, to learn that there is historical evidence of the Chartres maze being used for religious games rather than pilgrimages. Apparently the king and his court would sit as spectators while the clergy sang and danced around the maze, lobbing some object from one to another in festive worship. One can certainly imagine something more along these lines on St. Catherine's Hill than pious Wintonians painstakingly shuffling around the damp turf on their knees.

Which reminds me that the Winchester maze is said to have become distorted because, when it was first recut by restorers, the pattern was misunderstood so that the bare earth has become the route, where it should form the lines of division between the encircling turf paths. And this is where there is now a genuine puzzle: what should be the pattern of the maze? There are 11 circular paths at Chartres but only 8 strips of turf at Winchester; have 3 been lost? Certainly the centre seems over large and an outer ring could easily have been lost. So perhaps there should be 2

more in the centre and 1 outside? Or was it always an 8 ring version? Perhaps careful archaeology would give the answer.

There is then the question of the loops. Is there a missing boundary line in each loop? This would make 12 paths on the south side but only 10 on all the others, yet the layout appears symmetrical on both axes.

I remain mystified and hope that someone will see a clue which I have missed. All you need is a piece of tracing paper and a great deal of patience!.

Michael Carden

Racing in Winchester - TrustNews August 1990

According to Bailey's 1856 Transcripts from the *Municipal Archives of Winchester*, horse-racing was 'from time immemorial a favourite national pastime' and there is no reason to doubt that its popularity in Winchester goes back farther than the visit of Queen Anne and her Consort in 1705 which he describes. There is even a tale of King Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great, being presented in Winchester with a number of racehorses of German breed as a gift in connection with the marriage of one of his sisters. So racing in Winchester started a long time ago, continuing down the years with varying fluctuations in popularity until the end of the last century. Since then it has disappeared almost without trace, with only the precious, but sometimes fading, memories of a few elderly citizens to recall its final days.

Where and ....

There are some references to racing at Abbotstone Down in the 19th Century, when it sometimes alternated with Worthy Down for steeple-chasing, but nothing remains of the course today, and it appears that Worthy Down was certainly the most popular course for the Winchester Races. The Racing Calendars do not begin until 1727, but there is plenty of evidence of meetings before that, especially under the Stuarts who were great supporters of the Turf. J.P.Hoare, in his *History of Newmarket and Annals of the Turf*, Baily 1886, mentions Lord Pembroke making 'extraordinary great winnings at a horse-race at Winchester' in 1631. Old city records mention the necessity for 'mending the waies near the race posts against the lords coming to the races' and in 1634 it was decreed that 'The cittie shall yearlie provide a cupp of the value of £24 to be run for at the races upon Wendesdaie in Easter Weeke'. Later on, in 1646 a plate of 50 ounces was to be provided for seven years ‘to be run for the Thursday next after the last Wednesday in August. Provided that the Gentleman Subscribers to the other parte of ye Articles doe provide a Plate and runn for it the Wednesday before', rather a complicated provision, and considering the tragic and disruptive events that took place over the next seven years in the Civil War, it seems rather unlikely that the races were even held at that time - and the silver for the plates was no doubt put to other use.

Presumably racing was suspended under the Commonwealth, but upon the Restoration it flourished with the active support and participation of Charles II,

affectionately nicknamed 'Old Rowley' after a favourite horse he rode at Newmarket. The fire which destroyed the King's house at Newmarket was one of the reasons for his projected move to Winchester where Sir Christopher Wren was starting work on the King's House on the site of the old Castle in 1683. The King liked this area particularly for many reasons, some political, some personal such as his delight in 'its prospect, air, pleasure and provisions' which 'made the King more earnest to render Winchester the seat of his autumnal field diversions for the future'. However, this was not to be for long as the King died in 1685 and his great palace was left unfinished.

The visit of Queen Anne in 1702 was probably the one during which she inspected the now derelict palace with a view to restoring and finishing it for her own and her Consort's use - a plan which came to nothing. However, she did go to the Races and David Wavell Esq, Mayor, contributed £10 from the City coffers towards the value of the City Plates.

.... When?

Racing seems to have been held throughout the spring and summer months - as early as April and on until August. There were many other race courses in the area, notably Stockbridge, home of the famous Bibury Club and often frequented by Edward VII when Prince of Wales; Andover, Basingstoke and Soberton Down where the Hampshire Hunt held their Meetings in April. So probably the Meetings were timed to enable both horses and visiting gentry to make a circuit of the various courses. Transport was obviously much slower in those days and the horses had to be ridden from Meeting to Meeting, then rested for a while to make sure they were in top form for the races - especially as many of the races were run in heats which must have been very hard on the horses. It is suggested that the many looseboxes at South Wonston Farm were built for this purpose but others say that the Marquis of Donegal built them to stable his own racehorses. It was a 700-acre farm in the late 18th Century, stretching all the way to Worthy Down, but nowadays the remaining looseboxes mostly house pigs, tractors and combine harvesters rather than racehorses.

