

THE CHICHESTER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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See pages 2 and 3 for Richard Williamson on the Peregrine Falcons who have returned every year to the Cathedral tower for over 20 years Photo: Brian Henham

AGM 2021

We are pleased to announce that the Society's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 27 October at The Assembly Room North Street, Chichester.

After AGM business we welcome as guest speaker **Margaret Paren OBE** former chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.

See page 18 for details

HAPPY READING!

Recommending articles from such a rich assortment of stories on Chichester's past, present and future is difficult. As the Society has a civic remit, readers are encouraged to begin with planning policy on pages 4 and 5 to understand about making better use of brownfield sites (previously developed land) across our city. Your Executive Committee believe imaginative development solutions, especially for higher density housing, ought to be a priority in these locations. Do readers agree?

Aware that climate change is affecting our lives, you may wish to read two articles on this theme. The first on pages 8 and 9 alerts us to an opportunity for creating a wildflower meadow in Chichester - a new style of park for the public: a good idea? The second on page 19 sums up the Society's response to a public consultation on air quality.

Other topics in this edition to appreciate are: peregrine falcons who have made their home at the Cathedral for many years; the 75th anniversary of an air-speed record at Tangmere; a growing natural disaster in Chichester Harbour - we summarise the facts from an influential report; Chichester in 1951 during the Festival of Britain; caring for our city's historic fire marks; and on the centre pages we present a photograph that captures the Sloe Fair's spirit - we look forward to it returning to Chichester in October.

Anthony Quail, Editor



CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL’S THRIVING FAMILY OF PEREGRINE FALCONS

Writer and naturalist Richard Williamson pays tribute to one of nature’s deadliest hunters

It is possible that peregrine falcons have used cathedrals as vantage or even nesting sites for a thousand years. To the birds these are merely cliffs which are their natural habitat. Falcons attempted to breed on St. Paul’s Cathedral one hundred years ago, giving my father a news scoop when he was a cub reporter on a London newspaper. But the birds would have been prime targets for falconers and later, egg collectors. Salisbury cathedral has had peregrines on and off since 1864. But it was not until 1992 that a single peregrine was noticed on Chichester Cathedral. The birds were in any case very rare in Sussex with occasional breeding on Beachy Head. But they too were the target of egg collectors who prized these large reddish-coloured gems, which could be sold for a high price.

Almost extinct

After WWII the peregrines’ days appeared to be numbered. During the conflict they had been systematically destroyed because they were catching carrier pigeons taking essential messages for the military. Out of a population of seven hundred pairs in the UK in the 1930s, six hundred were shot, mostly in southern Britain. Organo-phosphorus insecticides originally developed in the war as a nerve agent weapon compromised any comeback since the falcons’ eggs suffered thinning shells as a result of eating birds already carrying the poison in their bodies. However, after the banning of these dangerous substances the birds began a comeback.

A dynasty begins

By 1994 a pair was roosting on Chichester Cathedral. Early the next year County ecologist Graham Roberts wrote to the current Communar, Captain Shallow, on behalf of the Sussex Ornithological Society, seeking permission to place a nest box for the peregrines somewhere on the building. It was not until 2001 with an enlarged box that the birds were attracted and four eggs were laid. These did not hatch, but the falcons tried again in 2002 and four youngsters were reared. So began one of the most successful dynasties ever recorded, and



Two juvenile Peregrines having a discussion over food

which today has produced over seventy young. The first pair of peregrines was the most successful, producing forty-four young. The female, known as the *falcon*, was an exceptionally strong bird and could carry her own weight a mile, having been seen carrying a mallard in from Chichester Harbour. The male is known as the *tiercel*, a word of French origin which means he has a third less size and weight than the falcon. He was a very feisty bird, often hunting in Fishbourne Channel, where on one occasion he chased a pigeon into the cabin of a sailing boat and was very reluctant to give up the final capture, eventually being persuaded to fly away. He gave us many thrills over the years, especially when passing food to his young.

Teaching the young

Falcons fly when only six weeks old and very soon the parents start to teach them the art of catching flying prey for themselves. They bring in a dead bird, call the young to fly alongside and then drop the bird for them to catch. These food parcels are made more difficult as time goes on, but the young must keep up. On one occasion we were treated to a most daring food pass when the tiercel called the young and flew at over one hundred miles an hour through the gaps in the bell tower where he dropped the pigeon. Only two young dared to follow, and one made the catch. On another occasion the falcon called the

young and right over the city centre dropped a whimbrel which it had caught in Fishbourne Channel. This wader is a big bird and only slightly smaller than the common curlew. The young peregrine missed the catch and RSPB staff manning the information tent watched in horror as the body almost hit a woman in the street. On another occasion a lady shopper picked up a dead pigeon she watched falling after another missed catch and brought it back and laid it out on the cathedral lawn.

New generations

Eventually this first pair died out but another pair quickly took over. The new tiercel was nicknamed ‘Maverick’ and again, was a highly competent and faithful parent like

his mate. He gave many a dashing display frightening the wits out of wandering buzzards, red kites, and even herring gulls which might attempt the predation of very young peregrines. He had at one time partnered a falcon on a block of flats in Brighton but had moved on. He brought in countless young starlings from the city suburbs to feed his family. He did however succumb a little to family fatigue and sometimes used to hide in a special nook on the north side of the cathedral spire out of sight of the falcon.

One year his small son, outnumbered by three much bigger sisters, did not want to leave home, and hung about the cathedral all winter. Maverick used to escort him off the premises, putting him to roost on some buildings at Graylingwell. He eventually left on his odyssey. One or two youngsters were found dead over the years, identified by their code numbered leg rings with which all are fitted by County ecologist Graham Roberts in June each year. One falcon found a partner on Norwich Cathedral. One died on the road near Singleton, another was seen in France.

Gods of the skies

Eighteen geographical races of the species *Falco peregrinus* are found across the world except South America. They breed on tall buildings in New York, Vladivostok, Sidney and Oslo among others. They are fascinating because of their extreme pinnacle of development which makes us seem insignificant in physical terms. Their eyes each weigh approximately one ounce and in proportion to us, our eyes would each weigh four pounds and measure three inches across. A peregrine falcon can see a spider moving a mile away and is the fastest creature on the planet, able to dive



Maverick, a male or tiercel Peregrine circling the Cathedral’s tower

at 260 mph. The name peregrine comes from the Latin *Peregre* which means foreign: a traveller from abroad. Another interpretation is pilgrim. The word falcon is from the Latin *falx*, a sharp thin-bladed sickle used for reaping corn, delineating the bird’s shape in the air. The Pharaohs knew it as *Horus* – the god of the skies. I know some local folk refer to the Cathedral birds as ‘them ‘oly ‘awks’, killing everything that comes within range. But unlike us they do this with extreme panache and daring and we admire them for their extraordinary lives.

