



A QUESTION OF CHOICE

Enclosed, for those who were unable to attend the AGM, are the group reports presented to the meeting. They are also on www.stratfordsociety.co.uk

We want to let you have information in the way you want to receive it. At the moment members who have access to the web receive all our communications by email and via our website. Otherwise these are sent by post. However, if you have email but would prefer to receive short messages only by email and longer reports and newsletters by post, please let us know. If you want to change the way you receive information from the Society, please email your preference to Ian Fradgley. His address is jeni@92ban.freeseerve.co.uk

Those without email will, of course, continue to receive their Update, Talk of the Town and all other documents by post.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

July 7th A special members' visit to the Birthplace, including a viewing of the new portrait of Shakespeare, has been arranged with the director, Dr Diana Owen. Details are on the enclosed application form. Places are limited so please book early.

April 27th Just a reminder that the final members' meeting of the season will take place at the earlier time of **6.15pm** at the Falcon Hotel

Town Centre Survival Plan

The Society's Historic Spine is a Core Ingredient

The Strategy Group's call at the AGM for priority to be given to the future of the town centre is to be followed by a special town meeting to discuss what shops, property owners and tourism can do to survive the recession.

Organised jointly by the Society and the Town Management Partnership, the meeting will be held on July 16th and representatives of all three local authorities will be invited.

Discussions will be chaired by the Society's president, Sir Brian Follett. David Pywell, programme director of World Class Stratford, will present a summary of the County Council's Walkable Core initiative, which includes the Society's Historic Spine.

Leading Organisations

A panel representing leading organisations in the town will comment on the opportunities offered by the project. Panellists will include Dr Diana Owen, director of the Birthplace Trust, Richard Eggington, Town Trust chief executive, Jane Jordan, local manager of Laura Ashley and Gary Barnes, TMP chief executive. A representative of Advantage West Midlands will also be asked to join the panel and the audience, too, will be invited to offer suggestions.

The major objective of the meeting is to raise public awareness of the Walkable Core and to explore how the town can benefit from the project as quickly as possible, given the restrictions of the economic climate.

"A lot can be done that doesn't need a huge financial outlay," says vice-president Ian Heggie, organiser of the meeting. "Removing selected on-street parking spaces, restricting pick up and delivery hours, slowing traffic to 20mph in the centre and de-cluttering street signs would not cost much and would go a long way to improving the appearance and enjoyment of the town.

"There is, for instance, a yellow parking sign directly in front of Harvard House and a single yellow line where delivery vans like to park,

completely obscuring the front of the building and seriously restricting the opportunities for anyone who wishes to enjoy and photograph it. Whoever put up these signs had no respect whatever for the town's most important buildings.

Core Element

"The Historic Spine is a core element of plans to revitalise the town centre. It would cost very little to improve the environment of the buildings along the spine and if these simple measures were put in place they would have an immediate impact on the attractiveness of the town centre - and consequently on its economic success. Larger, more expensive measures could be addressed later when the national economy improves."

The meeting will be held at the Falcon Hotel on July 16th at 6pm and all members are invited to attend.

District Council Impasse

In February the District Council suspended monthly planning meetings with the Society. Leon Tanner, chairman of the Planning Group, with Brian Wright and Peter Burgess, have since met Liz Nicholson of the District's Planning Department to review ways that the Society's can communicate with the planners in future.

At the moment, although it is likely that the Society will have access to documents relating to 'major' applications, the Planning Group will have to rely on the internet for information on the majority of proposals. There is no agreement on how the Society will be involved in consultation on major schemes in future and regular meetings are not being considered at all. It is hoped that this situation will be temporary.

COMINGS.....

Who's Who on the new General Committee

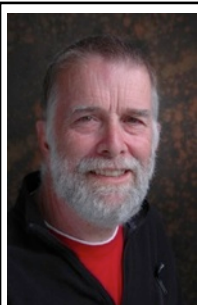


Dr Kevin Bond was co-opted to the General Committee in 2008 and was elected vice-chairman at the AGM. He is a company director and an expert in environmental management, with considerable experience in both public and private sectors. A former Home Office advisor, he was also chief executive of the National Rivers Authority.

In his early career with the police force, he became Chief Superintendent in Herefordshire and he has held advisory appointments both to the global service construction group Keller and to the Government of Barbados. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Paul Burley: Paul is a retired architect and a member of the Society's Planning Group. He is a past president of Birmingham Architectural Association, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and Associate of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and chairman of the Solihull Manor House Charity.

He is particularly keen to improve the arts facilities in the town (in addition to the theatre), and hopes to extend links between the Society and local schools.



Dick Prior: Dick retired in 2006 as a science teacher and Exams Officer at North Leamington School. He is chairman of Stratford Photo Group and a Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society, having exhibited in many international exhibitions. He is also treasurer of Stratford Cycling Club.

Dick has a remarkable portfolio of creative and award winning photography. Apart from taking topical photographs of Society events, he intends to build a substantial archive of Stratford as it develops.



Ian Heggie: In recognition of the considerable work he has done for the Society, Professor Ian Heggie has been elected a Vice-President. He joined the General Committee ten years ago with a formidable reputation internationally as Road Advisor to the World Bank and as a former Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Transport in the Thatcher government. Since coming to Stratford his work for the town has included being a trustee of the Town Trust and treasurer of the Town

Management Partnership. He was chairman of the Society for four years until 2006 and has recently chaired the County Council Reference Group overseeing the Walkable Core project. He has also been an executive committee member of the Historic Towns Forum. His wide range of contacts have helped to raise the Society's profile nationally as well as locally and have attracted some of our most influential speakers. He will continue to serve on the General Committee and is chairman of the Communications Group.

....and GOINGS

Two retirements

Two long-serving members of the general committee, Neville Usher and Jack Crimp, retired at the AGM on 9th March.

Neville has been Social Secretary for the Society since 1989 and has organised many fascinating outings from a exploration of the work of the Birmingham Assay office to a lunch trip on the Severn Valley Railway, which coincided spectacularly with one of their Wartime Weekends.

He has made a tangible gift to the Society and the town in the form of the Society's oral history project, which he initiated in 1990. With Bob Bearman as technical adviser he organised interviews and recordings of the memories of Stratford people going back to World War I. He eventually transcribed more than 1,800,000 words which are now lodged in the Birthplace archives.

The Oral History tapes provided several spin-offs, including two presentations to members based on life in town before and during World War II and, in conjunction with the BBC, an exhibition of Stratford at War at the Shakespeare Centre.

Jack Crimp's work also forms part of the Birthplace archive. He has been responsible for all the Society's photography since he became chairman of the photographic group in 1999. One of his major achievements, with a team of seven Society members, was the photographing of all the streets in the conservation area for the Society's Millenium project.

For the Queen's Jubilee Jack organised the photography of the floral exhibition in the Guild Chapel which was later turned into a CD and album presented to Her Majesty.

When the photographic group expanded to include awards for architectural excellence in the town, Jack was also responsible for researching and recommending suitable candidates, who received Society certificates of merit.

The contributions of both Neville and Jack are highly valued by the Society and, although retired from the General Committee, they will both remain members of the Society.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The Society has accepted with pleasure the offer of Pancho Gordhan, manager of Logical Computers and a professional photographer for 15 years, to provide his collection of photographs of Stratford as a basis for the Society's archive, which will be developed by Dick Prior. In due course the archive will be available on the website. More details in the Spring issue of *Talk of the Town*.