



The Stratford-upon-Avon Society

Trustee Report and Accounts for the Year ending 31st December 2023

MARCH 18, 2024
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON-SOCIETY
Registered Charity No: 251182

**THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON SOCIETY
REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 251182**

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**THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON SOCIETY
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President	Dr Kevin Bond
Vice Presidents	Professor Ian Heggie Dr Roger Pringle
Chairman	Jann Tracy
Vice Chairman	Dr Lindsay MacDonald
General Committee (Trustees)	Jonathan Devereux (Treasurer) John Scampion CBE Margaret Cund (Planning) Ian Fradgley (Membership) Steve Turner (Planning) Helen Elliott (Publicity) Dr Robert Bearman MBE (Civic) Dr Diana Owen OBE (Environment) Ian Prosser (Civic)
Note	
Charity Number	251182
Hon Secretary	<i>Vacant</i>
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc Market Cross Stratford-upon-Avon Warwickshire CV37 0EA
Independent Examiner	Wende A Hubbard FCCA Burgis & Bullock 8 Elm Court, Arden Street Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6PA

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Trustees report for the year ended 31st December 2023

The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Constitution, Objects and Policies

The Society is constituted by Trust Deed dated 19th January 1966 and is registered with the Charity Commission, Registration Number 251182.

Appointment of Trustees is governed by the constitution of the Charity. The Board of Trustees to fill vacancies arising through resignation or death of an existing Trustee.

The Trustees comprise the officers of the Stratford-upon-Avon Society and are responsible for managing the business of the society according to Charity Law.

The Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public. The Charity is established for the public benefit which through its objects and principal activity is within the area of Stratford-upon-Avon and its surroundings

- To promote high standards of planning and architecture;
- To educate and stimulate public interest in the geography, history, natural history, and architecture of the area;
- To encourage the preservation, protection, development, and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area The society will through its general committee;
 - Consult and work with the local planning authority, planning committees and all other statutory authorities, educational institutions, voluntary organizations, charities and persons having similar aims to the society;
 - Pursue these aims through meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of education, publicity, and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature
 - Raise funds for the furtherance of charitable objects through contributions from person or persons by way of subscription, donation, or other contribution.

Annual Review

Chair's Report for 2023

The year 2023 saw a variety of speakers at the Society's monthly meetings on topics as diverse as Americans, Freemasonry and Swans all visiting or being a part of the town; as to the more substantial, there were talks on the Guild Chapel, KES and Shakespeare's statue, plus we learned about the work of a tourist guide and how to fictionalise historic Stratford; all this and a visit to the gardens at Clifford Manor.

The annual Shakespeare Birthday Parade did not have a contingent from the Society in 2023, an omission which will be made good in 2024.

This year saw the Society reach out to others in the area, such as the Shakespeare Club, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Town Trust for reciprocal advertising of events. This will be continued and expanded in 2024.

Last, but by no means least, we had a very successful evening trying to answer the fiendish questions set by Margaret Cund for the Christmas Quiz night. Everyone present appeared to enjoy themselves, and I think that members not having to pay to participate is something that should become a tradition.

Membership is growing and thanks to all the committee members who continue to keep the Society in the public eye.

During 2024 we have a full set of speakers and the Corelli Centenary to look forward to.

Jann Tracy

Chair

February 2024



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Publicity Officer Report for 2023

During 2023 I have attended the Society's meetings and prepared 15 reports on meetings and events for the Herald, and for the Facebook Page, via John Freeland, who is its administrator.

As I said last year, I do not have accurate statistics about the effect of this publicity, but we have some evidence from people that they have been to meetings and joined the Society as a result of reading the articles.

It would be helpful to the Society if we could routinely ask visitors and new members about how they learned about the Society. The question could be asked on the membership application form.

My reports of meetings are being sent by e-mail by John Freeland to the membership, which is helpful to those who did not come to the meetings or as a reminder for those who did.

Helen Elliott, Publicity Officer
16 February 2024

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Planning Report

In 2023, the most prominent planning application related to the Debenhams site. The SDC gave Consent with Conditions for some amendments to the Listed Building Consent which had already been granted for demolition of the store and construction of a hotel. At the earlier stage, the Stratford Society had submitted strong objections to the proposal, but these subsequent changes were minor and, while we did not object, we emphasised the importance of retaining existing historical fabric. The planned date for demolition at the end of 2023 has now passed, but a new date has yet to be announced.

The Society did, however, raise objections to two new applications, on neither of which a decision has yet been taken. The first of these seeks Outline Planning Consent for housing on the site of Chutney's Orchard, Bordon Hill. We argued that development of this site was not part of the Council's Core Strategy, would be detrimental to vistas to and from Shottery and Stratford, and would add further to traffic congestion along Evesham Road.