Fields were not very large in the 18th Century and judging and regulation were haphazard to say the least. In 1753 the main race of the Meeting was described thus: 'The King's Plate of 100gns for 6 year-olds 12 - 0 each was run for and won by Lord Strange's br.h. starting alone'. However, in 1774, there were five entries for His Majesty's Plate and at this same Meeting 'there was the greatest sport that ever was known at our races for many years past. The first heat was run for by the Duke of Bolton's Chose and Mr. Bishop's Amphion, which was with great difficulty decided in favour of Chose, and the third heat was a dead heat between the same two horses'. The Dukes of Bolton were powerful in racing circles in the 18th Century for in 1722 a notice announcing the running of His Majesty's Plate states 'if any difference arise relating to their Ages (i.e., the runners) Entering or Running, the same to be determined by His Grace the Duke of Bolton'. An 'Old Sportsman', writing in *Hampshire Notes and Queries* in the late 19th Century, looking back 50 years notes that 'Formerly there was no paid or regular judge or starter, consequently too often there were palpable mistakes in both departments. Not the least conspicuous of these errors was one at Winchester, where a gentleman of high standing was

officiating in the judge's box, and he placed the horse first which to all observers was only a moderate second'.

Local tradition in Canon Street in Winchester suggests that another noble Owner was the Duke of Hamilton but this is not at all certain, although there is no disputing the fact that an early owner of Hamilton House built a large group of stables behind his house for his race-horses. The stables were either demolished or converted in the late 19th Century to make way for a soft drinks factory, which has now in turn been replaced by modern cottages. Hamilton Cottage in Culver Road next to the big house was supposed to be the Head Lad's house.

Attendant festivities

The racing season occasioned many attendant festivities besides horse-racing and these no doubt brought a substantial increase in trade in the city - as well as a consequent increase in rowdiness. In most cases runners had to be entered for a race 'the day seven-night before they run' usually at the Chequers or the White Hart in Winchester, both of which were the scene of much entertainment and merriment during the season. Both were inns of great antiquity, the Chequers dating back to mediaeval times and covering a huge area from St. Peter Street down to Parchment Street and fronting onto the High Street. It was demolished in 1769. The White Hart stood on the south side of the High Street next to the old Guildhall. It was first mentioned in 1409, but was pulled down to be rebuilt 'in the modern style' in 1806 and finally closed in 1854, having been brought up by the landlord of the Black Swan who considered it a threat to his own business. The large window and balcony on the first floor of numbers 46 and 47 are about all that remains of this once-famous coaching inn today.

Cocking (cock-fighting) was almost as popular with the racing fraternity as horse-racing and there was plenty of this sport (if you can call it that) at the inns and taverns of Winchester along with 'ordinaries', concerts and balls. An ordinary was a meal served to all corners at a fixed price and they would start around 2 in the afternoon, so everyone was in fine fettle for the racing which usually began around 4 or 5 in the evening and carried on until the light was too bad for the judges to see the finish - or sometimes a little later. A description of the 1776 Festival at Winchester in the *Hampshire Chronicle*, after describing an assembly, concert and ball attended by 'numerous and polite companies', notes that 'on Thursday after an elegant breakfast at St. John's House, the company according to an annual custom repaired to the College where they heard an excellent composition on the subject of Macbeth'. So all tastes were catered for, though as ever the weather could not be relied upon and was often very inclement prompting Jane Austen to write:

