

Doing our bit for Heritage Open Days

THE Society participated again the annual Heritage Open Days event, accepting the Town Council's invitation to take a stand in the Town Hall as we have no premises of our own to open to the public. Previously the Society's photographic displays covered various topics of interest, but this time we concentrated on a single subject, namely the Tollhouse on

**Report and photograph
by Jack Crimp**

Clopton Bridge, employing both quality photographs and structural drawings

We had been asked by the District Council to consider what might be done to the Tollhouse to improve its future benefit to the town. The Society decided to involve as many local interested bodies as possible. With this in mind, the opportunity was taken to invite visitors to the Exhibition to offer their suggestions on the future of this historic building by completing a questionnaire.

About 80 people responded including children, and the results will be taken into account before any formal proposals are submitted by the



●The Society's Heritage Open Days stand in the Town Hall inviting ideas for the future use of the Tollhouse.

Society. Ideas are more important than numbers and some may be surprised that several people offered to pay to live there. One thought it would make a quirky and fantastic venue to hold civil wedding ceremonies. Yasmin Case, aged ten, saw it as a hairdressing salon. Eleanor Jackson, aged six, thought it should display Stratford's history on three levels—past on the ground floor, present in the middle and future on

the roof, with a vertical beam of light shining up into the night sky; “would look spectacular on entering and leaving town.”

There was a problem again this year with the availability of Society members to steward this event, again with it being left to a few and probably fewer this time. Earlier notification would no doubt help and perhaps a volunteer register could be useful. Suggestions and/or volunteers are

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warning that ministers are likely to seek 380,000 new homes in the region by 2026 whereas the West Midlands Regional Planning Partnership had been proposing 362,600. The great bulk of the new housing would be on brownfield sites in the metropolitan areas but the report warns that to achieve the new targets may need 3,000 acres of the region's green belt. The figure for Stratford District is 5,600—one of the lowest in the region.

Will we have to build the houses?

The information outlined above shows the national dilemma and whilst, hopefully, the cities can provide the bulk of the West Midlands' quotas there can be little doubt that Warwickshire will face pressure on the same basis as last time—maybe greater. The political parties are discussing variations on the centrally-imposed Whitehall dictat. Labour are suggesting extra funding for councils who surpass their targets, the Tories have speculated about allowing Councils to decide between new houses and an improved council tax settlement or no houses and higher council tax. The Lib Dem annual conference rejected their proposals. The odds are that Stratford will face enormous pressure to put up more

houses. Another feature of the new housing policy will be the emphasis on affordable and social housing. In the West Midlands alone there were 137,992 households on waiting lists in 2005. This, in turn, will lead into yet more fevered local discussions about starter homes as evidenced recently in Welford and Henley. It is also worth remembering that whilst Stratford-upon-Avon District has been allocated an overall figure of 5,600, central Oxfordshire is due to get 40,100 and the Sussex Coast 54,000.

Where and how? In general the Stratford Society policy has been that if new housing is inevitable in or around the town it must be better planned and better designed. By and large the volume house builders have used their standard designs in Stratford. Yet in Ely the Council, despite opposition from the house builders, managed to get a design statement adopted in supplementary planning guidance. Thanks to Ian Heggie the Society ran a seminar on Ely's experiences which we thought had achieved local impact. But Stratford District is currently cutting back on its planning department at the very moment when climate change is going to become a major factor in building design. There are many in the Society who believe that green space

within the town is just as important as outside.

Where would we put any new housing? One of the immediate dangers of any new housing target for Stratford District is that it would trigger the Shottery development, which was placed on the reserve list. Last time Stratford received the bulk of the new homes because, for the sake of infrastructure planning, it needed to be close to schools and transport facilities. Stratford has both built outwards and also inwards with brownfield/infill sites being exploited with great efficiency. The difference this time will be the greater emphasis on green housing. One of the options in Stratford District Council's plans for the future of the old army base at Long Marston is for a development of up to 3,000 houses.

