



The Community Newsletter of TOTSOC - the Totnes and District Society

Chairman's Ouiz

Judy Westacott

As the environmental settings of our Town and surrounding villages are more and more at risk as developers look to green field sites for housing, I have set a quiz to test your knowledge of the birds and flowers, some of which can be seen locally. I hope you enjoy it and look forward to seeing you at our AGM on the 15th of October.

To help you here is a sample clue together with the answer:

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Regal Angler?

Birds:

- Does it rub when you move slowly?
- 2. Fight in a row
- 3. Can't tell it from butter
- 4. Nocturnal Vessel
- 5. A utensil you don't like receiving
- 6. A silly person
- 7. Find it on the beach and avoid it
- 8. An aid to memory
- 9. Part of an Elizabethan ladies attire
- 10. A communist lower leg

Answer - Kingfisher

Flowers:

- 11. Spread on your bread and use it to wash it down
- 12. Did it bark as she got up?
- 13. Gather them in the Spring
- 14. Man about town with a roar
- 15. Straight-laced English bloomer
- 16. Bees use it to raise their young
- 17. Rye Blossom
- 18. Lovers plea
- 19. Will she give you an answer?
- 20. Hairy old gentleman

Answers on page 13

Some Changes in Totnes

Iohn Keleher

Change is a feature of human activity. But in many ways the rate of change which has taken place since the end of World War 2 has been far faster than ever before in the history of mankind. This change, largely brought about by the enormous strides in technology, has affected every aspect of our lives: this includes where and how we live. To what extent, we wonder, has Totnes been affected by this phenomenon?

In the Totnes Archive (previously called The Study Centre) which is housed in the tiny (too tiny) premises behind the Museum there is an important document which TOTSOC presented to the Totnes Borough Council in 1971. This paper isn't a planning document: it is, as the authors point out, "a statement of a set of values which the Society believes to be at stake in Totnes."

It seems to me that these values are pretty much the same now as they were in 1971, These can be summed up as a valuing of the town's long history and its buildings; maintaining it as a pleasant place to live; at the same time recognising that the town must change with the times. As a member of the Society and since TOTSOC owns any copyright you can, for a small fee, walk away with your own photo copy since TOTSOC owns the copyright and you are a member of TOTSOC. Alternatively, you can read the Archive's copy on site.

In paragraphs 6-17 of the 132 paragraphs there is set out what the authors call 'The Functions of the Town'. The town's role, it states, is a subtle mixture of seven functions: as

- 1. an agricultural market
- 2. a shopping centre
- a centre for other services 3.
- 4. a port
- 5. a commercial and industrial entity
- 6. a tourist centre
- a residential area and place for retirement.

How relevant are the first four of these functions today over forty years later? What impact has the inevitable process of change had on the town over this period?

As an agricultural Centre.

The paper points out the cattle market, the bacon factory, the dairy-related activity of the Unigate site as examples of Totnes' agricultural activity: none of these exist today. It goes on to mention the presence of South Devon Farmers and specifically mentions Harris's ironmongers as being examples of the agricultural services which were a feature of the town at the time: the current owner of this shop has recently made a use-it-or-lose-it appeal to the population of the town.

This move away from agriculture as an important feature of life in Totnes is further

illustrated by the fact that in the 2011 Census 0% of those in work reported that they were employed in the agricultural/forestry/fishing sector! Although there were no figures available at the time it's pretty safe to assume that the percentage in 1971 who were, would have been higher than 0%, otherwise the authors of the paper would not have claimed Agriculture as being one of Totnes' main seven functions.

As a shopping centre.

Like every other town Totnes was traditionally a collection of small independent shops, each being run by local people, upon which the townsfolk and those from surrounding villages relied for their shopping. The paper acknowledges that Totnes cannot compete with larger neighbouring towns as a regional shopping centre, and it goes on to talk about the need for what it calls 'specialist' shops which visitors are likely to find attractive; these shops should fit in with the historic character of the town.