Chichester’s Peregrine Falcon project, formerly managed by the RSPB, is now run by David and Janet Shaw in partnership with the Cathedral Chapter and Sussex Ornithological Society.

All photographs for this article are courtesy of David Shaw Wildlife.



Two young Peregrines on the nest turret

A PLANNING CHALLENGE FOR CHICHESTER

The Chichester Society believes more must be done to create new housing at higher densities close to the city centre. Here's how.

A tool for achieving this already exists. It's known as Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA for short), and all English councils with planning powers produce one every year. Chichester District Council (CDC), as the planning authority for this area, has published its HELAA for 2021 and it can be viewed on the Council's website. But what is a HELAA for? Its prime purpose is to identify land with development potential for housing and employment.

The method for identifying these sites is to approach owners or developers by what's called a 'Call for Sites' and the result is a HELAA document of possibilities and no more, for HELAA doesn't formally allocate sites for development. This is determined through the Local Plan Review, a process well under way in Chichester. Any sites included in the HELAA will still require a planning application. An alarming related issue is that Chichester's current HELAA has identified several substantial greenfield sites around the city - but this is not the subject of this article! To be eligible for inclusion in the HELAA document a site must be suitable for at least five dwellings, or at least a quarter hectare in area for commercial development. All sites selected in this manner are considered by CDC's planners and reviewed against a range of nationally set criteria. Only then will these sites

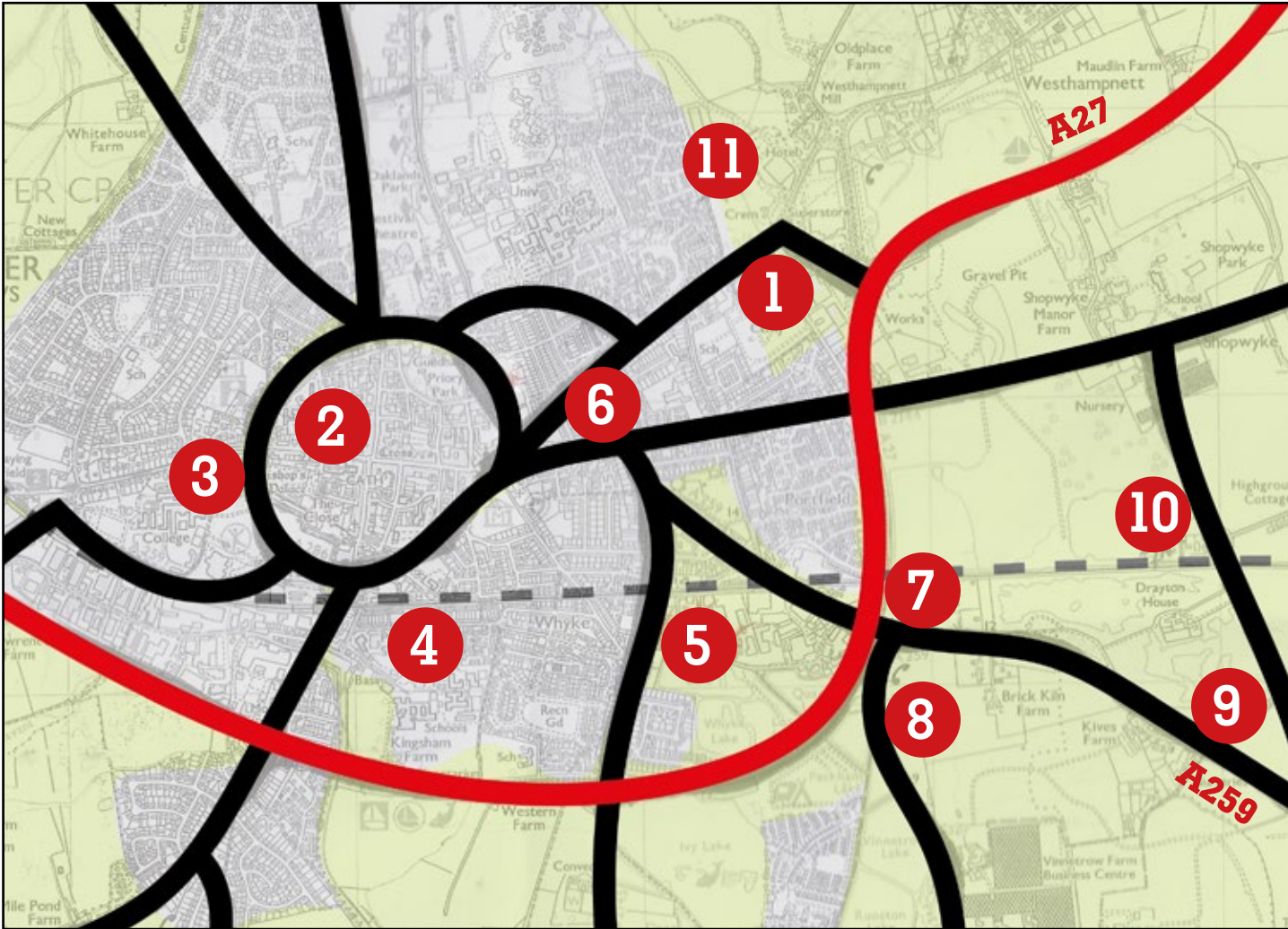
be taken forward in the Local Plan Review process.

Brownfield sites

A 'brownfield' site is a planning term for vacant land that was formerly developed but is currently vacant, and defined more closely in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In development terms brownfield land means around 30 dwellings per acre for average density. However, higher densities may be appropriate where community facilities are within easy walking and cycling distance - as is indeed the case for most of Chichester.

Within Chichester the 2021 HELAA includes several brownfield sites suitable to help meet our housing quota. See the sketch map below with the following numbered sites:

BROWNFIELD SITES WITH DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



1. Former **Portfield football ground** (see article on page 3 of June 2021 Newsletter)
2. Former **House of Fraser** site in West Street (suitable for housing with a retail frontage)
3. WSCC's former **Tannery offices** at Westgate
4. Two sites in **Kingsham Road**: the former **police sports ground** and former **Chichester Boys High School** buildings. These are both within the long delayed Southern Gateway redevelopment which is receding into the distance but there is no reason why they cannot be developed for housing immediately.