The second application relates to the proposal for construction of an apartment block in Windsor Street on the site of the former Stratford Picture House. The Society submitted objections relating to the scale of the proposed building, which would not enhance the character and quality of the area and would be adjacent to the proposed Gateway Project. Here we were in good company with a number of heritage organisations which took the same line as the Stratford Society.

In the case of a number of applications of concern to the Stratford Society dating from 2022, consultation on these closed many months ago but, to date, have not come before the SDC's Planning Committee. We shall continue to watch closely for any developments.

Margret Cund

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The Town Centre Report

As last year, the Society's interest in the town centre has focused on the work of the Strategic Partnership and on the town's historic buildings.

The Strategic Partnership is an association of the main interests in the town, business, local government and charities. Its purpose is to identify priorities and secure support for them from each of the sponsoring organisations. It is intended to give a common sense of purpose for the town which has been conspicuously lacking for many years. This year, the Partnership has been working on a vision and a set of strategic priorities for the town centre. Amongst them are likely to be projects already familiar, as for example, the Gateway project and the World Shakespeare Centre on which there was consultation recently; also, the Bridge Street /High Street project, which, as reported last year, has not received the hoped for Government funding. Beyond this, there are proposals for building the town centre economy by encouraging more residential use, and boosting the evening activity as well as proposals for building, a broader cultural focus and facilities for youth.

The draft plan will be finalised shortly and then referred to the local authorities for them to support its contents. It will then go for public consultation during which I expect to be able to bring it to the Society for full examination and response.

The District Council have indicated they will aim to introduce the High Street part of the Bridge St/High Street scheme during the year though its precise timing will need to be co-ordinated with progress on the Debenhams Hotel re-building also expected to begin this year. I understand the County Council will shortly begin a temporary closure to research and test the traffic implications of a full-time closure.

During the year the General Committee authorised the re-establishment of a small group to consider and make recommendations on how to project further the heritage of the town as expressed through its historic buildings. Its membership so far is drawn from the Committee with two external members. It has immediately concentrated on the historic spine of the town and continuation of the plaques scheme. Its recommendation is that the aim should be for a further 8 plaques along the spine which would in effect conclude the first phase of the scheme along the spine. Thereafter, the focus could turn to buildings in other parts of the town or indeed to other ways of recognising and enhancing our historic buildings heritage.

The Plaques Scheme:

Funding for the 8 plaques is proposed to be achieved through contributions from the owners of the buildings with a contribution from the Society's reserve funds but only where other funding would be unachievable. This was the approach taken in the later stages of the completed parts of the scheme. And we are looking at other ways of securing funding from Government or publicly available sources try to secure a sound basis for future initiatives.

John Scampion February 2024

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Stratfire Project Report.

The Society was awarded a grant for a four-year project to date through dendrochronology selected buildings along the Historic Spine thought to have been affected by the fires of 1594/5 and 1614. Associated volunteer research led by Bob Bearman into buildings and families in occupation at that time will seek to explore the impact of these fires on individuals and the economy of Stratford upon Avon. The grant awarded totalled £40,625 predominantly funds building archaeologists providing the detailed targeting for the Historic England appointed dendrochronologist to undertake sampling. In the year funding was increased by £480 to allow for public engagement giving a total grant of £41,105.

Project income and expenditure.

Grant spend is determined by availability of building archaeologists, access negotiated with multiple stakeholders, but also the feedback loop from Historic England's work funded from their budget for dendrochronological sampling and subsequent lab based dating. Both ends of the process have proved challenging and have impacted the achievable spend in the year, although not the input from the voluntary research aspect of the project which has continued apace. That too is not able to complete until dating is successfully achieved through Historic England's contribution to the project. It is for Historic England to decide when, from their budget to apply more expensive dating techniques given the quality of Oak samples achieved, or the hard to date Elm and Ash revealed in individual buildings.

Dendrochronology Progress

21 Chapel Street – Chaucer's Head Bookshop sampled in July 2022, during 2023 the research and final report reached an interim stage pending any decision by Historic England to apply more expensive dating techniques.

36 High Street (Ecco Shoes) The final report was completed in 2023 and the scientific dating report published by Historic England.

22 Chapel Street – Nash's House was surveyed on 24 August and sampled on 17 October 2022. Finalisation awaits Historic England's scientific data report.

25 High Street – Garrick Inn also surveyed on 24 August and sampled on 18 October 2022. With interim dendrochronology results in February 2023 an interim scientific data report has been released by Historic England, meaning draft documented histories have been prepared pending any further scientific dating.