The authors recognise the threat posed to the town's shops by the supermarkets and the out-of- town shopping centres, and press for a 10 mile no-out-of-town shopping centre zone. They go on to urge the County Council to continue its opposition to such developments. However, they try to have it all ways, for they have no objection to such convenience developments taking place within (their underlining!) provided they are consistent with the character of the town. That was the way TOTSOC saw the position in 1971. How does it look nowadays, at least from one member's viewpoint?

In recent years society has changed enormously, and this has had a knock-on effect on the way we shop and on the role of small independent units within a community. As we've noted, in 1971 these faced life-threatening competition from the supermarkets and the out-of-town shopping centres, but today the situation is probably worse. First, there are, nearly half a century later, far more cars on the road and these are no longer the preserve of the males in the family! Women are driving all over the place to do the family shopping! It's not a question of Totnes not being able to compete with our rival towns in the region, because nowadays these places are more readily accessible when necessary - as are, on a more regular basis, the out-of-town outlets. Second, the Internet had yet to be invented in 1971, but when it was it did not take long for shopping to be revolutionised.

Today on-line purchasing presents a constant threat to the future of all shops, not just small local outlets, since with each year the value of on-line purchases increases at (to a shopkeeper) an alarming rate. Thirdly, as a means of trying to learn any changes that have taken place in the intervening years we turn again to the Census of 2011 when 20% of Totnesians who were in work reported that they were employed in retail/wholesale businesses.

How much of this activity takes place outside Totnes we do not know. Unfortunately there are no figures for around 1971 but it's likely that this figure would have been higher since this was one of the major functions of the town at the time. (As an aside it occurs to me that in 1971 you bought from these small shops the quantities that you, the customer wanted. The number of bacon rashers you wanted were sliced off in front of you; the grocer would cut off the quantity of cheese you wanted; if you

needed only one lemon then one lemon you bought. Nowadays, when so many of the goods we buy are pre-packaged we are increasingly being forced into buying the quantities that supermarkets want us to buy - presumably with a view to increasing their profits.)

As a centre for other services.

The paper notes a number of areas of economic activity, and among these it lists schools, hospitals, public buildings, local government, solicitors, banks, surgeries etc. It goes on to urge an expansion of these activities provided the vitality of the town is not compromised. Unfortunately there are no statistics telling us how many people were employed in these areas in 1971, but forty years later nearly 60% of the working population was. However, there seems to be no data showing how much of this type of work is carried on outside the town (for example in Torbay or Plymouth) but we can assume that this sector within the town itself has expanded since the paper was produced.

As a port.

At the time the Dart brought upstream to Totnes mainly timber and people. What's more, TOTSOC wanted to see an expansion of this function, perhaps with even bigger timber-carrying ships, since it was of some economic importance to the town. However, the authors warned against the dangers of this for it might further threaten the area, pointing out that

"The river, its banks its buildings and walks and trees, could be an unsullied delight. Too much of it now is tawdry and uncertain, from the industrial buildings fronting on the Plains to the spatter of buildings and the dying trees of the east bank and the Long Marsh."

The Dart no longer brings timber, and so the associated jobs have gone as well. But the above description of the riverside would certainly not apply today, since the changes that have taken place since those words were written have certainly been for the better.

Conclusion.

Despite the absence of good comparative data it would seem that over the last fortyodd years Totnes has not been immune from the inexorable process of change as far as these four functions are concerned. If employment figures are an indicator then it is as an agricultural centre where change has been the most noticeable, while, of the four functions we've looked at, it is the services sector which has probably expanded the most. Port-wise there has been a considerable improvement in the environment as a result of its losing one of its roles, but the volume of riverborne human traffic has probably increased since (a) there are now more and bigger boats sailing between Dartmouth and Totnes and (b) the Round Robin is a post 1971 attraction.