To sum up. It is to be hoped that this time round Stratford town will be spared the intensive developments seen in the last round. Some new housing is probably inevitable but it should be better designed and better planned. Stratford District Council has published a consultation document Meeting Housing Needs about the new government plans. This can be viewed on-line or at Elizabeth House. The closing date for response is 4th November.



THE TALK of the TOWN

The newsletter of the Stratford-upon-Avon Society

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

October 2007

The Armillary: how NOT to run a public art project

AN 'Armillary' so we are told, is a navigational aid which was used in Elizabethan times. So how is it that an Armillary has appeared on the roundabout at the southern end of Banbury Road in a town like Stratford-upon-Avon which could hardly be further from the sea? It is a curious tale and, unfortunately, can now only serve as a model of how not to manage a project purporting to display a piece of art!

Some two years ago a planning application was lodged for the Armillary at the location mentioned. I understand that funding had been made available by one of the developers of the housing in the Banbury Road area, for a piece of artwork. The intention was to provide a piece of art which would serve as an attractive 'Gateway' feature to the town.

In 2005, when the Society commented upon the planning application, we objected to the proposal on two grounds:

1. We recognised that this was a well-intentioned scheme, but questioned whether a roundabout was a suitable place for an artwork of quality. Surely, an attractive piece of art is to be considered, contemplated and admired—not just in a passing second—and this creates a conflict for passing motorists who really should be keeping their eyes on the road.

By Ian Prosser

2. We failed to see the relevance to the town of this particular installation and could not understand its significance as a mark for this approach road.

Coming back to read the terms of this objection, and with the benefit that we have now seen the artwork in place, my conclusion is that Leon Tanner and our Planning Group, who submitted these comments in 2005, got it absolutely right. Each of the comments has been proved to be so relevant and appropriate.

It is a feature of life in Stratford that, unfortunately, many people and groups react to a project, only when they see something happening on the ground. Often, it is then too late to influence any change. In 2005 we

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Changes to *The Talk of the Town*

IN November 1998 the first edition of the quarterly newsletter, *The Talk of the Town*, was distributed. It replaced the irregular mailing of newsletters from previous Chairmen which were proving inadequate to keep members informed about issues and events.

In the spring of this year it had become apparent to the general committee that the present quarterly newsletter had two main disadvantages. One was its inability to respond promptly when there were important developments on which we had views; the second was that the four-page format did not allow for serious articles dealing with planning policy or strategic thinking, or for occasional articles by outside experts. We needed a faster, easier, way to supplement *The Talk of the Town*. Hence the new *Updates* which have gone out in August and October. *The Talk of the Town* will now be twice-yearly, in an eight-page format, autumn and spring, end of October and end of April.

Please let me have your comments. (Patricia McFarland, 38 West Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6DN (Tel: 01789 204127.)



●Lessons to be learned. . .The unloved Armillary in Banbury Road.

Photo courtesy of the *Stratford Herald*

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were almost alone in voicing our objections to the original planning application for the Armillary. If only we had been joined then by the people who have recently criticised the Armillary, then there may have been a happier conclusion to the story. We recently declined the opportunity to support a petition which was being circulated opposing the Armillary. We felt that petitions are generally ineffective and invariably too late in the day to secure any significant changes.

The original aim of this project was to provide an attractive entrance to the town. This was highly commendable. Further, I can understand that the artist, in providing the piece of art, did not want to follow the town's main Elizabethan link with Shakespeare, but sought some other subject. But what has been provided falls well below that commendable objective. In approaching the town from the south, what we now have is, not an attractive gateway scene, but a view of a clutter of road traffic signs, with only a glimpse of the Armillary. Hardly an attractive approach!

It is now history that the planning application was approved, but from here the position deteriorates even further. Once the planning consent was approved, the scheme was handed to the Stratford Renaissance Group which had been set up to bring about various improvements in the town. Despite our objection to the planning application, we were represented on this Group, because we have always tried to secure

improvements by getting involved, rather than by sitting on the fence and rubbing any proposals coming forward.