14-19 Chapel Street – Shakespeare Hotel Sampling took place in January 2023, with interim dendrochronology reports in March. Documented histories have been prepared but the scientific data report remained at interim stage.

Tudor House 23-24 High Street was surveyed and sampled in May 2023. Scientific dating reports are awaited at the close of the year which will enable completion of historic building and research reports.

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Harvard House, 26 High Street was surveyed during the year in May to supplement existing reports Sampling is planned for early 2024.

Hoorays 27/28 High Street was surveyed in July and sampled in September 2023. Results of scientific dating are awaited at the close of the year. The Antique Centre forming the back range of 28 was also surveyed.

Hathaway Tea Rooms 19/20 High Street was surveyed in August 2023. Sampling awaits access to 21 High Street for surveying 19-21 having been built as one.

Documentary histories

Robert Bearman, assisted by a volunteer team, has completed documentary histories of most of the buildings listed above. In addition, work has been carried out on 6 buildings (**12 Chapel & 1 Ely St, 13 Chapel St, 22 High St, 32 High St, 33-4 High St and 35 High St**) where no trace of the 16th or 17th century building remains through subsequent demolition. One of the project outcomes is to identify *all* sites in High St and Chapel St affected by the fire in order to build up a more rounded picture, reflecting the fact that while the project focused on 20 named addresses, around 50 buildings in total may be of interest to the project objectives.

Communications

Articles on the project appeared in the Stratford Herald on 12th May and 28th September. In October a Blog post examined the impact of the fires and in December with publication of the 36 High Street results a further blog and article was written. A communications review led to a complete restructuring of the Societies website pages devoted to the project. The society's web site is updated with the latest draft and finalised reports as the project progresses.

<https://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk/stratfire>

[Houses in High Street \(stratfordsociety.co.uk\)](https://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk/houses-in-high-street)

[Houses in Chapel Street \(stratfordsociety.co.uk\)](https://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk/houses-in-chapel-street)

Steering Group

Four steering group meetings have been held updating stakeholders. Challenges remain in negotiating access and availability of team members matching with access slots. Historic England are aware of the challenges and used to the need to slip budget provision between financial years given this is a project with multiple stakeholders to consider for each building who have no obligation to participate.

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Stratford Town Transport Group Report

The Town Transport Group (TTG) represents various Stratford interest groups such as, Accessible Stratford, Climate Action, Cycle Forum, Neighbourhood Plan, Strategic Partnership, Stratforward, Town and District and County Councillors, and the Stratford Society. Meetings take place once a month, at present every fourth month at the Town Hall and three months via Zoom.

Topics recently discussed include proposed changes to High Street, a sustainable parking strategy, the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, and current and proposed roadworks. Updates are given to the TTG by the relevant councillors at various times.

The good news is that High Street will be closed to transport later this year (2024 - actual date not yet forthcoming), the bad news is that this will likely coincide with the demolition of the Debenham building. The Stratford Society strongly supported this option. Pedestrianisation of Bridge Street has been put on hold for the foreseeable future.

The updating of Birmingham Road is an ongoing saga as progress is extremely slow. The new roundabout on Evesham Road caused many hold-ups to traffic flow last year, and it remains to be seen whether the rest of the through road for Shottery is actually connected at both ends (at present it is accessible at one end only).

Very often at the beginning of a scheme reports are made to the TTG that are not yet in the public domain, so cannot be disseminated. As the County Council and Highways England are the organisations that actually do things to the road system there seems at times a disconnect between what is expressed in meetings and what can actually be achieved.

When appropriate the TTG expresses doubts and/or frustrations with proposed and outstanding issues. As a transport group buses, trains and cycles are of course included in the remit and are frequently discussed – as. For example, the prolonged closure of the ticket office at the railway station.

Although meetings often contain nothing of immediate interest to the Stratford Society, I think that as a Civic and Historical interest group we should still be represented here.

Jann Tracy
Society rep at TTG
February 2024

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Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the Charity's Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or*
- 2. The accounts did not accord with those records.*

I have no concerns and have come across no other matter in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

WA Hubbard

*Wende A Hubbard FCCA
Burgis & Bullock
8 Elm Court
Arden Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6PA*

18th March 2024

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Financial Report for 2023

Bank position at: 31 December 2023.

Deposit Account	£19,884.68	Current Account	£ 124.63	£20,009.31
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Receipts for the year of £10,227 (£16,425) included £6,536 (£11,900) for restricted funds and £3,691 (£4,525) from general activities.