Although not identified in this year's HELAA, there are several industrial activities within the city which would be better located close to the A27 and if moved would free up further sites for housing. (see article on page 14 of June 2018 Newsletter.) Examples include:

5. Sites towards the western end of **Quarry Lane** such as vehicle hire, food distribution and a metal scrap yard. Good community facilities are nearby with a bus service, Rumboldswyke primary school and Muchos Nachos pub/restaurant, both recently saved thanks to vibrant community action.
6. There is also the **Kwik Fit** site which extends from St Pancras to The Hornet which could be developed for flats and houses

The HELAA identifies several vacant sites close to the A27/A259 to which these industrial uses could be relocated. For example, on the Bognor roundabout is the **former fuel depot** (7) and nearby is vacant land on the **Vinnetrow industrial estate** (8). Further along the A259 is a substantial site at the former **Chichester Garden Centre** (9); and by the railway there is vacant land within the **WSCC Highways depot** at Drayton (10). To the north of the new Lidl store the proposed phase 2 of the **Barnfield retail park** is still vacant (11).

A challenge for Chichester!

A challenge for CDC is to actively seek developers prepared to design high quality housing at higher-than-average densities on sites within easy reach of the city centre. Since the necessary infrastructure already exists, it should be possible to provide a high proportion of affordable homes for essential workers. Examples can be found in many historic towns and cities (see page 8 of the June 2021 Newsletter *A manifesto for new housing*). Chichester deserves award-winning developments close to its heart!



Chichester High School for Boys in Kingsham Road, now vacant
Photo: John Templeton



Vacant and boarded-up WSCC offices at Tannery Close in Westgate
Photo: Anthony Quail



One of the business premises at Quarry Lane
Photo: John Templeton

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF TANGMERE'S WORLD AIR SPEED RECORD

David Coxon recounts the hopes and frustrations experienced in 1946

It was in the middle of World War 2 when Britain's first single seater jet fighter took off: a Gloster Meteor on 5 March 1943. After the war ended development continued because the Gloster Aircraft Company and Rolls-Royce were certain their Meteor, powered by its Derwent jet engines, was faster than any other aircraft flying at that time. Government approval to try for a World Air Speed Record was speedily granted in July 1945, only two months after the War had ended in Europe. On 7 November 1945 Group Captain Willy Wilson established a new record of 606 mph in a Meteor over Herne Bay in Kent. Following this success everyone involved - the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Supply and Fighter Command's Commander-in-Chief - agreed this record could be improved. The RAF's High Speed Flight, based at Tangmere, was re-formed in July 1946 to make a new attempt.

Going for 621 mph

The flight was led by Group Captain Teddy Donaldson who announced his intention 'To raise the record to 621 mph at least'. Two other pilots were posted to assist: Squadron Leader W A Waterton from the Central Fighter Establishment, and Flight Lieutenant Neville Duke who was half-way through his Empire Test Pilot's course. It was decided that the record attempt should be made over a 3 km course off the Sussex coast at Rustington, near Littlehampton. The procedures laid down by the *Fédération Aéronautique Internationale* (FAI) required 'lead-ins' of one kilometre at each end of the 3 km course through which the aircraft had to fly at less than a hundred metres above mean sea level to exclude any benefit from diving. An outer zone of five kilometres was established at each end of the course to enable the reciprocal turns to be made and for the same reason the turns in this zone had to be flown not above five hundred metres. To ensure these rules were complied with, Tangmere's No 29 Squadron provided Mosquito aircraft with observers to monitor the aircraft's flight either end of the 3 km course. Timing cameras were placed at either end of the 3 km course and either side of these, balloons were flown to provide guidance to the pilot of his altitude. In case of an accident air-sea-rescue Walrus and marine craft were also made available.



Gloster Meteor EE549, the World Airspeed Record holder, on display at Tangmere Military Aviation Museum. Photo: TMAM/Pete Pitman

Weather problems

The flight was provided with standard line-production Meteor F4s with cleaned-up fuselages, including faired-over gunports, and uprated Derwent engines delivering 4,300 lb of thrust, about a third more powerful than normal. Neville Duke kept a diary of his time with the flight. He recorded that his first day on 2nd July didn't go without mishap: *Towards the end of the final run at 550 mph, at 200 feet the starboard engine cut dead. A violent swing to starboard occurred but was corrected quickly by throttling back the port engine and heavy use of the rudder. The dead engine showed no signs of picking up and a single-engine landing was made back at Tangmere.*

Duke concluded that certain conditions would be necessary for good runs including a hot day, still air or slight breeze and good visibility. Weather therefore was very much a factor in attaining the record. By the middle of August the High Speed Flight was worked-up and ready for the record attempt. On 13 and 19 August full timed practice runs were carried out but then unfortunately poor weather conditions set in. On 24 August he recorded: *Attempted a few runs over the course, chiefly to inspire the public who had been on the beaches to see a record run all day – sea fog right down on the coast making it quite impossible!* On 26 August he wrote: *An attempt laid on late afternoon with the Group Captain flying EE550 and myself 549. Group Captain went up twice to look at the weather and myself once but bumps did not warrant an attempt with this comparatively low temperature of around 15 degrees Centigrade. So unpromising was the weather forecast at the end of August that Neville was dispatched to Prague to demonstrate the Meteor to the Czechs.*

616 mph average

Eventually on Saturday 7 September 1946 a break in the poor weather finally arrived and at 17.45 hours Donaldson took off from Tangmere in EE549 to make the most of it. He landed back

fourteen minutes later having returned an average speed of 615.78 mph over the course. Waterton then took off in EE550 at 18.11 hours and turned for Bognor Pier at 800 feet. As the speed increased his Meteor dropped its port wing (a recurring problem with this aircraft) and veering to the left of the course Waterton almost collided with the height marking balloons. By using starboard rudder he was able to stabilise the aircraft and avoid the inevitable crash. He continued with the runs in spite of this major problem, and achieved an average speed of 614 mph.

Neville Duke made a further attempt on 24 September on the record set by Donaldson. On his first run in EE550 (Waterton's aircraft on 7 September) the port wing again started to go down requiring Duke to prop his elbow against the side of the cockpit to brace the control column. Duke wrote that he also had to use a very heavy foot load on the starboard rudder pedal to help with the wing. On the first run Duke was unable to keep the aircraft in a straight line and abandoned the attempt. After landing back at Tangmere the aileron trim was adjusted to make the aircraft right wing low but again he found that at high speed the Meteor's port wing went down. Six runs were made but Donaldson's record was not improved upon.

