



Long Marston photograph courtesy Bird Group /St Modwen

**Programme 2008/09**  
**Your programme card for next season is enclosed.**

The Society is delighted that the season will be opened on 8th September by Dr Diana Owen, the new director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. She will talk about her vision of the Trust's future. Please put September 8th in your diary and note the earlier start - 6.15pm.

Maintaining our reputation for attracting speakers of local and national importance, the programme also includes talks by Ian George, English Heritage's Ancient Monuments inspector, Michael Culverwell, vice chair of Orbit Heart of England Housing Association, Vikki Heywood, the RSC's executive director and Dr Paul Davidson, director of the sustainable energy group in the government's Building and Research Establishment.

There will also be a special Christmas visit on Sunday 7th December, to Lord Leycester's Hospital in Warwick.

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**New Member**

Welcome to new member Sue Stevenson who has already generously offered help with the Society's conservation aims and is already working on possibilities for the Toll House and the improvement of town centre shop fronts.

# Eco Town or Urban Sprawl?

## Tell us what you think

The Eco-Town may never happen but it has created a smoke screen that obscures an important fact that will affect us all – by 2026 there will be between 5,600 and 11,000 more houses in the district. There are two vital questions: Where will they all go and what will they look like?

The unpalatable fact for many local people is that existing towns will have to allow for expansion and Stratford is one of them. It will not just stand still. Now is the time to consider the facts, rather than the rumours – because the final decision will affect us all.

**Fact 1:** Members of the government's own advisory panel on Eco towns want to cut the number of schemes to one or two. It would be better, they say, to produce one successful eco template for future housing than several bad examples that devalue the idea so much that developers won't build them and people won't want them.

**Fact 2:** Figures have been bandied about, but although a statement was due in March, nothing definite has been said about how much of the housing proposed for Long Marston will count against the housing target for South Warwickshire. If it doesn't count at all, the development is nothing more than a con trick to produce more urban sprawl.

**Fact 3:** Statements by the developers that they will give priority to local people

struggling to get on the property ladder cannot be more than a public relations exercise until the houses are designed and costed. The developers can't do that until they know who is going to pay for the infrastructure. Without government support, no developer can afford to upgrade major roads unless the quality of the houses is sacrificed.

**Fact 4:** Affordable housing is cross-subsidised by other housing. An exemplar at Upton in Northamptonshire showed that the higher percentage of affordable housing, the lower the quality of the all the houses. The suggestion for 'Middle Quinton' is that 2,000 of the 6,000 houses will be 'affordable', which could compromise high quality design.

Minister Caroline Flint visited Long Marston on July 28th and said, "At the moment Stratford is bursting at the seams. Rental accommodation is used up, the housing list is very long.

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*Eco-Town continued from page 1*

The idea is that the eco town will tackle these problems, as well as helping to save the planet.”

The Society has already expressed the view that because it was a brownfield site, some housing for Long Marston airfield would be acceptable. It is the scale of the present proposals that is causing concern in view of Government’s statement that the 5,600 proposed in the West Midlands plan is not enough and the total figure imposed on the District could be as many as 11,000 - 5,600 *plus* the Eco town.

Successful European eco-towns have all been built on the edge of existing towns and cities, where the infrastructure was already in place. Stratford cannot stand still so the problem for the council to consider is this: If not Long Marston – where?

Wherever estates are built, we want to avoid the off-the-peg, urban sprawl look, so the Society is pressing for the District Council to get together with developers to find how they can provide, within their budgets, not only energy saving buildings but also aesthetically good design.

Let us know what you think about the proposals so that we can put your points of view when and if the planning stage is reached. Contact Beryl Downing, 01789 292847 or email [bldowning32@waitrose.com](mailto:bldowning32@waitrose.com)

## SAVING THE TOLL HOUSE

Peter Burgess is in contact with various organisations, including English Heritage, who have suggested that the future of the Toll House might be best assured by the creation of a Building Preservation Trust. This would entail the creation of a consortium which could provide finance for refurbishment. This would include lottery funding

District Council officers are happy for the Society to look further into a way forward along these lines as the District itself is not willing to provide further funds and the previous lottery bid made by them was rejected because of lack of input. For a bid to succeed it is also necessary to show a strong community involvement.

## TEA WITH THE VICAR

It was a full house for the chairman’s evening on July 15th when 60 members were given a special tour of Holy Trinity church by the Rev Martin Gorick, who showed us parts of the church that visitors normally cannot reach.

Members were shown the rare medieval stained glass which cannot be seen from the nave, the 1190 stone altar which had been hidden under the floor to escape destruction during the Reformation and, the church’s greatest treasure, a 1480s carved head of Jesus (pictured right) tucked inside one of the carved stone sedillias to the right of the altar.

A photograph of the head is on display to the public, but the carving itself is not normally on view. Known as a vernicle, it is a representation of the image reputedly imprinted on St Veronica’s handkerchief as she wiped the face of Christ on his way to crucifixion.



Other carvings representing the Trinity have all been destroyed or, as in the boss in the church porch ceiling, chipped away because they were thought to contravene the commandment not to make any graven image.

## AFTER THE FOOTBRIDGE - WHAT?

The news that Warwickshire County Council has decided not to go ahead with the proposed footbridge across the river, plus all the economic problems, might provide a good point for World Class Stratford to re-consider its options, says *Strategy Group chairman, Brian Wright.*

“Given that the real impact of increased petrol prices hasn’t really taken effect yet, it may be an especially good time to look at pedestrianising the town centre. But, above all, to look at the overall package that Stratford offers resident shoppers and tourists deterred by the the price of aviation fuel.

“A major aim must be to get people to stay longer. In a recent list of the 100 best places in the UK to stay for a weekend Stratford was notable by its absence.

“The arguments for pedestrianisation have been rehearsed so many times that I don’t want to go over them again save to say that the one real fear must be what will happen to the beleaguered town centre shops as it is introduced. But we need to revolutionise transport in the town as quickly as we can. However, the good news is that town centres are losing fewer customers than out-of-town shopping centres as people opt for staying close to home and not using their cars. We could also do a deal with the taxi operators to adopt the systems found at Paddington Station and abroad where the driver is allowed to solicit for other passengers who want go to the destination of whoever is at the front of the queue. Taxis could also play a role in deliveries.

“But this depends on the town centre being a lure and this can be done by adopting the Society’s proposals for the walkable core and, in particular, the Spine - the route from Holy Trinity to the Birthplace. This would involve restoring the High Street shops, which should make Stratford more exciting to visit. But this needs a clear sighted strategy.

“Marylebone High Street’s enlightened landlords in London had exactly that and have turned the area into one of London’s leading food and shopping destinations. Of course, Stratford is not the same, but why not consider converting Town Square into a covered market?”

### New Vice Chairman

The May meeting of the General Committee unanimously elected Peter Burgess vice chairman (designate) of the Society. The appointment will be put to the next AGM.

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