Amounts held for **Plaques** have been increased to provide for a further six where the Society will underwrite up to half the cost - £3,000 extra in total. Two plaques from the initial batch are awaiting installation, one more is being redesigned. Dates from dendrochronology are also key. A further two plaques making a total of eight were identified for designation after the year end bringing the designation to £4,000 in 2024.

The second payment for the **dendrochronology** project, £5,480, was received, funds can only be spent on the cost plan agreed with HISTORIC ENGLAND to deliver the project. Within the year £4,242 was spent on the project, leaving £6,749 restricted reserves. The four-year project has a grant approval totaling £41,105 for the period to September 2025. The pace of delivery is complex with a wide range of stakeholders for each building needing to agree access. The budget will need to be slipped, something Historic England anticipates.

In January 2023 a £50 donation to the **Marie Corelli Fund** was received. As we enter the centenary year there is a £596 balance of excess donations available for planned events, for which further funds will need to be set aside and grant applications made in early 2024.

The **Historic Spine** leaflet reprinted at a cost of £575 in December 2022, amounted to £360 sales within the year - £480 by January 2024 – we would expect sales of at least £360 in 2024.

Gift aid received in 2022 - £1,109 covered three years. The £377 received in 2023 relates solely to members opting to gift aid donations made within the calendar year.

Membership receipts before gift aid exceeded 2022, totaling £2,422 (£2418) and the position in January 2024 indicates expected renewals will mean a slight increase in the year ahead. The General Committee has discussed plans to further promote membership to improve on that.

Reserves net

Trustees will further review the level of reserves appropriate in the year ahead. Budgeting for the Corelli centenary project reveals a likely call on the general reserves, even if a grant supporting the project can be secured. Events will take place in May 2024.

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	£
Cash Position @ 31st December2023	20,009
Held for Stratfire	6,749
Held for Corelli Fund	596
Held for Plaques	2,006
Restricted reserves	9,351
Designated for Plaques	5,050
General reserves	5,608
Total Reserves	20,009

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Receipts and Payments Account for year ending - 31 December 2023

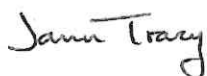
	<i>Restricted Unrestricted</i>		2023	2022
			Total	
		£	£	£
RECEIPTS		£	£	£
Subscriptions		2,422	2,422	2,418
Stratfire	5,480		5,480	10,000
Plaques	1,006		1,006	1,900
Corelli Fund	50		50	-
Gift Aid		377	377	1,109
Sales - misc		360	360	645
Visits & attendance		345	345	335
Bank Interest		187	187	18
Total Receipts	6,536	3,691	10,227	16,425
PAYMENTS		£	£	£
Governance & admin				
Insurance		395	395	395
AGM		75	75	75
Inspection		312	312	288
Committee Meeting expenses		151	151	97
commission and charges		9	9	10
	-	942	942	865
Talks, Presentations and communications				
Zoom Fees		144	144	144
Promotion		40	40	159
Website		300	300	300
Members meeting expenses		736	736	150
	-	1,220	1,220	753
Events and Visits				
2022 Events		-	-	700
Clifford Manor		150	150	
Plaque event		76	76	
Shakespeare's Return		238	238	
Christmas Party		322	322	417
	-	786	786	1,117
Projects				
Stratfire	4,242		4,242	4,489
Pavement plaques	50	574	624	4,250
Historic Spine	-	-	-	575
	4,292	574	4,866	9,314
Total Payments	4,292	3,522	7,814	12,049
Net of (Payments)/ Receipts	2,244	169	2,413	4,376
Funds at 31st December 2022	6,561	11,035	17,596	13,220
Funds at 31st December 2023	8,805	11,204	20,009	17,596

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Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31st December 2023

	<i>2023</i>		<i>2022</i>
ASSETS - Cash funds	£		£
Barclays Bank - Current Account	124		2,509
Barclays Bank - Deposit Account	19,885		15,087
Total Cash	<u>20,009</u>		<u>17,596</u>
Creditors	-		-
Total assets	<u>20,009</u>		<u>17,596</u>
RESERVES		<i>Restricted Unrestricted</i>	
			<i>2023 2022</i>
			<i>£ £</i>
Stratfire	6,749		6,749 5511
Plaques Donations	2,006		2,006 1,050
Plaques Designated		5,050	5,050 2,050
Marie Corelli Fund	596		596 546
General Reserve		5,608	5,608 8,439
Reserves at 31 December 2023	<u>9,351</u>	<u>10,658</u>	<u>20,009 17,596</u>

Approved by the Board on 18 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Jann Tracy

Chair of Trustees



Jonathan Devereux

Honorary Treasurer and Trustee