But it is in the function as a centre for shopping where change is most marked – and controversial! Changes have taken place in society, resulting not only in the way people shop but also in their expectation of shops' functions. Increasingly a high

street is becoming a place to socialise rather than a place to buy the necessities of life. It is here that perhaps the biggest long-term changes will be. At a future date I hope to consider the three other functions highlighted in the paper.

But in the meantime why not nip along to the Totnes Archive on a Thursday or a Friday to have a look at this 1971 TOTSOC paper? You'll find Jill Drysdale and Sue King extremely helpful.

St Andrew's Church, Ipplepen

Lawrence Green



Ipplepen is a large vibrant village near Newton Abbot that remains compact without having sprawled all over the place. Its name is unusually Celtic for Saxon Devon, not 'Ipela's Fold' as written in the church, but 'Ipela's Hill or Headland', 'pen' being triumphantly pre-Saxon.

St Andrew's church is on a slight knoll at the northern end of the village and lies north-east to south-west rather than the more conventional west to east. With its fringe of trees in the churchyard it can be seen from miles away, particularly from the Totnes direction. The whole church building, except the sanctuary extension, is rendered in a grey mortar, much as it would have been when built.

It is the third church built on the site; all traces of the Saxon building have gone. Traces of the Norman church remain: the weathered red sandstone arch over the outside of the north, or 'Devil's, door and the reworked sandstone pillars of the magnificent arcade.

A yew tree, what appears to be a granite font and a correctly restored granite churchyard cross lie just outside the south doorway with its eighteenth century sundial and parvisse, or room over the porch. The tower, which is ninety-one feet and six inches tall, is remarkably similar to the tower of nearby Torbryan church with its eight small turrets.

Entering through the south porch past the broken holy water stoup we see the massive oak door which probably is as old as most of the church, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century. The original lock case has an upside down keyhole and a key weighing one pound eleven ounces.

The church interior is uncluttered, spacious and light. Beer stone perpendicular windows with clear glass line up with the arches of the magnificent arcade. The gothic arches are in red sandstone and the octagonal pillars are reworked Norman pillars. By contrast the capitals are beer stone and are mostly carved in foliar patterns. The exception is the capital nearest the 'Devil's door' which shows a man, a woman, a cat, a dog and an owl. Where the capitals remain uncarved it is thought that the Black Death was responsible.

Most of the church dates from between 1430 and 1450. The screen was badly damaged during the Civil War and magnificently and accurately restored by Herbert Read of Exeter during the 1890s. The whole rood loft was beautifully put back and the black paint removed from the forty-eight painted figures on the panels of the screen. They represent: twenty-four elders, twelve apostles and twelve prophets. The screen is one of the best in South Devon.

The polychrome pulpit on the north side of the nave in front of the screen also dates from 1430. The paint is original and ornate, the seventeenth century pulpit steps unusually encircle a pillar. The beer stone font dates from the same period and is now on the south side of the crossing. Some of the eight bells hung in the tower also date from before the Reformation.

The Victorians unusually added to rather than subtracted from the glory of this church building. The nave ceiling can only be described as 'open barrel vaulting' and is a remarkably successful restoration. The flat panelled aisle ceilings work well in a rather Tudor way. Fortunately the four Victorian stained glass windows, fine in their way, are confined to the sanctuary and to the east end of the south aisle. Two were given in memory of members of the Robinson family of nearby Parkhill House and contain fragments of mediaeval glass.

Other Victorian features which in no way clash with the mediaeval church are the plain wooden pews in the nave. The front three pews on each side of the central paved area are of carved oak modelled on fifteenth century pews. One wonders if funding ran out at this point. The floor, despite a seventeenth century plaque near the tower, is good Victorian herring bone red tile with parquet inlaid under the pews



and in front of the screen. Stone memorial slabs are set into the tile floor to very good effect.

This is a church building that is harmonious and exceptionally well cared for. The carpeted Sunday School corner at the west end of the south aisle and the carpeted side chapels and choir give a very cared-for impression.