Ian Heggie and our representatives on the Group tell me that there were several features which were discussed and agreed by the Renaissance Group, which have not been implemented. These were

1. The piece was originally planned with a brass finish—very different and much more attractive than the rusty brown finish we now see.

2. The chevron signs were to be removed so that the art work would be more visible – these chevrons are still there adding to the other clutter in the vicinity.

3. The roundabout area was to be landscaped with decent grass so that this would set off the appearance of the Armillary – nothing has happened yet and the surface of the roundabout still has only rough grass and weeds.

Armed with these frustrations, we sought a meeting with senior people at the District Council and a meeting was duly arranged in early August. We met Councillor Thirlwell, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and appropriate senior officers. We explained our frustrations, point by point and then posed the question – If, as you say, the Armillary is to remain, can you please ensure that the project is finished properly?

The SDC representatives readily accepted that the project had not been well handled. They agreed that there is a lesson from this that if projects cannot

be implemented properly, they should be delayed. SDC agreed to make arrangements for the landscaping to be finished. We were also told that the chevron signs would be removed, but have since been informed that, unfortunately, this cannot now be done because of a difficulty over funding. The chevrons would need to be replaced with some alternative signing, such as smaller signs or block paving, but, unfortunately even this appears to be beyond existing budgets.

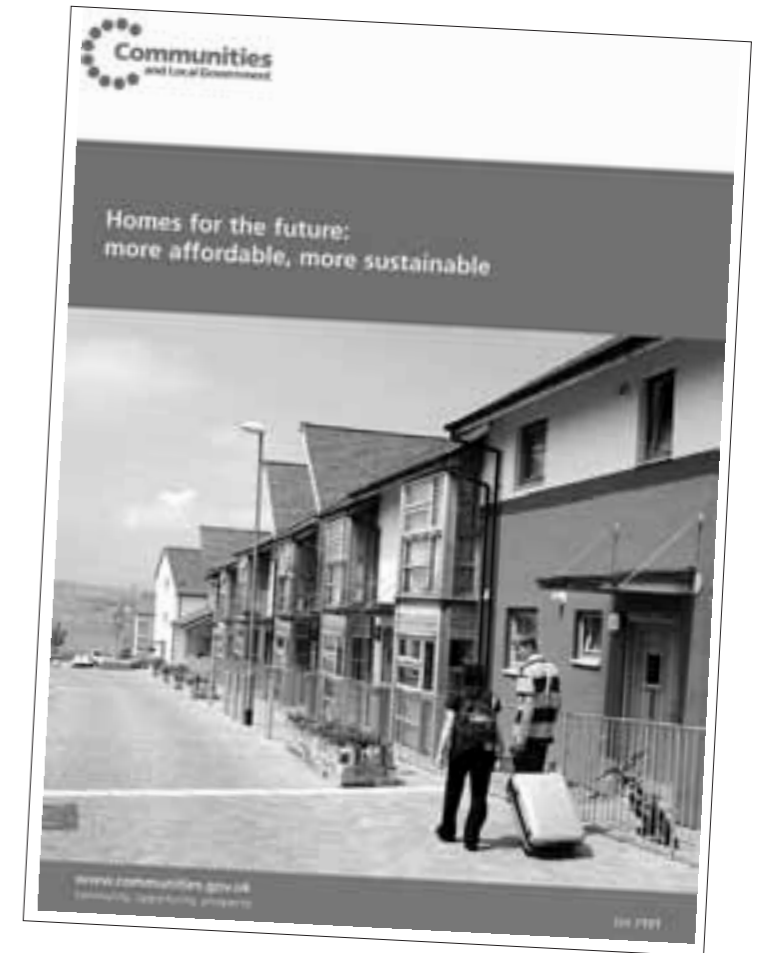
So the net result of our meeting with the District Council is that we can now look forward to the landscaping of the roundabout, but those dreadful chevron signs will remain.

