



VECS Newsletter Spring 2018



David Way

It was with great sadness we learnt that David Way died on 17th March. David had been a founder member of the Civic Society, a past Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Newsletter Editor for many years. He was in many ways the mainstay of the Society over a long period. Our thoughts go to his daughter Caroline. We will carry a special article on David in our next Newsletter.

The AGM – 7:30pm, Tuesday 10th April, Egwins Club – High Street Evesham

The formal notice of the AGM is enclosed with this newsletter. Please note that it will be held at the Egwins Club as advertised in our printed events programme. Parking is available in Albert Road, the High Street and behind the club.

After the completion of the formal business, we will hear a short talk by Jenny Davis, Wychavon Arts Officer on the Evesham Enlighten Project.

Your Society Officers and Committee

We understand that most of the Committee are prepared to carry on, but John Goodwin is stepping down after three years as a hard working Hon. Secretary. We are looking for a new Secretary and new Committee members. **PLEASE consider standing.** John will be very happy to hear from you and help with the nomination process.

Your Subscription is Now Due

Adrian Peake reminds us that our subscription year starts on 1st March. There is now a joint or family membership set at £15, whilst the individual membership continues at £10. We also are offering the option of paying by Standing Order. Adrian will be at the AGM and will be pleased to accept cheques or standing order forms. No cash please unless it is impossible for you to pay in any other way.

Membership

We welcome all the new members who have joined us this year. We could do with more members to strengthen our case when we make representations on your behalf. Do ask your friends to join us.

‘#Love Evesham’— 14th April 2018

The Civic Society will be well represented in this event in the Market Place. There will a stand featuring our involvement with VECTA and the Town Council in the project to improve the visual appearance of our historic buildings in the Town Centre. In addition the Wolff Wahle Evesham Photographs, taken in the 1970s will be on show together with something to tell us about the remarkable man who took the photographs.



What is Sue up to.....?

Read all about it in the next issue of the **Vale Magazine!**

One good thing about snow is that it hides all the litter. It also meant the scheduled Litter Pick for 3rd March was cancelled.

However, the **Great Evesham Spring Clean**, is now on:

**Saturday 24th March.
Meet at 11:00am in the Market Place**

That Was the Year That Was.....Annual Report by John Goodwin, Hon. Secretary

The 1962/63 TV programme, upon which our heading is based, was for just one week, but our concerns have been more long term during 2017 /2018.

At our last AGM we managed to persuade **Jim Powell** to carry on as Chairman for another year and Jill Haycock as Vice Chair. Colin Tether stood down because of his other commitments, in particular his election to Evesham Town Council where he continues with his usual enthusiasm trying to make a difference. We did however elect two new members to the Committee, **Ian & Pat Stanton**, they have been a breath of fresh air, injecting much needed vigour into the many aspects of business undertaken on behalf of the Society. Otherwise the Committee remained unchanged.

Chairman Jim Powell has throughout the year given the committee the benefit of his infrastructure experience, local history and knowledge based on many years working within the Evesham and Wychavon Local Authority. His recent letter to the journal, which also appeared as a headline piece, highlighted the pollution caused by recent flooding on the riverside meadows and play areas and he continually tries to get answers from the NRA, Severn Trent and Wychavon. It is an issue we all would like to see resolved and we know that Jim will do everything possible to achieve this.

Jim has been ably supported by **Jill Haycock**. She has been a committee member for many years and vice Chair to David Way and Colin Tether. She makes every effort to be involved in as many of our events as possible and assists Sue Campbell with some programme items and trips. She is also on the committee of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group. Jill has represented VECS on the panel of the Worcestershire Architectural Awards. She has also been responsible for the distribution of Newsletters and emails advising members of forthcoming events.

Despite the sad loss of his wife Pat, **Brian Chilver** has managed to keep his enthusiasm for his association with VECS. He is one of the longest serving committee members and his vast experience has been invaluable. In conjunction with Richard Thomson they carried out a comprehensive survey of Evesham's Conservation Area and its other important buildings. Brian wrote a report with recommendations and lobbied the Town Council and Wychavon on its findings. Subsequently in conjunction with VECTA and the Town Council, he has aimed to continue this awareness with his Pride in Evesham initiative. Pat Stanton and Richard Thomson are now representing VECS at these monthly meetings.



