



The
Stratford-upon-Avon
Society

THE TALK *of the* TOWN

The quarterly newsletter of the Stratford-upon-Avon Society

*For those who care. . .and who want to
influence the future of our town*

May 2007

Good progress on World Class Stratford

GOOD progress has now been made with the proposals for the Bancroft Gardens and the Recreation Ground.

Following extensive consultation with the Community Forum and other bodies, the plans have been approved by the District Council, and it is anticipated that a start will be made on some of the changes in October this year. The redesign of the Bancroft will include:

Two new public squares with distinctive features.

□A new canal bridge for pedestrians.

□A new riverside walk which will complement the theatre promenade.

The swan fountain will need relocating to meet the design details. This fountain is owned by the Stratford Town Trust although it stands on District Council land.

The move of the fountain has caused some concern, but it appears there have been recent discussions between the parties involved - the Town Trust, the District Council, and the fountain designer Christine Lee. These parties appear confident that there will be a satisfactory outcome to this problem.

On the Recreation Ground there will be a new cafe with car parking spaces, an enhanced bandstand area, and a separation of some of the sports pitches to the south of the site. The overspill car parking area will go, but 380 parking spaces will remain. In the longer term, the Society will be looking for a reduction in the car parking provided, once a Park-and-Ride site has been provided. The Society was concerned to ensure that the beauty and tranquillity of the riverside walk area in the south part should be unaffected.

This has been achieved, and other areas will be strengthened with the provision of an enhanced ecology area with long grasses and extra tree planting.

On the transport side the County Council has started the consultation process on the Clopton Bridge, and on options for improving Southern Lane and Waterside. Many people are very concerned about the amount of traffic using the Bridge with particular reference to the heavy goods vehicles

By Ian Prosser

which struggle across it. Possible solutions mooted have been a new bridge, upstream from the old, or a series of weight restrictions to limit access. More Park-and-Ride has been suggested. It is clear that there is no easy answer, but it is the Society's view that we should look in depth at the options, including the provision of a new bridge. Once the options are clearly set out, we can come to a view on the way forward. We shall follow careful future discussions on the Bridge and the options for Southern Lane and Waterside. One of the options for Southern Lane was for it to be pedestrianised, but this drew a raspberry at the Community Forum when we were told this was necessary to support the proposed Pedestrian Bridge!

As reported at the AGM recently, we have been asked by SDC if, as a Society, we would be prepared to come up with ideas for the future use of the Toll House on Clopton Bridge. The thought is that if we can come up with a proposal which is acceptable, this could form the basis of an application for Lottery Funding to support the project. Your Committee recently gave the green light to this request as we felt that this is just the type of project that we, as a Civic Society, should be involved in. The Toll House is in a key location on one of the main

□Continued on Page 2

Well. . .well. . .well

HAVE you been in to see the restored well in Superdrug? It is rather disguised by the surrounding displays but is very carefully reinstated. Perhaps Superdrug could be persuaded now to add a little historical background to why it is there. The Society should congratulate itself on rescuing this High Street feature.

575,000 new homes needed

THE West Midlands Amenity Societies' Association is part of the Civic Trust 'family' which shares the concerns of amenity societies across the country. It started as a branch of the Midlands Amenity Societies Association formed in the late 1980s but became a separate body as membership of the Midlands Association grew too large. The Society was an original member of the Midlands Association and now belongs to the West Midlands body.

At a General Meeting of the Association in Leamington on 10th March, Penelope Tollitt, an environmental scientist and now Spatial Planning Manager for Wycombe District Council gave a powerful presentation on global warming. Having described the science, she also referred to potential

consequences of climate change and to the international community's present attempts to reach agreement on preventative actions at governmental level. This led to discussion of what might be done at local level or by individuals and Penelope described the operation of Wycombe's carbon offset fund which is used to encourage improvements in home insulation.

The meeting also discussed aspects of the response submitted by the Association to the Regional Assembly's current revision of the regional spatial strategy. Particular criticism was directed at an estimate, based on untested and oversimple Government projections, of some 575,000 new dwellings needed in the region over the next 20 years.