Teddy Donaldson's record was therefore the limit pilots of the High Speed Flight could achieve in weather conditions experienced that late summer of 1946. If they had found smooth air and higher temperatures, there is no doubt that Donaldson's intention of achieving at least 621 mph could have been met.

David Coxon is Director of the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum. The record breaking Gloster Meteor has been on display at Tangmere since 1992, courtesy of the trustees of the RAF Museum.



RAF High Speed Flight from left to right are: Neville Duke, Bill Waterton and Teddy Donaldson Photo: Key Publishing



Meteor EE549 is readied for the record attempt. Oil painting by Jack Froelich, photo TMAM/Pete Pitman

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN OUR CITY

Chichester District Council has an opportunity: Vincent Porter explains

Let’s understand the background before thinking about the situation here in Chichester. Firstly, as readers are aware, Britain is hosting the United Nations’ 26th climate change conference in November this year, when nearly 200 countries meet at Glasgow for a ‘Conference of Parties’ – hence the abbreviation COP26. Alok Sharma MP, a member of the Cabinet, is COP26 President. Secondly, Alok Sharma and Philip Dunne (chair of the Environmental Audit Select Committee) explained on Channel 4 News last April that in the battle to head off climate change *decarbonisation* and *biodiversity* are two sides of the same coin. This was complemented by Craig Bennett, who heads the nation’s Wildlife Trusts observing ‘You cannot tackle nature and climate change separately. They are both intricately linked’. Thirdly, the statistics summing up sources of this country’s carbon dioxide emissions: about a quarter come from surface transport, nearly a fifth from the building sector, and 9% from agriculture. The UK is also one of the world’s most environmentally depleted countries, while among G7 nations, it’s the UK that has lost the most species. Strangely, there’s no mention of *biodiversity* in the 2018 Climate Change Act.

Carbon reduction

Given this bleak scenario, how can Chichester District Council (CDC) help capture the carbon dioxide we generate every day? CDC has made a modest start, with its Climate Emergency Action Plan to reduce carbon emissions by 10 percent a year until 2025. But can this be achieved without additional powers from Westminster? CDC is encouraging residents and businesses to sponsor a tree in one of its many parks and gardens. Councillor Penny Plant, CDC’s Cabinet Member for the Environment, commented that ‘Trees are a precious natural asset and, as a natural carbon sink, are a vital part of the fight against climate change’ when she and Green Councillor Sarah Sharp planted a new tree in Whyke Recreation Ground. They highlighted five environmental benefits:

- One tree absorbs around a tonne of carbon during its lifetime
- Trees help us adapt to climate change, through reducing the ‘urban heat island’ effect and help mitigate against flooding
- One tree produces enough oxygen each year to support two people

- Trees provide a rich habitat for all sorts of wildlife
- Trees improve health and wellbeing by purifying contaminated water.

So far, so impressive. But there are limits to the Council’s scheme: first, a tree only absorbs carbon when it is well established; second, each tree has to be maintained; third, each tree must be planted on council-owned land. CDC has established a Green Spaces team to help establish this programme.

Land ownership

Biodiversity reduces carbon dioxide from the ground up. Land ownership is therefore a key dimension in capturing carbon. Not all of us are as fortunate as the Duke of Richmond, who plans to plant 78,000 trees in one of the largest re-wilding schemes in the south of England. Across the District developers are acquiring land in order to build more houses, which in turn means the arrival of more cars driven by new residents. The only land that will be left for CDC to improve biodiversity could well be the grass verges along our roads. CDC and the County Council could also develop policies for their verges to capture carbon. Conservation charity *Plantlife* is already

working with local councils to encourage town verges managed for wild flowers, and the wildlife they support. Its *Good Verge Guide* provides accessible and practical guidance on nature-friendly road verge management. Unfortunately, the nearest place to Chichester working with *Plantlife* is Lewes where *Wildflower Lewes* wants to see the town’s verges buzzing with bees and butterflies (see wildflowersinlewes.wordpress.com).

Protecting ancient woodland?

CDC’s current plan for managing a changing environment contains a sketchy section with ambitions to create new wildlife habitats and provide sustainably managed woodland. As the Council’s initial mapping project has already shown, the West of Chichester development site contributes to the strategic networks of green corridors to the west of the City. Among other features, it hopes to retain land adjacent to the city’s ancient woodland, known as the Brandy Hole Copse Local Nature Reserve. *The Planner’s Manual* published by the Woodland Trust, recommends a council should provide an adequate buffer to protect a sensitive area from the impact of disturbance both during and after construction. The buffer should either be planted with trees or shrubs, or it could be an area of land upon which the developer is not allowed to encroach. As a precautionary principle, a Council should maintain a minimum 50 metre buffer between a development and the ancient woodland, including during the construction phase. Indeed, in 2015, Wiltshire’s Core



Looking south from Brandy Hole Copse in early spring
Photo: John Templeton

Strategy went further and identified the need for a 100 metre woodland/parkland buffer around all its ancient woodlands. The Woodland Trust’s preferred approach is to create new habitat, including native woodland, around existing ancient woodland. This will help reverse the historic fragmentation of this important habitat. The consequent increase in ecological connectivity between areas of ancient woodland will create the resilient landscapes recommended by DEFRA in *Making Space for Nature*, (the Lawton Report) which it published in 2010.

Copse or wildflower meadow?

Whitehouse Farm developers, Miller Homes and Vistry Group, are proposing that two fields south of Brandy Hole Copse become a ‘country park’ for recreational uses. As there is already a country park in phase 1 of the development, the Friends of Brandy Hole Copse would prefer these fields planted as a wildflower meadow with a woodland buffer added to Brandy Hole Copse Local Nature Reserve. By careful landscaping and management, Chichester District Council can head off climate change by helping nature to capture carbon in the West of Chichester.

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Vincent Porter is a member of the Friends of Brandy Hole Copse and the Newsletter Editorial Committee



A future vision for Chichester: a wildflower meadow with a view towards the Cathedral
Image: ADP



Looking across to Brandy Hole Copse when a wildflower meadow is in place, crossed by paths for everyone to enjoy. Image: ADP combining photos from several sources.



Chichester's Sloe Fair, a tradition for hundreds of years prevented only by war and the Covid pandemic. We look forward to its return this October.

Photo: Brian Henham.