As previously mentioned **Richard Thomson** has been involved in several projects and headed up our litter picking throughout the year in conjunction with the Town Council. Richard is also involved with our information publications and distribution to the participating business owners, who kindly assist by offering them for sale. As an ex town planner his experience is invaluable when applications require more expert analysis and he is a valued contributor to our Newsletters.

Sue Campbell is another long serving committee member and besides her grand-parenting duties manages to put together an excellent programme of speakers and events every year. This year is no exception so keep an eye on your programme for forthcoming events as your support is always needed and it gives us all a chance to "catch up". She is the Professional Researcher attached to the Hive in Worcester, so any historical, Simon De Montfort or Battle queries Sue is able to answer with authority. She is also being drawn into the battle enactment that is proposed for August 2018, so there may be some VECS involvement there.

The landscaping and enhancement of the drinking fountain off St Peter's roundabout Bengeworth project was carried forward from last year. **Cefn Blundell** look over from Colin Tether the unenviable task of dealing with the public utilities and local authorities in trying to progress the projectit is still ongoing with the drinking trough to be moved from the Almonry and the landscaping scheme completed.

Adrian Peake has worked quietly behind the scenes keeping our finances in good order; his previous experience with committees helping to keep us older members in touch with the outside world. Love it or hate it, we are all affected by EU Directives and a recent proposal is that we should adopt General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) directive coming into force in June 2018. It will involve us in advising all our members that they have the right to be forgotten!! It is a regulation that requires businesses and organisations to protect the personal data and privacy of EU citizens for transactions that occur within EU member states. He has advised us that this will affect us and our membership and will mean altering the way we gather and store personal information and this will affect our future application/membership forms. Subscriptions are due now so we will have to advise members later of our obligations and member's rights.....watch this space and thanks Adrian for guidance.

Our Husband and Wife team **Pat & Ian Stanton** have got off to a flying start and are supportive of all the VECS activities. Even before joining the Society and the committee they had tackled BT to the top of the executive tree to get the premises in Abbey Road tidied up and with some success. Now they peruse the planning applications for unwelcome or inappropriate development or proposals. Both being local to the area they often have background knowledge and a great interest in the Vale that is beneficial when considering local issues. Pat has taken over the role of Membership Secretary so with subs due you will be hearing more from her in the next few weeks. Ian has put together our recent flier, trying to get more new members and he is involved now with sourcing all our printing and copying requirements. He has been raising the issue of Houses of Multiple Occupancy, this is where a house is purchased then altered into a series of one or two roomed flats. His and therefore VECS concerns are about the necessary controls being put in place to make sure that local authority requirements are being met. In short they are keeping us on our toes and making sure we respond where needed to local issues and providing backup where required (thanks Pat for doing the minutes when I'm away).

Other items of note during the year

We have been involved in the erection of an information board on the site of the old St Peter's Church Yard. Colin Tether carried on with the information board but this time as Councillor Tether and this project is now completed with an unveiling on March 3rd 2018. There will be an article in the Vale Magazine about the history of the site and the project initiated by Dr. Sue Ablett in 2016.



**The High Street Cattle Trough and (once) a drinking fountain.
Is it a temporary location? Possibly not.**

There is renewed interest in the provision of public drinking fountains as an alternative to single use plastic bottles. We think this particular trough is rather beyond restoration back to its original function.. Rest in peace!

A drinking trough was discovered on the site of the New Fire Station. We supported Colin Tether in his attempt to get it repositioned in the Town, our favoured position being near its original location on the northern corner of Avon Street and High Street. We attended two meetings seeking permission from the Town Council but both attempts were rejected. In the intervening time Ashleigh Jayes, from The Almonry museum, arranged for it to be moved to its "temporary" location in front of the Almonry and there it remains.