I believe there is an implication here, much wider than the concerns of one piece of artwork on one of the approaches to the town. Although the Armillary was not part of the World Class Stratford Initiative, District and County were jointly involved in it, and there will, no doubt, be many joint schemes under WCS promoted by these Principal Authorities. We need assurances that these WCS schemes will not be managed in a similar way with similar criticisms following. In future, projects of this type must be planned and thought through: they must be completed properly, otherwise they should be delayed.

The credibility of the World Class Stratford Initiative could be at risk, so let us hope that the lessons from our unloved Armillary have been well and truly learned.

In its Green Paper on housing, the Government proposes that three million new homes be built in the UK over the next 13 years

Brian Wright examines why they are needed and where they will be built



An extra 5,600 homes in the district by 2020

THE pressure for new housing rears its head again

It doesn't seem so long ago that Stratford was, in common with many other areas in England, involved in a passionate debate about new housing. There was the spectre of a major development in Shottery, the size and planning of the new estates in Bridgetown and Bishopton and the constant 'infilling' throughout the town.

With the advent of the moratorium on new housing starts which came into force once Stratford District Council had fulfilled its quota that had been imposed from above everyone seemed to relax. Now, however, it has all started again.

Gordon Brown has surprised people by making house building one of the priorities of his new government and steps are being taken to increase the volume of new housing and to 'improve' planning procedures both for major projects and for mass house building. It has already been announced in July's Housing Green Paper that the new housing target is 240,000 homes a year—a 20 per cent

increase on the previous target with an overall target of three million by 2020 (there were 86,269 new housing starts in the first half of this year). There is a strong emphasis on green issues with ten eco-towns on the agenda and also on social and affordable housing—70,000 of the total will be affordable housing of which 45,000 will be social housing.

The largest regional total will be for the South East where a local Inquiry has just reached the conclusion that the overall annual regional target should be 32,000 with an overall 20-year target of 640,000. Most of the new housing is concentrated in four growth areas—the Thames Gateway, Ashford, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale. The 4,000 houses coming from the Olympic legacy in Stratford E15 are in the London element of the Thames Gateway. One of the less well-known facets of long-term planning is the emerging South Midlands city between Milton Keynes and Northampton.

Does Britain actually need more houses? Virtually all the political parties and economic gurus are agreed that we

have not been building enough houses since the mid-1980s. The situation has been made worse by people living longer, a big increase in people living on their own and a rise in population caused by increased immigration. Another factor is that virtually all the major cities in the Midlands and the North are losing population. If people could be 'persuaded' to live in the Northern cities the situation would ease considerably—but how do you persuade them? The shortage is generally viewed as the reason for the level of house prices. In order to build more quickly the Government is looking at amending the planning process to facilitate housing estates as well as major projects such as nuclear power stations. Another problem is that the British do not seem to like living in flats so this places even greater pressure on available land.

Why can't they be built elsewhere in the West Midlands? An article in the *Birmingham Post* (21.09.07) says that consultants appointed by the West Midlands Regional Assembly are

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Every action counts — doesn't it?

IN a recent poll that appeared on the BBC news on the 3rd July 2007, it was found that of more than 2000 adults questioned, 56 percent believed that scientists were still questioning the advent of climate change. Further there was a feeling amongst respondents that the stories were being exaggerated to make money! This struck me on both a personal and professional level. On a personal level I found the results of the survey depressing. The latest report of the International Panel on Climate Change couldn't have been more unequivocal: they found that it was now very likely that human activities are causing global warming. The reason why the climate change message is not penetrating as it should is not fully understood but these findings should be deeply worrying to government.

On a professional level, the results of the poll make me realise the uphill struggle on engaging with the public on this issue. My professional involvement stems from my role at the Civic Trust to manage their Every Action Counts campaign. This campaign envisages using the great networks established through voluntary section organisations such as the Civic Trust to disseminate information and encourage and enable everyday environmental actions from amongst its members. The hope is that through such campaigns more and more people will be encouraged to think about what it means to live within the planet's resources and to change nuances of behaviour towards sustainable, one planet living. No small task but the Every Action Counts campaign champions the taking of small actions by everyday folk that will ultimately have profound effects on reducing man-made green house gas emissions.