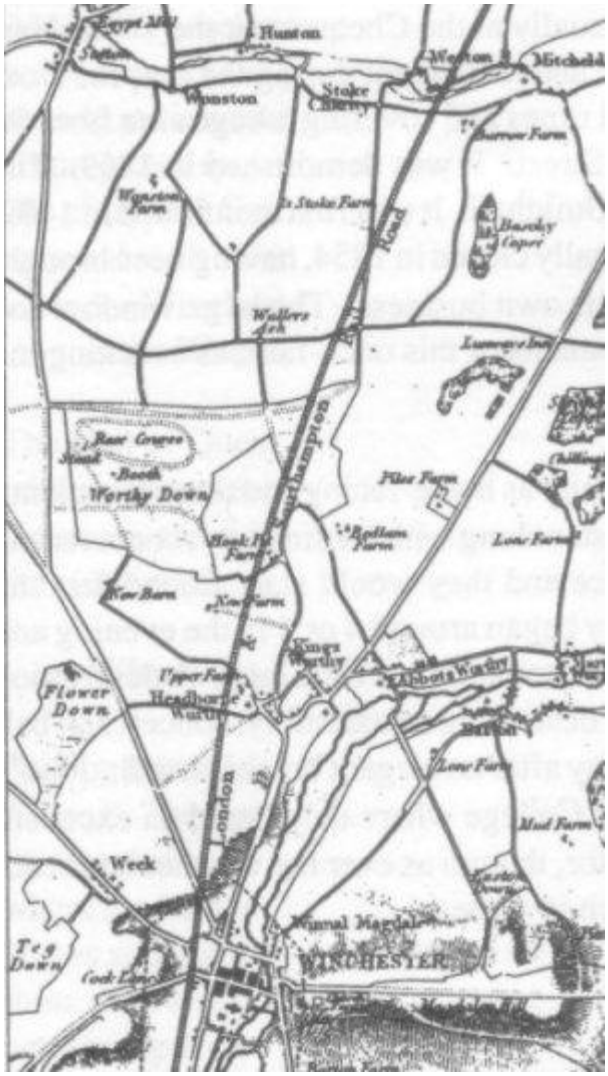
> When Winchester Races first took their beginning,
> T'is said that the people forgot their old Saint
> That they never applied for the leave of St. Swithin
> And that William of Wykeham's approval was faint".

Gradual decline in the nineteenth century

Fluctuation in the popularity of racing continued throughout the 19th Century. In 1811, apparently, 'the sport was indifferent and there were not many horses' but 1849 was better when, according to the *Hampshire Chronicle*, 'there was an unusually large assemblage and our races have not been so well attended for many years'. However, by the 1860s, in his *General History of Hampshire*, B.B.Woodward says 'There is generally one meeting in each season under the patronage of the officers of the garrison but the races are not of extensive interest or renown'. This seems to be paving the way for the end of racing in Winchester.

The last account of Winchester Races in the *Hampshire Chronicle* is dated 16th July 1887 and though there is no mention of this being the last meeting, it doesn't sound too happy an occasion: 'Owing to the want of rain, and consequent hardness of the ground, large fields were not to be expected, and thus the sport was of a moderate description only, and the attendance was decidedly poorer than usual. On the first day there was some talk of an objection to the day's racing on the ground that the rules of the Jockey Club had not been complied with'. This was to be reported to the Stewards of the Jockey Club.

Several reasons are put forward for the decline of racing in Winchester and indeed in many of the cathedral cities and county towns around the country. The National Horseracing Museum suggests that the introduction of the Jockey Club rule that every race after 1877 must be worth a clear £100 to the winner, may have contributed to its demise, and also the introduction of the gate money enclosure. The coming of the railways may have increased attendance in some places and eased the transport of horses, but if a racecourse was not on a main line, it could easily be bypassed in favour of those more easily accessible.



From Mudie's 'HAMPSHIRE', Vol 1, 1838


Monument to 'Beware Chalk Pit' on Farley Mount

What remains today?

So what remains today of the Sport of Kings in Winchester? Very little indeed, but at least high up on Farley Down there stands a pyramid erected to commemorate a famous horse owned by a Mr. Paulet St. John. This fiery steed fell into a 25 ft. chalk-pit in 1733, survived and won the Hunter's Cup the following year, both times with the 'owner up'. After his accident he was renamed and entered in the race as 'Beware Chalk-Pit'.

On Worthy Down a wide stretch of cultivated farmland sweeps across the whole area where the Races were once held, with nothing to indicate its colourful and crowded past, and only a few ramshackle buildings bearing witness to its later use - as an airfield in both the first and second world wars. There are still some horses though not, perhaps, of the calibre of the great runners of earlier days. Frank Ward, whose father was a trainer and built the Cloudbank Stables in South Wonston in 1929, runs a busy riding school there now. Though there was no racing, his father used the gallops in the area with apparently no conflict with the activities of the RFC, the RAF, the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Navy, all of which were stationed there at various times. (Of course, aeroplanes were smaller in those days).

Frank can recall riding with some of the all-time greats of racing before the war, including Sir Gordon Richards, and Steve Donahue who would fly in for an early work/ride, then take off again for whatever meeting he was riding in. Common practice for jockeys nowadays, but quite unusual then. There is nothing left of the old grandstand now, though I was told that traces of it show up when ploughing takes place. It was demolished in the early 1920s and during the war a practice bombing circle was set up just below where it used to be. However, Tony Groves, another youthful-looking long-time resident of South Wonston, can remember playing in the grandstand as a child. He describes it as a large square brick building, and he particularly recalls a vast stone seat on the upper storey. Some of the old timbers were used in the construction of Cloudbank Stables and for houses in South Wonston.