We have had some planning applications to consider, two were major applications which had been flying round the coup for over 2 years, they eventually came home to roost. The most contentious was Boat Lane, Hallam Land's application on behalf of Rudge Estates for initially 360 dwellings, later reduced to 220 houses, a care home and office accommodation. We had originally raised objections and these were reiterated when the revised scheme was submitted. There were seven organisations and individuals that wished to speak at the meeting but with only 3 minutes allowed for all, it fell to David Ashley to give a distillation of objections within the time allowed. John Smith also was allowed a further minute to add his objections. Several District Councillors and Evesham Mayor Cllr Richard Jones were allowed to speak before the vote was taken. After guidance from the Chair of the Planning Committee, it was agreed to defer approval pending further discussion on the volume of development, the chairman pointed out a refusal opens the way to an appeal process which Wychavon cannot afford to fight and risk the costs involved. It has been rumoured that this application may be reduced to just the 220 houses.

Bloor Homes application was for 460 homes, the scheme was altered by the intervention of Highways England refusing access on to the A46 / Football Club roundabout. A revised scheme was submitted and again objected to by VECS, the Town Council and various individuals, but there was not the support Abbey Road had for lobbying and for objections to be considered, so the application was approved. This development has only one designated access and one narrow emergency access; it does cross through another development of 47 houses with an access however. This is a huge development and will be phased over many years, its impact on Evesham will be considerable.

Two proposals were located within the designated battlefield site and one, a new house, was refused and another, an extension, approved after a reduction in its size.

KFC at The Valley, was approved and we had objected on the grounds that it was part of an ad hoc development without an overall scheme and that it made no allowance for foot or cycle traffic from the Town. Its approval only goes to reinforce the opinion that it is being deliberately separated from Evesham, becoming an A46 services and "out of town" shopping area only accessible by car. It is now called the Valley and not Evesham Country Park and has lost its original concept, to match farm buildings, becoming something akin to an industrial park.

Twice a year we are invited by Head of Housing and Planning Services to attend Wychavon Civic Societies Liaison meeting. All civic societies in the Wychavon area are invited to attend but we are not allowed to raise planning issues. Our list of questions is always considerably reduced by the time we receive the meeting's agenda but such detail would take too much space for this report. Our next meeting is in June 2018.

The Long awaited Traffic Survey is out!! Has anyone seen it or been invited for consultation, or has it passed beyond that stage and a decision reached to do nothing as there is nothing to be done? Richard Thomson wrote an article in an earlier edition of our Newsletter when he said that new towns are the answer rather than altering and tacking development and infrastructure onto already overstretched conurbations.



Comment by Colin Tether

Thanks to Chris Madden for the cartoon. I am not sure the Traffic Survey is 'out'. The last I heard is that WCC are appointing an independent consultant to decide which options to test. Watch this space if you are the type of person who likes to watch paint dry.

The late Wolff Wahle was a long serving member of the Civic Society and loved Evesham. His daughter, Christine, now lives in Germany and recently gave VECS 230 photographs taken by Wolff at various times during his life in the Town. Several members of the Committee led by Brian Chilver have reduced that to 90, identifying their location and it is intended that 40 to 50 of them will form the basis of a display. Details are still being considered but it will be a fitting tribute to a founder member of our Society and of great interest to the community.

Another proposal is the production of a series of leaflets about buildings and areas in and around the WR11 area. The information in many cases already exists, thanks to a series of articles done for the Evesham Observer. The intention is to expand on these and possibly to resurrect the Village Trail with possible help from other local interest groups.

Unfortunately VECS is not able to tackle all the issues that arise during the year such as the Public Hall and its need for regeneration, Heritage Open Days and many more because of a lack of members. We have launched a recruitment drive and delivered over 2000 flyers around Evesham. Ideally we need younger members, the society was formed in 1972 and in many cases its members have grown old with it. I am stepping down at the next AGM after a busy 3 years in the hope that a younger member will take my place and help inject some vitality into my role as Secretary. It has been an enjoyable and busy 3 years and although no longer being on the Committee, I will help when I can with Newsletter items and with our VECS website.

Summer Outings by Sue Campbell

Thinking ahead to the warmer summer months I thought I would tell you about some of the outings I have organised for you. I hope that you will enjoy these excursions. Our outing to Lincoln on 18 July is a joint event with the Simon de Montfort Society. More about this later

Morton Hall Gardens Wednesday 16th May. Tour at 2pm

In May we will visit the lovely gardens of Morton Hall near Inkberrow. I first came across Morton Hall when the owners asked me to research the history of the house for them. The present house was built c1775-1781 by Thomas Perkins, an attorney with Chambers in Clements Inn in London. It probably replaced an earlier building and it is known that in the fourteenth century there was a chantry chapel at Morton Underhill and there are several moated sites nearby.