THE DECLINE IN CHICHESTER HARBOUR'S CONDITION

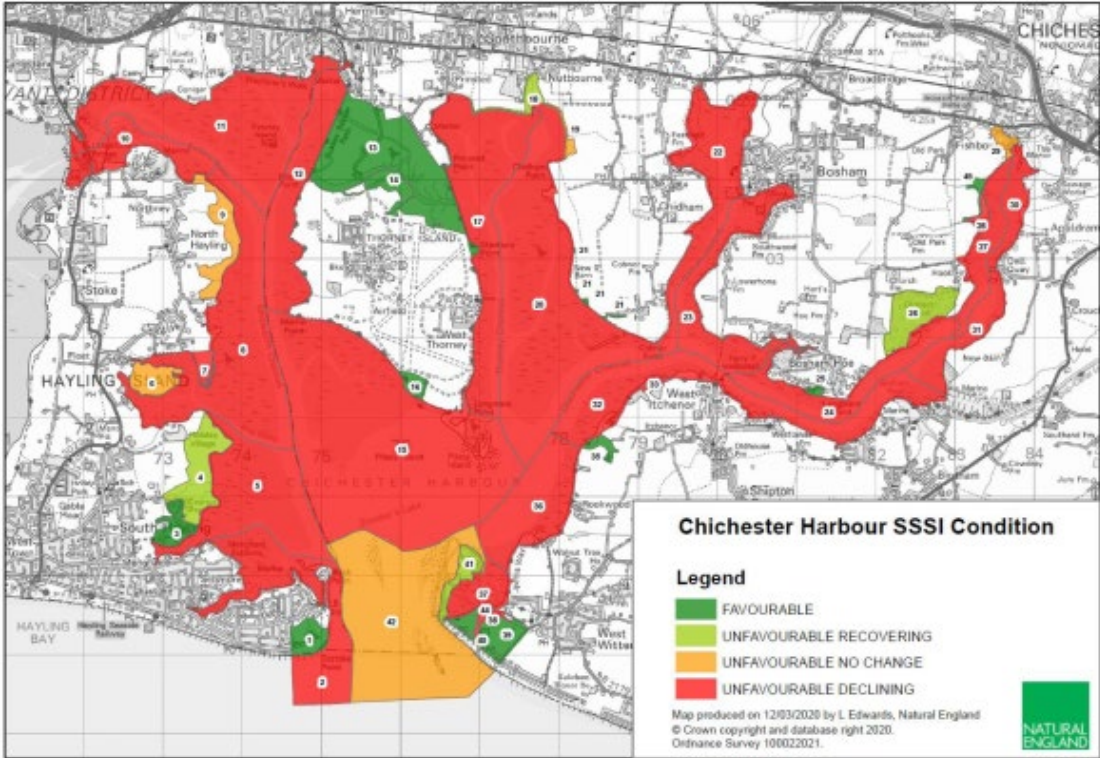
Christopher Mead-Briggs on a worrying report published by Natural England, especially when viewed through the prism of a legal judgement against Southern Water

The recent decision to fine Southern Water £90 million for the illegal discharge of sewage along the South Coast, which has been widely reported in the media, has highlighted the danger to wildlife around Chichester Harbour. In this context Dr Louise Bardsley's report published in February this year by Natural England makes alarming reading for it describes the deteriorating condition of our Harbour. This report also emphasized the Harbour's significance for wildlife both in the UK and worldwide for migratory birds. This should concern us all. Now that the UK has left the European Union, this report has gone to George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – Natural England's sponsoring Ministry. However, the Harbour's deterioration does not seem to be the result of just local issues. In reviewing the key findings, one has to ask how we can influence for the better the many impacts which lie beyond control by local government (the District and County Council) or the Harbour Conservancy. These key findings by Louise Bardsley and her research team concern loss of saltmarsh, falling numbers of over-wintering bird species and loss of intertidal habitats. Water quality, in particular inorganic components of nitrogen, are also assessed.

A massive decline

Dr Bardsley's devastating conclusion is that around 80 percent of the designated area within Chichester Harbour is now classified as 'unfavourable declining' – that's the red area in the map below. In response the report makes several recommendations to the Secretary of State: eleven for future conservation and eight for updating the evidence on which to base future assessments. Regrettably, some of the latter are markedly vague and beyond the control of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Worse, many of the causes lie outside the remit of the Conservancy such as: realigning sea defences; prevention of further 'coastal squeeze'; reducing the amount of nitrogen in the water. Achieving these aims means changes to policies and priorities, including those at government level. To illustrate:

Realigning sea defences will involve changes to the Shoreline Management Plan and agreement from numerous stakeholder organisations.



Areas of Chichester Harbour coloured red are assessed as 'unfavourable or declining' - about 80% of the Harbour
Map source: with thanks to Natural England

Contrasting standards

It appears the European Union has two different measures for water quality. Dr Bardsley and Natural England use the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) when assessing water quality. However, Chichester District Council has been using the bacteriological standards from the EU Bathing Water Directive to publish 'Chichester Harbour Sampling Results' every year. Over the last 6 years these have shown compliant samples from 11 locations in the Harbour and record only a 1% percent failure since January 2016 most often north of Dell Quay. Some readers may remember that 40 years ago we had signs around the harbour that stated 'Do not enter the water'. Considerable improvements were subsequently made to local wastewater treatment processes in 2008 when the latest telemetry systems were installed to monitor storm water discharges; and subsequently, new ultraviolet treatment processes are used to kill bacteria.

Difficult objectives?

It's difficult, perhaps very difficult, to see how Chichester Harbour Conservancy can influence future actions to achieve Natural England's objectives. These are:

- Restore saltmarsh habitat within the harbour to achieve 552 hectares at Site of Special Scientific Interest designation. This appears to require some realigning of sea defences.



Intertidal area denuded of saltmarsh

Photo: Meryl Mead-Briggs

CHICHESTER CELBRATES THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN

Richard Childs recalls 1951 was an amazing year with numerous events in the city

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Festival of Britain. Though the Festival was firmly focussed on London’s South Bank, across the country cities, towns and villages held their own celebrations to mark the Festival and Chichester was no exception. Over six months from 19 May to 26 October 1951 the city hosted some 40 events including plays, concerts, sporting events, exhibitions, and pageants. For the whole of the Festival the Market Cross was floodlit at night.

Chichester’s Festival events began on Saturday 19 May by re-enacting the arrival of James II’s 1685 royal charter, delivered to the City by the 6th Duke of Somerset. This was followed by a procession of Chichester’s ancient guilds representing amongst others, mercers, dyers, cordwainers, blacksmiths, tanners and brewers parading in appropriate dress on a series of lorries along the city’s streets, ending up in Eastgate Square. Both events were choreographed by poet, playwright, and producer Robert Gittings, who had recently moved to Chichester.