In the *Winchester Countryside* published in 1947, Alan Rannie says, 'Worthy Down is also the site of the old Winchester Racecourse abandoned about half a century ago. Near the spot where the grandstand used to be is the site of a British village. This was excavated in 1920 and amongst other finds was a set of iron currency bars now in Winchester City Museum. Surely racing in Winchester doesn't go back that far . . .

Sara Dick-Read

NB If anyone has further information on this subject, or the Mizmaze Puzzle, the Editor would be interested to receive it with a possibility of the material being included in a future Newsletter.

A feature of Winchester is the great number of beautiful trees. However, many of them were planted a long time ago, some are over mature and some have grown up neglected and unthinned.

The Cathedral authorities have faced up to the problem and, having had a detailed survey of their trees, are carrying out a phased felling and replacement and are planting young trees near old ones that eventually have to go.

The two recent severe storms have uprooted a large number of the town's trees and have made many people nervous of the larger older trees that are still standing. An example is the once beautiful cedar in the churchyard at Weeke. It lost some boughs in the storms and had others removed, to make it safe, but it will need more boughs removed, further spoiling its appearance. It may be better to replace it with a new tree.

The City has planted a great many young trees in the parks and in St. James' Lane cemetery, but quite a number of them will undoubtedly die because of the very dry spring. If in their first season people living near-by would "adopt" a newly planted tree and give it water during dry spells, many more would become established.

Penny Neyroud

Planning Developments - TrustNews August 1990

There are some planning decisions which are very much a matter of opinion, and the ones which immediately come to mind, are those of signs. Here colour, illumination, and lettering all have to be taken into consideration. Our Planning Panels spend much of their time inspecting these types of applications, but it is often that the true effect can only be appreciated after the work has been done.

There are some planning applications however, where there is little room for doubt. The Brooks developers recently applied for change of use of the 19 residential units to retail. Enquiries by the Trust at the Planning Office gave the impression that this application might very well succeed. In addition to making a strong statutory objection, letters were therefore sent by the Trust to the Chairman of Planning and also to the Mayor, pointing out, that this would be against the City's own policy of encouraging residential use in the centre of Winchester. In this case the application was refused.

Listing continues to be an important part of the Trust's activities. The Southampton University Industrial Archaeological Group recently sought the Trust's support in an application for the listing of the Hockley Railway Viaduct. This was gladly given as the Trust considers that this early brick and concrete structure has now assumed an added importance in the screening effect it will have on the raised course of the projected Motorway.

In the May issue of this Newsletter, the very poor condition of some of Winchester's Ancient Monuments was pointed out. No repairs have yet been carried out either to

the Buttercross or to the Westgate, and the Trust has been unable to obtain any information. A recent inspection of the Buttercross reveals fallen masonry obliterated carvings, graffitti, and general neglect. Unless immediate repairs are carried out by the City, this very beautiful Gothic structure, may be beyond saving. The West face of the Westgate was considered to be in a dangerous condition two years ago, and again nothing has been done. Also the Trust's scheme for repaving the lower side of the Westgate which was promised last year, has still be be implemented.

Jeffrey Smith

Heritage Centre - TrustNews August 1990

We were very sad that while I was in Australia early in the year my deputy manager, Neville Oldfield, died after a short illness. Ray Eaglen who had done this job before kindly agreed to take over until my return. We were very grateful to him as the Centre would not otherwise have opened as scheduled in April.

Alan Cooke Hon. Manager

Hampshire Butterfly Report - TrustNews August 1990

How did Hampshire butterflies fare in the long hot summer of 1989? That question is answered for all 48 Hants and I.O.W. species in the British Butterfly Conservation Society's Hampshire Report, now available.

The Holly Blue had its best year within living memory and Editor, Adrian Hoskins, had no hesitation in nominating it "butterfly of the year". Any blue butterfly in a garden is almost certainly a Holly Blue. It frequents both town and country and has continued to prosper in 1990. Phenomenally early February sightings were recorded this year - perhaps an indication of global warming. Butterflies are unsurpassed "indicators".

Wall Browns, which had become rare away from Hampshire's coast, staged a comeback inland. Chalkhill Blues also did well: they are common on both of BBCS's new butterfly reserves - at Compton Down and Magdalen Hill Down, Winchester.