When Anne Olivieri first visited Morton Hall in 2007 and saw the mass of snake's head fritillaries in the wild flower meadow she knew she had to buy the house. Morton Hall stands in an elevated position with far reaching views and Anne and Rene Olivieri wished to link the house, garden and park to the wider estate beyond. This was done by forming a succession of linked garden rooms around the house. The garden has been described as, "a journey from Georgian elegance to post-modern reflection."

In May the garden will contain rhododendrons, lilacs, alliums, magnolias, azaleas and peonies. We will have a guided tour of the garden and then afternoon tea in the orangery.

Numbers are limited to 24 and I have 5 bookings already. It is not suitable for wheelchairs. It is an own transport visit and the distance from Evesham is 12 miles.

Witney and Rousham House, Oxfordshire Thursday 14th June Coach will leave the Chadbury Farm Shop at 9am.

We will visit Witney, the town with free parking, in the morning and after an early lunch there will travel to Rousham House for our tour at 1.15pm.

Witney was famous in the past for its woollen blankets, gloves and other woollen goods. Increased prosperity in the sixteenth century led to comprehensive re-building and few medieval buildings now survive in the town. The Woollen Hall contains a shop and a café noted for coffee and pies. The church has an imposing tower and close to the church are the excavated remains of the medieval palace of the Bishops of Winchester which can be inspected free of charge.

In the 1980's Witney was one of 4 towns in Oxfordshire selected for rapid growth and it has seen much modern housing development. The population is similar in size to Evesham.

When we arrive at Rousham House we will be given a guided tour of the building. The present house was built in 1635 by Sir Robert Dormer but it has been altered over the years. It is now the home of the Cottrell Dormer family.

The stable block and wings were added by William Kent who worked on the house and planned the pleasure grounds 1737-1741. The gardens were intended to be visited by the public from the start and were arranged to provide a series of views. Horace Walpole considered it to be his favourite William Kent garden. It is one of the few gardens of this date to have escaped alteration.

There is no café there but you can take your own drinks or picnics to eat in the garden.



Are Windows the Soul of a house? By Colin Tether

The eye is the window of the soul, a saying possibly dating back to Cicero. Can windows then be the soul of the house?

We live in Cambria Road, one of the 'Royal Roads', built from around 1895, together with Victoria Avenue, Windsor Road and Princes Road. The original houses still appear mostly as built, red brick terraces. Just one, in Windsor Road, has stone cladding. None yet has external insulating cladding, despite an offer to all residents from Wychavon District Council to subsidise its installation.

When we first moved in around 13 years ago, around half of Cambria Road houses still had their original wooden sash windows. Now out of 47 houses in the road, just 5 do. 3 houses have made the compromise and replaced the wooden windows with plastic copies. The design of the replacement plastic non-sash windows varies from house to house. It seems a shame, because the original windows gave a uniform and neat appearance to the terraces. The older windows have narrower frames than their replacements, letting more light in.



The reason that people replace the old windows are not difficult to see. Old wooden sash windows need painting, they decay, they stick, they are draughty, they do not provide adequate insulation, either sound or heat. In our street, it is also significant that the 5 houses retaining the wooden windows are on the north side, not the sunny side of the street, where the effects of the weather is not so extreme. So why not replace them, especially when there is an aggressive industry targeting the few remaining people with the old windows?

Well in our case we have kept the windows. They are not draughty, they don't stick. They do need painting, but we can choose the colour, not just brilliant white. Insulation? It is a quiet road and we have heavy curtains. But I do wonder how long our wooden windows will last.....?

Where to now with housing? By Richard Thomson

Back in Mrs Thatcher's day and the arrival of the Housing Act 1980 I was in a considerable minority amongst my town planning colleagues in supporting the right to buy. I saw no reason why long term council house tenants should not be able to take a stake in their homes and thereby join the ranks of the majority who owned their houses. This seemed to me like common sense and an affront to natural justice – a bias against the have-nots becoming part of the property-owning democracy and participating in the wealth of the country.