There are a number of interesting details that do not dominate the general feeling of harmony. There is a small monument to two lpplepen men who died during the Boer War, the usual commemorative First and Second World War memorial, a wheeled iron safe dating from 1814 and a silver covered bible given to Commander Ivor Thorning MVO by King Hussein of Jordan in 1967.



On a window sill is the broken clapper of a bell that failed during a ring to celebrate fifty years since the accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth II.

Leaving by the ancient oak door we see the royal arms above, dating from the reign of George I but probably recycled from one of the Charles. Once more out in the churchyard we notice that the church has apparently sunk into its churchyard. This is unlikely; due to the numerous burials since Saxon times the ground level has risen.

The churchyard is reasonably level with a line of mature trees towards the back. Just beyond a particularly fine beech tree is a cross marking the grave of Bertram Fletcher Robinson who died aged thirty-six. He was Deputy Editor of the Daily Express and friend of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He lived with his wife at nearby Parkhill House and often entertained Doyle at their house. On one of Doyle's visits he and Robinson stayed at the Plume of Feathers at Princetown (now the Dartmoor National Park exhibition centre). Driven by Robinson's coachman Harry Baskerville, Doyle heard many a Dartmoor legend and was shown many a Dartmoor scene. However, it was at Cromer in Norfolk that Doyle and Robinson made up the plot for the Dartmoor classic 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'. The hound, being single, is not a Dartmoor hound which maraud in packs but a Norfolk 'Black Shuck' with glaring eye and glowing coat.

A footnote to this story that involved St Andrew's churchyard is as follows. Someone with a malevolent imagination rivalling that of Dr Moriaty concluded that Robinson had died from poison administrated by Dr Conan Doyle. He surmised that Doyle had done this quite soon after the publication of 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' so that he could take all the credit for the plot and invention of the tall tale. Application was made for the exhumation of Robinson's body so that a search for traces of poison could be made. After careful deliberation the Chancellor of the Diocese of Exeter denied the request as unfounded and ridiculous.

Near the northernmost of two lychgates can be found the gravestone of the Baskerville family. I cannot help but think that Harry Baskerville had the last laugh.

De-cluttering Our Streets

Anne Ward & Robin Lacey

Streets make up nearly 80% of the public realm in Totnes, but unfortunately our streets are cluttered up with signage, signposts, litter bins and bollards, a lot of which are either unnecessary, badly designed or poorly located.

The problem is that there is no one body or agency which oversees or takes responsibility for the public realm. This allows statutory bodies like water, electricity, gas companies and British Telecom, and LA's SHDC and DCC to install equipment when and where they think fit and more or less to do as they like. The result of this deficit is repetitive, redundant and misleading signage, inappropriate, poorly maintained and ad-hoc street furniture which means we end up with a degraded public realm.

Having one body with an overall strategy and design code which offered a cohesive placement programme which included the design and upkeep of street furniture, signage and waste management, would avoid a lot of the repetition of and redundant

and obsolete signage and general street clutter which degrades our public realm. According to English Heritage a large amount of street furniture has been provided simply because it has been provided in the past. There is a lot of "over signage", which can create confusion for both pedestrians and motorists as these duplicated signs illustrate.





Many of the signs in our streets are not subject to review and removal on a regular basis is a cost effective way of improving the streetscape.

Some signs are unclear due to where they have been sited, or because the lettering is too small or is displayed against a dark background. There is no duty for an authority to erect a sign unless a Traffic Regulation Order has been made (e.g. to prohibit entry, turning or parking for instance). Sometimes highway officers believe that a sign is required by regulation when it is not, or they fear that not installing a sign might leave the highway authority exposed to liability.

This kind of risk averse approach just produces a lot of unnecessary duplication of signage and street furniture which is not required by DfT regulations. Interestingly overuse of signs is not really a defence alone in law, as current case law says that drivers are 'first and foremost responsible for their own safety*.