But 1989 was a poor year for red admirals, small tortoiseshells and peacocks, normally common in autumn gardens and elsewhere. These species, finding a dearth of nectaring flowers (caused by the drought), went into premature hibernation - often as early as August.

To get your copy of the 1989 Hants Butterfly Report (a handsome booklet sponsored by Southern Water) write to George Yorke, Hughenden, Shawford, Winchester, with a cheque payable to "BBCS Hants Branch" for £1-50 inc. p. & p.

George Yorke

Hampshire Garden Trust - TrustNews August 1990

Hampshire Gardens Trust will be mounting an exhibition in the Heritage Centre which will be open to the general public from 2 - 4 p.m. on Saturday October 20th. Many of our members will be aware of the excellent work done by theTrust such as the creation of Queen Eleanor's Garden and the restoration of the Master's Garden at St. Cross.

New Books from Trust Members - TrustNews August 1990

Professor James Stevens Curl's new book, *Victorian Architecture*, is now published by David and Charles of Newton Abbot at £21. It consists of 320 pages, 58 figures and 175 plates and contains a reference section, a bibliography, and an index. The book is a celebration of Victorian Architecture, with reference to style, type, and innovation. The book does not neglect the design of the Victorian Cemetery.

The Lecture at the AGM by Professor Martin Biddle - TrustNews August 1990

An explanatory note

Professor Martin Biddle MA FSA, Astor Senior Research Fellow, Hertford College, Oxford will be speaking at the AGM on 31 October on "The Excavations at the Rose Theatre and Globe Theatre and their implications for archaeology in Winchester and elsewhere".

Professor Biddle was responsible for setting up the first urban archeaological dig in the world aimed at reconstructing the history of the city: The city chosen for this work was Winchester. The Winchester Research Unit was set up by Professor Biddle in 1968 to evalulate the results of the dig. This lecture promises to be extremely interesting and it is hoped that as many people as possible will come to hear Professor Biddle.

Programme - TrustNews August 1990

Friday 31st August 6.00 p.m.
Members are invited to visit the garden of the Trust's President, Sir Peter Ramsbotham, at East Lane, Ovington - for directions see May Newsletter.

Wednesay 19th September 7.30 p.m.
Heritage Centre, Upper Brook Street, HISTORY OF THE THEATRE ROYAL; an audio-visual programme of the Theatre's history from the early 1900s to the present day. Presented on behalf of the Friends by Grp. Capt. Monty Dawson. There will an opportunity for discussion and questions.

Saturday 22nd September
Saturday 13th October
From 11 a.m. in the Heritage Centre, Upper Brook Street, Winchester. Continuing the successful series of coffee mornings, with delicious refreshments by Mrs. Denis Loveday. Come and meet other Trust members, see the audio-visual programme on Winchester, and the permanent exhibition.

Wednesday 31st October 7.30 p.m.
A.G.M. at 7.30 p.m. In the King Charles Suite at the Guildhall when Prof. Martin Biddle will speak.

Wednesday 21st November 7.30 p.m.
Heritage Centre, Upper Brook Street. Repeat of the illustrated talk by Mrs. E. Proudman on WINCHESTER IN THE CIVIL WAR.

Unfortunately some members had to be turned away on the previous occasion. It is impossible to gauge beforehand the support for any particular event; using the Heritage Centre as a venue has several benefits, not least that the projector and screen are in situ, and normally the space is adequate.

There is still a need for more members to be involved in, and help with, events in the Heritage Centre. Please ring Rosemary Smith (0962) 840596 or Ann Jones (0962) 67048.

Application for Membership - TrustNews August 1990

Life Member Single £60
Double £75
Ordinary Member Single £3 Family or Household £4
(2 adults + children under 21)

Corporate Member £8
(for firms, societies, colleges etc)

Note: Higher rate subscriptions are always welcome

Name(s).....

Address.....

Signature.....Date.....

Please send cheque or banker's order to the Secretary, c/o The Heritage Centre, 52/54 Upper Brook St Winchester S023 8DG.

Membership Recommendation Form - TrustNews August 1990

Winchester Preservation Trust

Do you know anyone who might be interested in supporting the Trust by becoming a subscribing member?

If you do know someone, please let us have their name and address, and we will contact them to see if they are interested in joining the Trust, perhaps invite them to attend the A.G.M. on Wednesday 31st October 1990 at 7.30 p.m. in the Guildhall, Winchester, to hear more about us.

Names and Adresses of Possible Members

.....

.....

.....

Your Name and Initials

.....

May we mention your name in contacting the above? YES/NO

Please return this form to the Secretary of the Winchester Preservation Trust, Heritage Centre, 52/54 Upper Brook Street, Winchester.