Talks and plays

The following month on Saturday 16 June the renowned poet and playwright T.S.Eliot spoke to a packed audience at the Cathedral on the theme *What the Cathedral really is and does*. His talk ranged broadly, discussing clergy roles from that of the bishop to that of the curate. In Eliot’s view cathedrals were not monuments with an entry charge like museums. Indeed, there should never be a charge for entry. He derided the closure of any parish church but felt that if two churches were close together one might close so that the other might survive with a larger congregation.

Eliot was well-known to both Bishop George Bell and Dean Walter Hussey. It was the Bishop who encouraged Eliot to write his most famous play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Dean Walter Hussey was a regular correspondent.

With hindsight, it’s surprising that *Murder in the Cathedral* wasn’t performed in Chichester in 1951. But the day after Eliot’s talk the Cathedral hosted a play about the life of St Richard, written and produced by Robert Gittings. Three further plays, two with local connections, were performed during the festival season. *The Four Men: A Farrago* is based on Hilaire Belloc’s novel and recounts the tale of a 90-mile journey by four men on foot from east to west across Sussex, starting in Robertsbridge and ending in South Harting. *The Boy with a Cart* by poet, playwright, and local resident Christopher Fry tells the story of St Cuthman of Steyning, Anglo-Saxon hermit and church-builder, to whom Steyning parish church is dedicated. It relates a legend of miracles and faith in the style of the mystery plays. The third play was George Bernard Shaw’s *You Never Can Tell* presented by the Chichester Players which concerns a dentist who falls in love, and a family which accidentally meets the father they had never known.



A Charter ceremony on 19 May 1951 when Chichester remembered the arrival of King James II’s 1685 Royal Charter in the City.
Photo: from *Chichester the Valiant Years* by Bernard Price, Phillimore 1978

Exhibitions

As well as concerts in the Cathedral there were several exhibitions and the following indicate the variety: *Made in Sussex* presented local crafts such as smocks, hurdles and trug making, beehive keeping, textiles and pottery; Sussex manuscripts were on display at County Hall; there were model warships; Victoriana by the Townswomen’s Guild was at the Deanery. But the most impressive was the Chichester Connoisseurs Society’s exhibition in the Assembly Room and Council Chamber, held at the beginning of September. Lady Bessborough was the principal organiser who persuaded many of the County’s great houses to contribute. The result was nearly 400 antiques - furniture, including Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton - silver and glassware. The Duke of Richmond loaned a portrait of Charles II and two Louis Quinze chairs. This bravura show lasted a fortnight and was said to rival the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Pageants and sport

An old-time cricket match was held in Priory Park on Sunday 24 June between the Mayor of Chichester’s XI and S.C.(Billy) Griffith’s XI. The Mayor’s team made 118 but unfortunately rain stopped play and the match was abandoned. A week later the Royal Sussex Regiment was presented with the Honorary Freedom of the City in Priory Park. This marked the Regiment’s 250th anniversary. The Duke of Norfolk, Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, and a former member of the Regiment, inspected. Winston Churchill sent a telegram of congratulation. The Regiment then paraded along North and West Streets to a service in the Cathedral. A Festival Regatta was held around Chichester Harbour at Itchenor, Bosham, Dell Quay, Thorney Island, and Hayling Island.

Towards the end of Chichester’s 1951 Festival of Britain Season there was an International Car Race Meeting held at Goodwood on Saturday 29 September. It was an occasion dominated by the Italian driver Giuseppe Farina who broke several lap records and won the Goodwood Trophy. And a young 21-year-old Englishman, Stirling Moss, won three races. 1951 was a memorable year in Chichester!

Richard Childs is the former County Archivist of West Sussex and member of the Society’s Executive Committee and the Newsletter Editorial Committee.

CITY OF CHICHESTER FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN CELEBRATIONS

OLD TIME CRICKET MATCH

PRIORY PARK, CHICHESTER

SUNDAY, 24TH JUNE, 1951

TEAMS

THE MAYOR OF CHICHESTER'S XI.

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| 1. HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR | <i>run out</i> | 13 |
| 2. E. E. HARRISON | <i>not out</i> | 18 |
| 3. R. LONGLANDS | | |
| 4. Dr. D. RICE | <i>c. Emmerson</i> | 45 |
| 5. A. BUCKLEY | <i>st. Griffiths</i> | 28 |
| 6. R. UNDERHILL | <i>b. Griffiths</i> | 1 |
| 7. R. PITTS | | |
| 8. A. PIPER | <i>c. Stimpson</i> | 10 |
| 9. S. BLYTHMAN | | |
| 10. H. W. RUFFELL | | |
| 11. J. RODWELL | <i>b. Manners</i> | 0 |
| EXTRAS | | 3 |
| TOTAL SCORE | | 118 |

S. C. GRIFFITH'S XI.

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1. S. C. GRIFFITH | | |
| 2. Dr. G. EMMERSON | | |
| 3. S. G. RICHARDS | | |
| 4. Cdr. J. MANNERS, R.N. | | |
| 5. J. LOCK | | |
| 6. H. A. SKINNER | | |
| 7. R. BANFIELD | | |
| 8. Sq. Ldr. R. J. JENNINGS | | |
| 9. E. V. TIBBITS | | |
| 10. R. CHITTY | | |
| 11. A. F. STIMPSON | | |
| EXTRAS | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

UMPIRE L. C. HOOKER
 NOTCHER

UMPIRE C. W. HALL
 NOTCHER

A Collection will be made for The League of Friends of The Royal West Sussex Hospital by Nurses of the Hospital.

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

MINIMUM PRICE THREEPENCE

Rain stopped play.

There was a cricket match at Priory Park on 24 June, but ‘rain stopped play’!
Image: West Sussex Record Office ref, WSRO MP 376



Chichester’s celebratory Souvenir Programme for 1951 Image: West Sussex Record Office, ref WSRO MP2100



The Goodwood International Motor Race Meeting was held on 29 Sep 1951



There were concerts, plays and exhibitions across Sussex in 1951
Image: West Sussex Record Office, ref WSRO MP 376

CHICHESTER'S FIRE MARKS

Brian Henham warns historic fire marks can be seen in Chichester but beware of forgeries

In the Georgian and Victorian eras, the buildings in our towns and villages were liberally adorned with brightly coloured fire insurance badges known as fire marks. Nowadays you are more likely to come across a fire mark in an antique shop, auction room or car boot sale than on a building. But if you are thinking of buying one – beware. There are a lot of fakes and reproductions about.