There are some examples of signs which are well designed however, as this example on the Plains shows. The message is clear because it uses large black lettering against a white background and includes symbols which are easily understood. Signs with symbols are particularly useful to visitors as symbols cross language barriers and are easier to understand.

There are a lot of examples of bollards which are installed where none are necessary. Civic Voice, English Heritage and the Department for Transport all advise that bollards should be avoided unless

^{*} DfT Local Transport note 1/108 on 'Traffic Management and Streetscape'



absolutely necessary.

They advise that bollards should only be considered as part of a co-ordinated street furniture design programme. However there seems to be no consistent policy regarding the placement of bollards in our main streets. These can be an obstruction to those with push and wheel chairs, and those who are visually impaired. They can also be a hazard for the elderly and those with mobility problems.

Overuse of bollards in Totnes degrades our historic streets by adding to the visual clutter and hiding architectural lines. There are alternative design solutions such as strengthening the pavements and raising kerb heights, or not employing off the shelf models and creating locally distinctive and site-specific solutions that add to the character of the street and even and add an accompanying function. Classically beautiful streets can have their character degraded and can start to appear over managed if bollards are used as a cheap solution to a greater problem. Often what is required is just more time,

more consultation or more resources rather than

installation. 'Less is more' should be the guiding principle of a good design scheme'.

So how can we reduce the clutter?

Some of the ways we can do this are for instance by reducing unnecessary signage and where possible, putting signs on buildings. Designing street furniture and clear legible signage which respects the character of the area.





Strengthening pavements as an alternative to bollards and probably most importantly, campaigning to get our local authority to bring all responsible bodies together to coordinate overall street design and implementing a regular programme of surveillance and maintenance.

The objects placed in our public spaces should be useful to us as citizens and to visitors to the town. They should enhance the public realm and help visitors to navigate the streets easily enabling them to find key historic landmarks easily, rather than experiencing the frustration of getting lost and wandering all over the place.

De cluttering the main streets would not only help to make the town more legible to visitors but would also highlight its unique qualities so that we have a public realm that we can be proud of.

Research and further reading:

English Heritage Streets for All Practical Case Studies 2008 - www.helm.org.uk
Traffic Signs Manual, DfT 2006 www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tss/tsmanual/
Manual for Historic Streets, www.historictownsforum.org/mfhs
Reducing Sign Clutter (TAL 01/13)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-sign-clutter
PRIAN, www.publicrealm.info
Street Pride Briefings on Signage and Bollards,
http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns/street-pride/

Open Letter to Sarah Wollaston MP

Totnes and District Society and South Hams Society

Dear Dr Wollaston

Planning and Housing Policies.

Sufficient time has elapsed since the Election to establish that the previous Government's planning and housing policies, which impact so adversely on areas like South Hams, remain broadly unchanged.

These policies are:

1. **Planning**: NPPF. Para.14 (which applies where there is no up-to-date local plan in place) coupled with para.47 (requiring the local authority to allocate sites sufficient to provide five years worth of deliverable sites to meet its stipulated housing needs). The application of the policies set out in these two paragraphs has resulted in consents being granted for sites, which on previous established planning criteria would have been considered unsuitable for development. An

instance of this was the application in respect of Great Court Farm where you gave help to the objectors. Because of these policies the SHDC planning officer understandably felt he had no alternative but to recommend conditional approval. A further example is the proposal for 30-70 houses north of Green Park Way in Chillington which is at the pre-application stage. The site is not allocated and is opposed by the local community but the developer has made it clear that should the application be refused they will appeal, again using these policy grounds. In the circumstances SHDC planners will find it difficult to recommend refusal.

2. **Affordable Housing**. Grant funding ceased under the previous administration and thus in South Hams the provision of affordable housing is almost wholly dependant on negotiations with developers for its provision on commercial development sites. This in turn is dependent on viability appraisals where the negotiating position of local authorities has been further weakened by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 allowing developers to seek to vary the terms of any s106 Agreement should they believe that a scheme has ceased to be viable. The position has been further exacerbated by developers no longer having to provide either any social housing or making a financial contribution in lieu where the development is of ten or fewer units.