The trouble was that the funds generated from housing sales did not return to the councils who built the houses but rather to HM Exchequer - so robbing councils of funds necessary for the building of further houses. I'm sure you know the rest, over the years the number of council houses built dwindled – nationally, only 11,300 built between 2012 and 2018 during which time 55,000 were sold under Right to Buy. Plans to allow the building of houses for low-income households increasingly required a reliance on private developers allocating a few homes on their sites. Developers grudgingly accepted this requirement but many times would find excuses to build fewer affordable properties than the number agreed in the planning permission and what were built were invariably located in the least desirable areas of their sites and with the cheapest of materials.



There is a housing crisis. The latest information from Shelter is that there are 50,000 homeless households – a figure ever-rising. The good news is that the Government at last seems to have seen the folly of its ways and is determined to push house building rates, including increased numbers of affordable homes, higher than the fairly measly 160,000 total built last year to an average 200,000 per annum by 2020. It is allowing councils back into the game by giving them the ability to set up property development firms or to sign partnership agreements with private developers.

A programme to redevelop parts of the UK's 350,000 vacant properties must be part of the strategy to tackle the country's housing shortage. The Chief Executive of Kier Homes is one of those enthusiastically involved with local authorities to bring forward more affordable homes as part of this programme. The firm worked with Manchester City Council in a well-advertised scheme to provide homes for disabled ex-service personnel and with Stoke-on-Trent City Council in the "£1 Decent House" initiative.

A recent study has shown that since 2012 almost a quarter of councils in England have set up 58 Local Housing Companies. It seems there is now a head of steam to add many thousands more affordable homes to the total over the next few years.

Richard Thomson

The Round House, by Ian Stanton

(Thanks to PHILIP WILKINSON author of The English Buildings Book)

"Its usual name, the Round House, seems rather perverse, and fails to give the game away. Although it's not literally round, the building's exterior on its island site in the market place, can be walked around, so that's presumably the excuse for the name. There's another name, the Booth Hall, which suggests it's a market building. But the authors of the Pevsner Worcestershire volume doubt that its lower floor ever housed booths, and there's no sign of any traces the open arches that would have allowed this. Pevsner thinks it may have begun life as an inn."



Ian Stanton worked on the building in the 1960s and recalls his involvement over 50 years ago.

There are a multitude of articles and features about the "square" Round House or Booth Hall but not many of the writers will know this beautiful old building as intimately as I do!

In 1964/65 my late father's business Reg Stanton Ltd won the contract to rewire this building when The National Provincial Bank (now NatWest) restored it. We were on site for many months along with other well known local businesses such as Wheeler and Mansell Ltd (main contractors).

The building was stripped down to its skeleton with all floors and walls removed leaving just the wooden beams.

As this building is so important and historic the specification for any work carried out was closely monitored and to an extremely high specification. All the electric cabling had to be fire retardant copper clad and was Pyrotex brand supplied by BICC (British Insulated Callender Cables), and of course very costly. All the light switches and outlet sockets supplied were of a special finish and of course costly. The floors were replaced with substantial oak floor boards - no expense was spared anywhere.

Regretfully I have not retained the business files or drawings of this unique project – they would of course make very interesting reading and I would be able to compare the total cost of the project at today's value – probably hundreds of thousands. Evesham is indeed very fortunate that an organisation such as a bank owns and occupies this beautiful building and therefore safeguards it.

Playing Games – Pooh Sticks, by John Goodwin

When we were children, walking over a bridge, occasionally we would drop a twig into the stream below then run to the other side to watch to see if it came through. If it did we would keep looking to see if it snagged or if it floated into the distance. Sometimes other friends would join in, but often it was a solitary



In the last six months VECS dealings with the Wychavon Planning Department have been rather like that, imagine the stream as a planning system, The Applicant as the child, the twigs as their applications, the bridge as Wychavon District Council with the Planning Department, the area underneath we rarely see.

The first obstruction to the application twig is the local development plan. It's partly an obstruction of our making in conjunction with a Government Inspector, Wychavon and Town Councils. Now it is viewed as an essential obstruction, allowing Central Government quotas to be met but preventing unscrupulous developers making unsustainable or inappropriate development...all this is taking place under the bridge.