Help us keep Chestnut Walk up to scratch

THE Society put a lot of effort into getting the County and District Councils to clean up Chestnut Walk.

Most of the Chestnut trees were dead or dying and, after a constructive dialogue with the local Councils, we raised £750 from the Town Trust to pay for a new set of Chestnut trees. However, our efforts did not stop with the planting. The trees were planted in the spring of 2005 and the summer proved to be unusually dry. So a team

of volunteers studiously watered the new trees throughout the summer using a 50-litre "watering machine." The trees were treated to about 200 litres of water per week throughout the summer. As a result, all but one tree survived and the survivors are now doing well.

Since then, the area has again become somewhat neglected. The dead tree has not been replaced, the large flower bed has lost most of its plants, cars park on

By Ian Heggie

top of the smaller flower bed and the whole area requires a good sweep. After numerous letters to the two local authorities, we established that the District Council did litter picking, but little else. The County Council, on the other hand, did not consider the area their responsibility, but were willing to support anyone who wanted to look after the site.

With the agreement of the County Council, our Vice-Chairman therefore sprayed the weeds growing out of the brick wall, fertilised the grassy areas and planted bulbs along the walls of these areas. He then got Sally Hopkinson, a garden designer from Snitterfield, to offer *pro bono* advice on the flower beds. She advised more wooden posts with rope threaded

between them (to stop people parking on and walking through the flower beds), recommended treatment to improve the soil in the flower beds, followed by a simple planting scheme—David Austin roses, planted in groups of three, with lavender below. The existing box plants would be moved to the edge of the main flower bed.

The County has agreed to provide the wooden posts and have also agreed to allow one of the local residents to replace the dead chestnut tree with an aesculus hippocastanum "Baumannii" (double white flowered variety with no fruit). Once the wooden posts are in place, the rope will be threaded, the box plants moved, compost will be dug in and the planting will begin. Any volunteers willing to help with the planting, or to do the odd bit of weeding and watering during the summer, should contact me on 299891, or i.heggie@uku.co.uk.

Stalwarts honoured

THREE long-serving and influential members were honoured with gifts of engraved wine glasses presented by the President, Sir Brian Follett, at the AGM on 5th March. They were former chairman Dr Bob Bearman, architect Will Hawkes and planning group convenor Leon Tanner whose qualities and expertise were described with cultured elegance by former chairman Roger Pringle.

There was also a presentation of a book on opera to Eric Bennett who retired as treasurer after 27 years of what Sir Brian described as impeccable, quiet service.

Sir Brian Follett is pictured left, with Mr Pringle, right, and, from left to right, Mr Bennett, Dr Bearman and Will Hawkes

Photo by Jack Crimp





□ In need of some TLC. . . The Toll House on Clopton Bridge. Photo by Jack Crimp

□Continued from Page 1

entrances to the town. It has been empty for some years now, and it must be worth our effort to see whether we can come up with any interesting proposals. The Toll House is now owned by the SDC as they purchased it recently from the County Council at a nominal sum. The County provided some funding for essential repairs to make the building wind and weather proof. Some repairs have been made to the roof and some of the stone work has been replaced. There is no intention to spend any further money on the building, at least for the time being. In March some Society members carried out an initial inspection of the building. Some of the interior is in a poor state, but this viewing confirmed the wonderful location of the building with its proximity to the Clopton Bridge, the River Avon and the Wildlife reserve on the island.

Jack Crimp took some photographs so we have a reliable record of what we had seen.

We shall be arranging a meeting in May, with local land owners to see if they have any thoughts on future uses for the Toll House. We are hoping to invite the RSC, Tourist Information Centre, the Boat Yard, hotels in the vicinity and other businesses to this meeting which, we hope, will bring forward some ideas which the Society can develop and work up. If any member has any thoughts on this subject and in particular, on possible future uses of the Toll House, please contact me on 01789 740072 or by e-mail at ian@brittainprosser.fsnet.co.uk or the Secretary on 01789 292847, e-mail beryl@alvcot.fsnet.co.uk

SOCIAL

I AM delighted to advise members that we have sold out for our visit to Stanton Guildhouse which will take place on the 17th of May. It was indeed gratifying to have such a good response from those who booked for this visit. There must surely be other places in the area that members will come to, so if anyone has any ideas do please let me know.