To better understand the interaction between my involvement with Every Action Counts and Civic Societies, I have been reading a selection of the 2007 newsletters from the vast array produced by the Civic Trust affiliated societies and amenity groups. I was interested to see whether civic societies and groups were thinking about climate change issues, and whether the results of the poll were reflected through Civic Society's coverage.

From the numerous newsletters that I have thus far read, two articles struck me. I picked out these to in particular as they represented the depth to which some Civic Society members are talking, writing and thinking about these issues. They also span the climate change

spectrum and encompass the issues at the root of the Every Action Counts campaign. I hope the authors won't mind if I mention them.

One was an informed and informative article which appeared in the Otter Valley Association newsletter for July 2007 written by Norman Crossland entitled 'Climate Change and Effects on the South West'. This article gave a very good summary of the scientific background, causes and effects associated with climate change. A clear and concisely informative piece of writing. The article ended with notification for members that the Association is arranging forthcoming events to raise awareness of climate change, including a screening of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth". This article clearly demonstrates one of the objectives of the Every Action Counts campaign—raising awareness.

The second was an article that appeared in The Ipswich Society Newsletter for April 2007 written by Mike Brain. The article was entitled 'A Change in the Weather' and presented the reader with the ethical questions that arise out of climate change and other associated issues. Those are the behavioural choices facing us: whether we choose to take individual responsibility, collective responsibility or chose to drop out of responsibility all together? Is this not at the very heart of civic society's debate itself? Again it is very much at the hub of Every Actions Counts. It may also go some way to explaining the results of the poll; that is the interplay between personal responsibility and denial of truth. If the truth is too difficult, is it easier to drop out of taking responsibility altogether? And if it is responsibility that we need to take, how do we go about encouraging the sceptical 56 per cent to take it?

This brings me back round to Every Action Counts. If it is about taking personal and collective responsibility, then here is a ready made tool that can be used to encourage such degrees of action. Should Civic Societies be interested in encouraging members to effect change; to take personal responsibility that leads to collective responsibility that leads to change, to lead the way? My response to this is yes, Civic Societies should be at the forefront;

part of the vanguard of change.

The three facets of Every Action Counts:

First there is a website to be found at www.everyactioncounts.org.uk. When a society signs up to the Every Action Counts website there are opportunities for publishing and networking amongst other action groups, tips and general advice and an evaluator as to how much progress your group is making in respect of reducing its carbon emissions.

There is the appointment of Community Champions. Those prepared to champion Every Action Counts and become the voice piece and conduit for change amongst their group. In order to develop engagement and delivery with the group, two days free training and a range of tools are provided.

And finally there are the five Every Action Counts themes around which change is hung. They are;

1. Energy and climate change;
2. Resource minimisation and recycling;
3. Transport and travelling wisely;
4. Caring for where you live; and
5. Ethical and local shopping.

To list just a few examples of how Every Action Counts from among Civic Societies, as previously mentioned, The Otter Valley Association is screening Al Gore's zeitgeist move! The Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association has signed up to the "Founding statement on Sustainability: which starts "Our lives, our communities and our society should be sustainable for generations to come". The Weald of Kent Protection Society prints their newsletter on 100 percent recycled paper. Hilary Porter, Chair of the Leatherhead Civic Society is a Community Champion. And we at the Civic Trust have signed up to the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change which includes recognising the need for urgent action at all levels and adopting public plans to reduce carbon emissions.

What is our society doing to combat climate change and raise awareness amongst its members? Is there an issue of civic responsibility within the Civic Society movement to be doing something? Or is it an issue for others?

Write and tell me your views and for further information regarding Every Action Counts, please contact me at the Civic Trust, Monday to Wednesday on 020 7539 7904 or e-mail me on emortlake@civictrust.org.uk.