The first fire marks

The first fire marks appeared towards the end of the 17th century, with the birth of fire insurance. They were cast in lead by plumbers and made in batches for the fire insurance companies. The policy numbers were stamped on a panel below the company badge and when the policy was sold, the mark was fixed to the insured building, usually between the first floor windows. Houses were not numbered and very few streets were named in those days and this was the only positive identification as to which building was covered by the policy.

Very soon after its formation in London in 1710, the Sun Fire Office started to appoint agents in major towns and cities around the country. Other companies followed suit and by the end of the 18th century, there were over 30 companies offering fire insurance in Britain. In theory, with the arrival of the Uniform Penny Post system in 1840, identifying properties became easier and there was less need for the fire mark. By now the marks were providing a colourful means of

advertising for the fire insurance companies. Meanwhile, lead had become very expensive and the material of which they were made was changed to copper and later to tinned-iron. The practice of fixing marks to buildings finished altogether in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Fire mark collectors

It was at about this time that fire mark collecting began. By the 1930s, there were a number of large privately-owned collections and in 1934, the Fire Mark Circle was formed for those who not only collected marks but also had an interest in the history of fire insurance and fire-fighting. During the 1970s and 1980s, considerable research was carried out and a definitive book was produced, covering the subject of British fire marks in considerable detail (see below). Whilst it is regrettable that so many marks have been removed from their original location over the last 100 years, it could be said that at least they have been saved, when otherwise the majority would probably have been lost for ever.

Chichester's fire marks

By examining the census records, it has been possible to establish that in 1851, at least 15 insurance companies had agents in Chichester. By this time, lead marks had given way to copper or tinned-iron but as each policy was sold, the company mark was still attached to the insured building. The Chichester agents were located mainly in South, East and West Streets, but also in the Pollants and St Martin's Square. They included three Solicitors, three Grocers, a Bank Manager, a Schoolmaster, a Book Seller and a Plasterer. In the panel on the facing page contemporary fire marks of eight of the companies represented by agents are shown, together with the agents' name and location.

We can still see some original fire marks in Chichester. There are Guardian marks in East Street, Cavendish Street and Washington Street and lead Sun Fire Office marks in North Street and Little London. One does not need to walk far from there however, to find a reproduction Sun mark, which is attached to a building in St Pancras. It bears a fixing-tab at the top. The Sun never made a fire mark with this tab. It is a well-known reproduction of which hundreds were made and it is not intended to deceive. A few years ago, when the old Shippams factory in East Walls was closed and partly demolished, a Sun 'fire mark' was found on a wall which caused quite a stir at the time. All sorts of incorrect information was written about it but it was not a genuine mark at all. It was one of the reproduction marks with the fixing tab.

Fakes and forgeries

After the Second World War, fire marks started to fetch good prices and lead fakes began to appear. Sand was mixed with clay, moistened and compressed in to a mould-box. A genuine fire mark was then pressed into the sand to make a mould. Molten lead was poured in to the mould, allowed to cool, removed and cleaned. The resultant 'mark' would then be artificially aged, often by being buried in earth for a period to acquire a patina. The mark would ultimately end up being sold as genuine to some unsuspecting purchaser.

So how does one recognise a fake lead mark? Firstly, by ignoring the front and closely examining the back. Lead was expensive and original marks were cast upright in a two-piece mould, so that the convex design on the front appeared concave on the back. When cast in a sand-mould, the back is flat – the forger cannot replicate the concave design. If you have a lead mark with a flat back, look closer still. You may find small ‘pock-marks’ resembling the surface of the moon. When marks are sand-cast by amateurs, small air bubbles often occur, which when the lead cools, burst to leave small indentations. The final clue is that the policy numbers were punched in to the mark by the plumber, holding the mark on an anvil. The lead was quite thin and this usually left an image of the number in reverse on the back or at least signs of bruising. This cannot be replicated by the forger.

So before you buy a lead fire mark, remember the old adage – ‘Caveat Emptor’ – let the buyer beware! And if you have a genuine fire mark on your building, please leave it there. It is, after all, part of our heritage.

Brian Henham lives in Chichester, is Vice President of the UK Fire Mark Circle and co-author of *The British Fire Mark 1680-1879* by Brian Wright. Woodhead-Faulkener, 1982. Copies for sale are rare but may be available online via AbeBooks. Brian is a member of the Newsletter Editorial Committee.



This house in Little London has a Sun fire mark issued in the 1750s
Photo: Brian Henham



A Sun fire mark can be seen on 54 North Street, just below the roof. It was issued about 1757.
Sketch by Chichester historian Ken Green



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHICHESTER SOCIETY

will be held on Wednesday 27 October 2021 at 7.00 pm

At the Council House, North Street, Chichester in the Assembly Room.

GUEST SPEAKER, MARGARET PAREN OBE, FORMER CHAIR OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

After the formal business is complete a glass or two of wine or soft drink and light refreshments will be served. At about 8.00 pm Margaret Paren will speak on **the South Downs National Park, its history and future prospects**

A detailed agenda and copies of the annual accounts will be available at the meeting. This will contain the usual items of Officers’ reports, Approved Accounts and Nominations for next year’s Executive Committee members (see below).

MOTIONS FOR THE AGM AND NOMINATIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE 2021-22

The Constitution requires that the members of the Executive Committee (up to 16 places) and the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are elected at each AGM. Nominations in writing, supported by a seconder and with the consent of the nominee - all being current members - are therefore requested. They must be received by the Secretary, Anthony Quail at his address below 14 days before the date of the meeting, by Wednesday 13 October 2021. A nomination form is provided below.

A list of nominations received and details of any motions received will be sent by post to members as soon as possible after nominations close **unless no positions are contested and no further motions are submitted.**

There is provision in the Constitution for the period of service of Officers to be extended by one year subject to a vote of approval at the AGM. In the absence of other nominations, this provision will be invoked for the office of Secretary.

The Chairman and Treasurer will also present their reports and members are encouraged to put questions and initiate discussion after each of the reports.