As promised in the last edition of Talk of the Town, we have in fact booked another Christmas Lunch at the Stratford Victoria Hotel - the date will be Sunday the 9th of December so do put this date in your diaries now. We are currently working on ideas for a cabaret - someone suggested that we should hire a "dog and mouse circus" which appeared on television some years ago - but thought better of this!

Neville Usher

New faces around the committee table

AT the 5th March AGM four new members joined the General Committee, and Herbert Tuckey was elected our new Hon. Treasurer, following Eric Bennett's retirement after more than 25 years of service to the Society.

Herbert Tuckey is an FCA and the retired partner of a large firm of Birmingham accountants. He was chairman of Methodist Insurance plc and is currently chairman of a number of charities in Birmingham

and treasurer of Stratford Talking Newspapers.

The four new committee members, who will retire (in rotation) in 2010, are Nick Bishton, Joan Burgess, Peter Burgess and Andrew Cooper.

Nick Bishton has lived in Stratford for 20 years and has considerable experience in the field of transport planning with various consultants and local authorities. Now semi-retired he is well-versed in the

complexities of the traffic and transport issues in Stratford.

Joan Burgess's Civil Service career included directing central government funding for housing and regeneration projects for sixteen London boroughs. Since retirement she has run a number of community projects centred on a large inner London housing estate. She will take on the responsibilities of Programme Secretary for the Society.

Peter Burgess is a former civil servant responsible at various times for policy development in planning, housing, local government, environment and transport. He was appointed a CBE in 1995. Since retirement he became policy advisor to an international law firm. He is a member of the Society's Planning Group.

Andrew Cooper has made an energetic contribution to Stratford for four years as Town Manager,

working with the Town Management Partnership to create new initiatives to increase the town's prosperity. He was formerly employed in development and operational management roles at Boots the Chemist in Nottingham.

Continuing on the committee are Jack Crimp, Patricia McFarland, Paul Standing and Neville Usher (retiring in 2008) and Joanne Humber, Leon Tanner and Brian Wright (retiring in 2009).



□ Nick Bishton

Ask not what your society can do for you. . .

By Patricia McFarland

IAN PROSSER'S first report as Chairman of the Society to the AGM on 5th March covered a year of highlights, awards and celebrations of our 40 years. The full text of his report can be found on our website, www.stratfordsociety.co.uk but here are some of his major points.

Before reviewing the year the Chairman made special mention of the Anniversary Awards made to members who the Society felt had given outstanding service over a consistent period. The President, Sir Brian Follett, presented sets of specially engraved wine glasses to Robert Bearman, Will Hawkes and Leon Tanner (who was unfortunately not able to be present), with the Society's thanks for their inestimable help over the years. A presentation was also made to Eric Bennett on his retirement after more than 25 years as our treasurer. Our anniversary dinner was briefly mentioned, and a celebratory project will be the reprinting of Robert Bearman's

Stratford-upon-Avon, a History of its Streets and Building.

Of special interest over the year, the Chairman said, was the consultation process undertaken by the Community Forum and the discussions on

the RSC proposals. The Society played a key role in the consultations. Our President chaired this Forum and our Planning Group, led by Leon Tanner and Brian Wright, had regular meetings with the RSC and their architects. The planning application has now been lodged and we wait. The Chairman hoped that this type of Forum, where local representatives and organisations were engaged and involved, would be part of any future consultations on schemes of a major nature. He emphasized that for all the importance of the external appearance of the redeveloped RST, the scheme will stand or fall on what is done to the inside - and here the experience of the Courtyard will be invaluable.