By Emma Mortlake
of the Civic Trust



●Three states of the tramway wagon. . .Left, as it was in 1950; right how it looked in 2000 after the first rebuild and, below, its sorry state today.

Restoring the tramway wagon will cost £15,000

By Ian Heggie

MEMBERS will have noticed that the tramway wagon has "disappeared" from the eastern edge of the Bancroft Gardens.

Inquiries revealed that it had been taken into protective custody by Biffa on behalf of the District Council. It is now lying in pieces in the Biffa yard.

The first the Society got to hear about this was from Nick Billingham, an authority on the Stratford Canal and the tramway, when he wrote to ask for our support. He had already met with staff from the District Council who had stated they were "keen to have the wagon restored, but [had] a problem with the funding."

The tramway wagon lies outside the Society's normal terms of reference, but we always try to help in matters related to the town's heritage. Our first action was therefore to get permission to visit what was left of the wagon and to arrange—through the generosity of Tony Bird—to have a technical inspection carried out of what was likely to be involved in getting the wagon restored. The inspection report made depressing reading. It offered three realistic options: throw the remains away, carry out a partial restoration with modern substitutes (i.e., fake parts), or undertake a full historically accurate restoration that would cost at least £15,000.

Together with Tony Bird, I also carried out an inspection of the tramway wagon. We were stuck by the appalling state of the remains and by the lack of

security. A number of the genuine wrought iron parts—as shown on early photographs of the wagon—were missing and several of the parts added during an earlier re-build were fake. The straps to which the horses were harnessed were missing and so were the cross-chain that held down the tarpaulin. The substantial wrought iron chains that held the end doors closed had been replaced by light galvanised "jobs" and what remained of the rail fixings were virtually all fake. The wagon itself appeared to be made of planed white pine painted with a clear sealer, instead of rough-sawn oak and pitch pine.

I had done some preliminary research at the Birthplace and quickly unearthed photographs dating back to the original wagon taken in 1935. It was in poor condition and seems to have been refurbished and placed on display around 1940. The wagon survived until the 1950s when it appears to have been re-built. The re-build appears to be historically accurate, apart from minor variations and the loss of a few wrought iron parts. This was followed by the most recent re-build which was captured in a photograph from the Birthplace archives taken in 2000. This re-build bears little resemblance to the original 1935 model. Since our viewing of the remains, I have also visited the National Railway Museum, in York, to study the only other tramway wagon rescued from the Stratford and Moreton Tramway.

After a great deal of behind the scenes



lobbying, a meeting was arranged between myself, Tony Bird, Tony Brooker (all active members of the Society) and District Council staff. The meeting resolved that: (i) a contractor would be invited to collect the remains of the tramway wagon and would remove them to secure storage; (ii) the wagon would be stripped down and all metal parts would be sorted into those that are historically accurate, those that are fake and those that are missing; (iii) working drawings would be prepared on the basis of the photographic record and the other surviving wagon in York (I have done this and the drawings are almost complete); (iv) the Council would prepare bid documents, together with an estimate of the likely cost of accurately re-building the wagon and re-instating it on the old tramway; and (v) the Council would assemble the funding required to undertake the above tasks. The whole operation will be supervised by a Technical Committee that would include myself, Nick Billingham, Miles McNair and others. We hope that the above work will be carried out as soon as possible.