By order of the Executive Committee
Anthony Quail, Secretary, 44 Westgate, Chichester PO19 3EU

| | |
|--|---|
| CHICHESTER SOCIETY AGM Wednesday 27 October 2021 NOMINATION FORM | Please cut or photocopy this form if you have a nomination and send it to Anthony Quail, Secretary at 44 Westgate, Chichester PO19 3EU by Wednesday 13 October 2021. |
| TITLE OF OFFICE | |
| NOMINEE’S NAME | |
| NOMINEE’S SIGNATURE | |
| PROPOSER’S NAME (CAPS) | |
| PROPOSER’S SIGNATURE | |
| SECONDER’S NAME (CAPS) | |
| SECONDER’S SIGNATURE | |

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN CHICHESTER

Chichester District Council (CDC) recently consulted on a draft policy titled Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026. Your Executive Committee responded in some detail. We summarise here three themes which we stressed: air quality monitoring, greener transport, and planning and housing.

AIR QUALITY

The council proposed ‘Undeclaring’ (or de-listing) the existing **Stockbridge and Orchard Street Air Quality Management Areas**

We agreed. The good news is that air quality in these areas has improved so much that de-listing is expected under standard procedure. However, we added the proviso that proposed ongoing less-intensive monitoring should be robust enough to quickly reinstate these as Management Areas if needed.

Cancel ozone monitoring at Lodsworth

We disagreed because - as the Action Plan itself stated – ‘Ozone is an important pollutant...(and)... it is predicted that ground level ozone will worsen due to climate change’. To meet its commitment to the Air-Alert service, CDC should maintain ozone monitoring at Lodsworth.

GREENER TRANSPORT

CDC to electrify its fleet of vehicles

We agreed but urged changes be implemented gradually – to contain costs and monitor for unexpected problems (and newer technology). We also supported a proposal for a small fleet of ‘ebikes’ for local journeys of an official nature.

Encourage ‘green travel’ by CDC staff

We agreed but said this should be extended to councillors – because it’s important that our elected Members set an example.

Cycle use in Chichester

We felt the document lacked ambition when referring to a 5 percent rise in cycling as ‘highly ambitious’. In the Netherlands, one quarter of all journeys are by cycle. A 5 percent increase from a low baseline is unambitious for this area which has similarly flat terrain and perhaps better weather.

Different parking charges that favour electric vehicles (EVs)

The draft Action Plan dismissed this idea, saying that EVs are expected to cost no more than petrol cars in a few years. We disagreed as we felt that ‘price parity’, which influences purchase decisions, is less important than influencing which vehicle is actually used for any particular journey. Parking charges tailored to encourage use of EVs within the city could do much to improve our air quality. Recent changes in the use of disposable plastic bags illustrate how even quite small price differences can influence behaviour.



Orchard Street is one of Chichester’s more polluted streets owing to the volume of traffic using this route as an inner bypass through the city
Photo: Richard Childs

PLANNING AND HOUSING

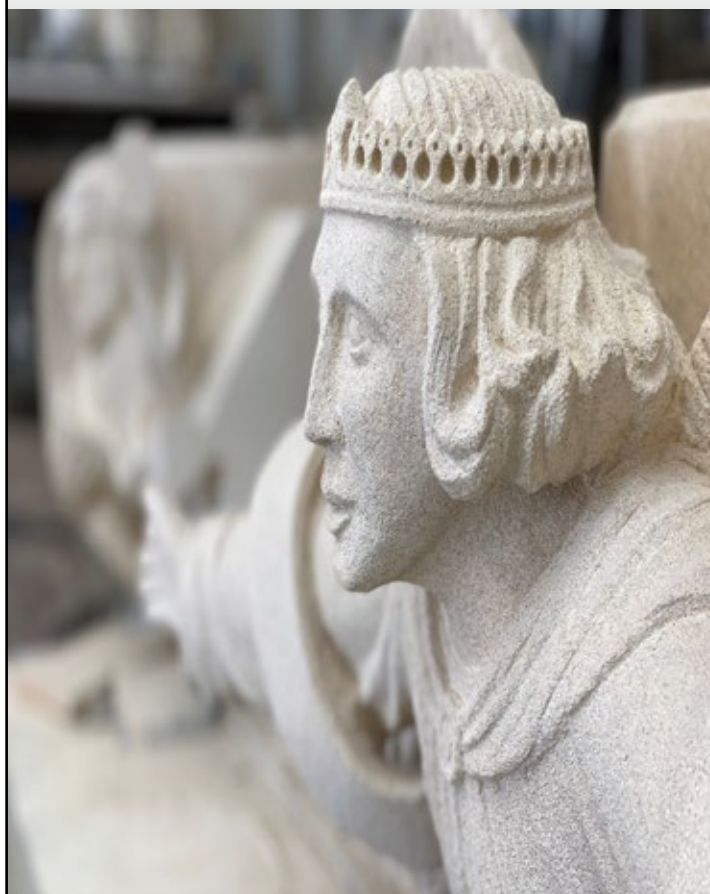
We urged CDC to be more active during the planning process. We gave two recent examples of poor outcomes:

- Shopwyke Lakes was promoted as a ‘sustainable urban extension’ – but in reality this community is severed from the rest of Chichester by the A27 and residents rely on their cars
- Whitehouse Farm (aka Minerva Heights) was also promoted as a sustainable extension, yet current proposals would degrade the existing, rather good walking and cycling route.

The Society suggested that, in terms of air quality, congestion and quality of life, CDC could give a stronger steer than has been the case in recent years when new housing developments are being planned. For example, the Action Plan document talks of shared car clubs. Pre-planning advice from CDC should strongly press the case for car clubs within larger new housing schemes.



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Part of a carved reredos in Park Lane, Bath Stone



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To find out more, please visit:
www.chichesterstoneworks.co.uk

HELP THE SOCIETY'S FUTURE!

Remembering the Chichester Society when arranging future bequests will help continue this City's civic traditions. See below for contact information or access the Society's website
www.chichestersociety.org.uk

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Vice Chairman: Bill Sharp
Secretary: Anthony Quail*
Treasurer: Mark Hoult

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Richard Childs*, Margaret Evans, John
Halliday, Christopher Mead-Briggs*,
Cedric Mitchell, Trevor Redman,
Grace Taylor and John Templeton*

*Member, Newsletter Editorial Committee
which includes Brian Henham
& Vincent Porter.

MEMBERSHIP

Single membership:

£8 by standing order or £11 by cheque
payable to the Chichester Society.

Joint membership:

£12 by standing order or £15 by cheque.

Life membership

(60 years and over):
£120 single and £160 joint.

Under 18 years: £4.

Corporate membership: £100 (one-off).

**Applications and/or queries about
membership** and annual subscriptions
to the Vice Chairman, Bill Sharp at 13
Whyke Lane, Chichester PO19 7UR.

Email: membership@chichestersociety.org.uk

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