World Class Stratford and the consultation on the Urban Design Statement were mentioned. (See the Chairman's report on World Class Stratford elsewhere in this issue.) Of course, THE BRIDGE was mentioned and the Chairman suggested that the whole procedure had been something of a shambles. Our views

had been set out in full to John Deegan of the County Council. As the County Council had not been able to answer our concerns the Society was unable to support the Bridge Proposal on the basis of the evidence in the public domain.

The Chairman reported on an important review he carried out last summer asking for General Committee members' views on what the Society should be doing, and what its strengths and weaknesses were. This very useful exercise is related in the full text.

A future project was the possible participation in a District Council plan to make use of the Toll House, recently acquired from the County Council.

The Chairman thought this was just the kind of project the Society should be involved in. Members were also asked for help with the new website, to keep it up to date. Thanks to Ian Fradgley and Ian Heggie we have made a very good start but we need to develop the site continually. The Chairman closed by (almost) quoting J F Kennedy, saying, 'Ask not what your Society can do for you, but what you can do for your Society.'



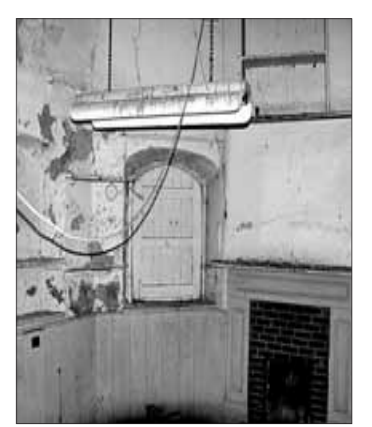
□ Joan Burgess



□ Peter Burgess



□ Andrew Cooper



□ Herbert Tuckey

Planning Watch

What we have done:

THE Planning Group has been making strenuous efforts to oppose a number of new buildings and other proposals that we believe are detrimental both to the Conservation Area and the town's general well being.

On the conservation side it has opposed the proposals to build four houses on the site of the old Doctor's surgery in Chestnut Walk. It described the proposal, which is not unlike Lysander Court in Ely Street, as resembling a ski lodge and entirely inappropriate for a site adjacent to some of Stratford's most famous buildings. On a wider plain the Group has made strenuous objections to Persimmon's plans for 19 houses at the site of the Banbury Road/Southern Relief Road roundabout. It has pointed out that the houses are higher than the

limits set down in the Stratford District Council's guideline for buildings at entry points into the town. The SDC has turned down the application but the developer will try again.

The Planning Group continues to call for a cleaning up of shop signs and frontages in the town centre. It has also opposed a proposal for an illuminated sign at the new Co-Op in the former General Post Office in Henley Street and an application for an A-frame in Cooks Alley (both of these applications have been turned down by the SDC). Again it felt that there are already too many A-frames and that the time has come to eliminate much of the clutter in the main retail areas.

There have been a number of meetings to discuss the RSC's proposals for the new theatre. On the

original application made at the turn of the year the Society made detailed comments on the canopy and the viewing platform of the tower as well as the main entrance, the gatehouse by the Swan and the Riverside dressing rooms block. It was asked to comment on the amended plans published in March. It pointed out that its concerns about the gatehouse and the Riverside dressing room block had not been answered, there had been some improvements in the plan for the main entrance but it was still worried that it was not big enough for such a key building. There was heated discussion on the tower within the Planning Group. The Society has supported the idea of the tower both because it can accommodate the new lifts and it provides something of the 21st century but it does acknowledge that many members

are uneasy about aspects of the tower. One problem is that there have been a series of proposals about the tower and each of them has its own proponents.

What we're watching:

AT an earlier meeting the Group decided to object to the proposal by Whitbreads to convert the former College Residential block at the junction of Warwick Road and Payton Street into a hotel. This has been turned down by the SDC but is expected to rear its head again in the not-so-distant future. The plans for the Bancroft and the Rec drawn up by World Class Stratford are due to start work in July. The Cattle Market is going to an Inquiry but it is worth noting that in Network Rail's forward plans the Stratford to Birmingham Line is due for an upgrade in 2009-10.

Compiled by Brian Wright