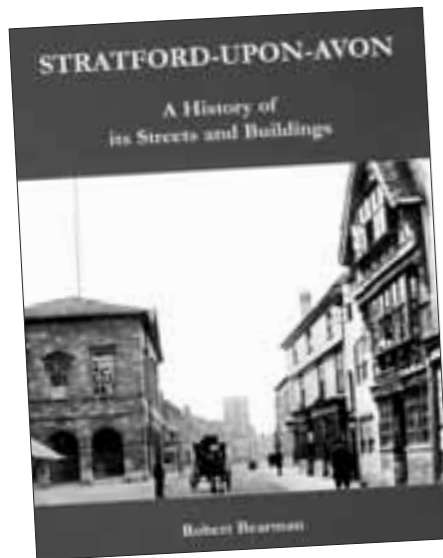
DIARY DATES

Between Two Funerals: The Vicar of Holy Trinity, the Rev Martin Gorick, spent a fruitful sabbatical researching into the history of his church. Thomas Balsall died in 1492 and was buried in the brand new chancel of Holy Trinity at the height of Mediaeval Catholicism. By the time Shakespeare was buried in 1616 it was a post-reformation world and the chancel had been wrecked. Don't miss Martin Gorick's lecture, entitled 'Between Two Funerals,' on Monday, 12th November, at 7.45pm at the Falcon Hotel.

Christmas Carols: Our annual Christmas Carols Party has outgrown its Nash House venue and this year, on Wednesday, 5th December, as you will see on the enclosed application form from Joan Burgess, we are expanding into the Wolfson Hall at the Shakespeare Centre. This will allow us to sit more informally, cabaret style, while enjoying our wine and mince pies. Do let Joan Burgess have your application forms and let us enjoy the new surroundings. Since this event began we have gathered in Harvard House, the Town Hall, The Shakespeare Institute and more recently at Nash's House.

Christmas Lunch: You already have the application form for the Christmas Lunch on 9th December. Reply to Neville Usher by 25th November. Merry Christmas everybody.

PUBLICATIONS



HAVE you got your copy of Robert Bearman's new book yet? After the very successful launch at the first Society meeting of the season his revised *Stratford-upon-Avon — A History of its Streets and Buildings* has been selling well. Available at Waterstones and the Tourist Information Office, at £7. Members can buy the book at the reduced price of £5, plus 70p postage and packing. Send a cheque, payable to the Stratford Society, to the Hon Secretary, Beryl Downing, at 5 College Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6BN.



●Better by design. . .Left, an example of good practice in shopfront design in Stratford. Right, something to be avoided in the future.

Streetscapes in historic towns: we're getting there!

Report by Paul Ogden

THE May 2007 newsletter of the English Historic Towns Forum (EHTF) noted that the state of the streetscape in historic towns is at last beginning to rise up the agendas of politicians and practitioners.

After many years of projects and campaigns, EHTF together with other organisations, continues to pursue the topic—looking at traffic management, the public realm and the relationship between them. A more attractive streetscape not only enhances the historic built environment, there is a growing evidence which suggests that investment in the public realm can add real value by contributing to regeneration and sustainability.

A workshop was held in January, bringing together experts in the field to identify the guidance already available and what more might be expected by EHTF members to help them achieve improvements in streetscape management. A conference was planned

for 5th July to disseminate this information and research. It was held in Leicester where an ambitious City Centre Public Realm Strategy is in place, looking at all aspects of the City regeneration through coordinated improvements to the public realm. The key themes are high quality and simplicity—thereby accommodating the diverse population of the City, reducing maintenance costs and ensuring durability—both physically and strategically. The conference was designed to bring together CABE, English Heritage ('Streets for All'), HEART, and the recently published 'Manual for Streets' (see below) to look at both theory and practice, with a view to compiling further practical guidance for EHTF members.

I was able to attend on behalf of World Class Stratford and enjoyed a very

practical day, which included an opportunity to see changes made to Leicester's public realm. The Forum was shown good and bad practice from a number of towns and cities.

Key points made during the day, regarding public realm, were as follows:

- Improvements needed public investment 'up front', to generate private sector confidence before they would invest. Improvements could be directly related to subsequent increases in commercial property value hence it was possible to prove the value of investment to Public Sector 'accountants'.

- It is vital to have an overall strategic approach (like we now have with the Urban Design Framework for Stratford-upon-Avon).

- The importance of lighting as part of any design (we already have an emerging lighting strategy for Stratford town centre).