Eventually it clears the bridge, all the while being altered or snagged by amendments and objections before reaching the next obstruction, caused by the planning meeting and all its officers. They are fairly representative of the Wychavon District but badly scarred by the passage of applications previously refused and therefore fearful of costly appeals against their decisions.

After that the stream is fairly free flowing with more detailed applications and various planning conditions requiring to be fulfilled as it continues hopefully to its confluence and not some polluted pool.

VECS had several twigs in the last 12 months but two in particular; Abbey Road/ Boat Lane and Cheltenham Road outline applications. Abbey Road was tangled up for a very long time under the bridge with major objections from the Town Council, several local councillors, English Heritage, VECS and other local groups and members of the public. It seemed to escape the influence of the SWDP, breaching it before being snagged, on the day of the hearing, by a much lobbied Planning Committee, deferring its approval until it managing to comply with the Development Plan.

The twig that was the revised Cheltenham Road application was also tangled up for a long time with objections by the Town Council, VECS and members of the public before escaping to pass the SWDP and Planning obstructions. It sailed through the planning meeting despite objections being voiced again by those previous objectors and Councillors Frances Smith and Gerry O'Donnell. This last approval has a capacity to expand beyond the allocated 500 homes in that area, with more land not included in the application but allocated on the SWDP, still available for development.

We are concerned that this might be headed for the polluted pool of uncertainty, not the confluence.

The Evesham Battlewell Field and Battle Trail, by Clive Bostle

At the top of Greenhill a brown-and-white tourist sign points you towards the Battlewell Field and the Battle Trail. Follow it and a waymarked linear route eventually leads to Worcester Road. On the way you'll be treated to an information board about the Battle of Evesham, see the alleged 'Battle Well' and enjoy wonderful views of Bredon Hill & the Malverns.

The Field is owned by the Rudge Estate and has been in the tenancy of the Simon de Montfort Society since 2005. Seeking to obtain permissive public access to one of the most important yet little-known battlefield sites in England that had previously only been available to visit legitimately by special permission, the Society's original intention was to combine this route with the pre-existing walk to Leicester Tower and the Obelisk. For various reasons that did not prove possible. What we have today is therefore not ideal but the Trail has more than proved its value over the eleven years since it was opened.



In 2005 the Field was about 80% covered in hawthorn scrub and the rest in brambles & nettles. It took two winters of very hard work to remove it. The very selective remains of that scrub is valuable berry-rich habitat and so is meant to be there. This was originally agreed in 2006 with Natural England when the Field came into Higher Level Stewardship. A comprehensive Management Plan was drawn up to create a varied mosaic of environments combining the historical interest with the wildlife one.

A key wildlife feature (which greatly interested NE) is the unimproved rough grassland – a rare and important habitat today. This may look neglected but it's nothing of the sort. Planned 'topping' takes place twice a year, with selective strimming undertaken elsewhere. A new 220m native-species hedge-with-standards was planted on the southern boundary in 2007-8, and trimmed each winter to maintain thickness. The pond ('battle well') is part spring-fed but mainly by nitrate-rich run-off from the arable field above (hence the 'bloom'). Clive cleans it out (in waders!) at least twice a year. This is currently due to be done as soon as conditions allow.

The Plan expired in April 2016. During its ten-year currency it was monitored and inspected by NE who grant-aided all the fencing, gates, hedging & drainage. Since then Clive has sought to continue the principles of the original agreement, whilst retaining the historical/archaeological interest (four professional archaeological investigations have taken place since 2007).

It's important to be aware that the Society's tenancy only covers the Battlewell Field itself. The onward route of the Trail to Worcester Road is over land which is managed entirely separately, now mainly cultivated for arable crops in fields recently enlarged and with new boundaries.

In consultation with the landowner and tenant farmer the onward route has now been changed, simplified and re-waymarked. The route map shown on the information board, and in the Trail leaflet, is consequently out of date so please just follow the on-site waymarking .

If Civic Society members are interested in helping in any way to maintain the Field, please contact Clive Bostle: **01386 765572; bostle@waitrose.com**