- Importance of selecting the correct

materials, ensuring quality of workmanship, and subsequent maintenance.

Members may recall that the society, together with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, raised funds and appointed Colin Davis* Associates to undertake a pilot streetscape study in High Street. The report was published in April 2005 and the results were shared with interested parties at an event in the town hall and Colin Davis

also spoke to members at one of our regular programme meetings. The study's recommendations were widely supported, but we are still waiting for them to be implemented. We are hoping that the World Class Stratford project will fund a way of creating a fund to grant-aid High Street shops to encourage them to go ahead and implement the report's recommendations.

Watch this space. . .again!

Streets are places too. ■ ■ ■ *By Colin Davis

'MANUAL for Streets' is a fresh approach. There is no new legislation, but it is not officially recognised that streets are places too. They have a function to facilitate movement, but they are also places where people live.

An important existing fact is emphasised. Apart from trunk roads, it is highway authorities, not the Government that set design standards for highways.

There is a common but mistaken

belief that official advice in various official manuals concerning designs for traffic have the force of legislation, and that not to comply would expose an authority to risks of safety and liability.

The 'Manual for Streets' clearly states that this is not true. The few cases that have reached court have been dismissed with the House of Lords restating the legal situation that drivers must take the road as they find it and are responsible for their own safety and the safety of

others. Safety audits are only one of the tests of a good design. They may be overruled if the reasons for a final design decision is recorded in writing.

A street is defined as all the space between the back edges of the pavements, that is the road and pavement or, as highway engineers call them, the carriageway and the footway.

Streets have a dual function, that of place and movement. Place includes local historic and geographic context,

community issues and concern for vulnerable people. Movement is the recognition of the role of a street within the wider system.

The greatest design challenges occur at locations where both place and movement are important, such as high streets, village and local neighbourhood centres and of course historic towns.

●See your programme card for 14th April 2008—Sarah Gaventa's talk 'The Joy of Streets.'

World Heritage Site status: let's go for it

IAN PROSSER and I attended a meeting recently with representatives of other key local organisations to review Stratford's aspiration to secure World Heritage Site (WHS) status. Everyone agreed we should take action now to pursue this goal, which should be seen as a natural corollary of the World Class Stratford initiative. However, it's clear the process is challenging, and the outcome uncertain.

There's already a history to this issue. Back in the late 1990s I was involved in a campaign to address the exclusion of 'Shakespeare's Stratford' from the then UK Government's draft 'Tentative List of Future Nominations' for WHS status. We were successful and Stratford was

By Roger Pringle

included in the final list, along with 24 other prospective nominations. Some of these have since been designated as a WHS, such as Kew Gardens, Liverpool Commercial Centre/Waterfront, and the Cornish Mining Industry. They joined nearly twenty existing UK sites, including Stonehenge, Blenheim, Bath, Ironbridge Gorge and historic Edinburgh.

To achieve WHS status the place or building in question has to be of 'outstanding universal value' and to meet criteria relating to authenticity and integrity. The process is overseen by UNESCO, advised by international bodies. Individual governments can submit one application per year. In the UK the Department of Culture, Media and Sport evaluates applications with external assistance, particularly from English Heritage or its sister organisations.

The pressure is on if Stratford wishes to be a serious contender for joining this special 'club'. There is a queue of other UK applicants, some of whom are well advanced with their submissions. The latter are drawn up in response to lengthy procedural requirements such as producing a 'Justification for Inscription', boundary maps, management plans, etc. At the recent meeting it was agreed the preparation of Stratford's case should involve some specialist consultancy and funds will be sought.

Why try for WHS status? Essentially it's a prestigious accolade: it doesn't bring funding, nor has it statutory planning force. What it would do is to strongly reinforce Stratford's reputation as one of the world's premier cultural places and improve our position in the forefront of international tourism. There's evidence that locations gaining the status have benefited considerably in terms of community pride and care of their environment, as well as attracting grants and investment, and improving their marketing position. Let's go for it, with the Society in support.