The extension of the right to buy to tenants of Housing Associations will reduce yet further the availability of social housing as it will be impossible to replace those sold with equivalent numbers. Furthermore, reducing the value of Housing Associations' asset base will impair their ability to borrow and undertake new developments.

What needs to be done?

Planning. With regard to planning one size does not fit all. The economic drivers of the NPPF bear down particularly harshly on rural areas and small historic towns. The pendulum has swung too far in favour of the large commercial developers with small local authorities not being able to make decisions on an objective planning basis because of the risks inherent in facing an appeal which in many cases they are likely to lose because of the overriding imperatives of the NPPF.

We appreciate that a lone voice will achieve nothing in gaining changes to present policy but there must be many Conservative MPs in rural constituencies like Totnes where their constituents share similar views to those expressed here. We would ask you therefore to seek out those MPs and work together to make changes which allow these rural local authorities to make planning decisions which reflect better the nature and needs of their communities.

Affordable Housing. Latest available surveys show the level of affordable housing in South Hams to be 11% of total housing stock as opposed to a national level of 18% (contrast 30 years ago when it was 33%). The Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA) (October 2013) for South Hams demonstrates that at that date 242 affordable homes needed to be built in each year of the ensuing five years to meet both the then current "backlog" of need and ongoing requirements. Nearly two years on, the position can only have worsened.

The present position of leaving it to commercial developments to make adequate provision has not worked nor will it. The only practical way forward is to enable local authorities to have access to sources of funding from which to borrow, with the remit either, to acquire land and build enough homes themselves to meet the need, or work with Housing Associations to do so.

Again we would ask you to work with other members representing constituencies similar to your own facing similar difficulties to press for the measures suggested in the previous paragraph to be taken.

Yours sincerely

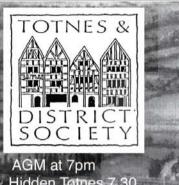
Kate Wilson (Planning Officer TOTSOC)
Paul Bennett (Secretary TOTSOC)
Vivien Napper (Chair SHS)

Quiz Answers

Judy Westacott

20. Old Mans Beard	10. Redshank
γsisΩ .91	9. Ruff
18. Forget-me-not	8. Knot
17. Cornflower	7. Shellduck
16. Honeysuckle	6. Goose
15. Primrose	5. Spoonbill
14. Dandelion	4. Nightjar
13. Lilac	3. Stork
12. Dog Rose	2. Sparrow
11. Buttercup	1. Chaffinch

2 SHOWS for your diary OCTOBER & NOVEMBER



Presentation by the Totnes Image Bank Images & stories from the archives

Hidden Totnes 7.30 Royal Seven Stars

Thursday 15th OCT TOTSOC & TOTNES IMAGE BANK members £2.00. non members £3.00

on the door.



annual end of year show ROYAL SEVEN STARS HOTEL

MAIN FEATURE STORY Cats Eyes Cunningham & the Totnes Air Crash 1941 PLUS

INTERESTING **NEW IMAGES & NEWS**



THURSDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2015 - 7PM START

Friends & Members of the TOTNES IMAGE BANK - FREE TOTSOC Members £2.00 Tickets for non members £5.00 on the door

Application to join the Totnes and District Society (TOTSOC)

Individual annual membership fee: £5.00; family membership: £8.00

Please complete the form below. Payment by standing order is much preferred, but if you wish to pay by cheque or cash this is also quite acceptable. The membership year is from 1st October.

Name	Tel
Address	Post Code
Email address	
STANDING ORDER FORM	
To: (name of your bank) Please set up the following Standing Order and	
1. Your Bank Account details	
Account name Ac	count Number:
Your bank branch	ort Code:
	Post code
2. Payee details	
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Account number of TOTSOC: 000 3. About the payment How often are the payments to be made: YEA Amount details: £5.00 / A Date of first payment: on or after 1st	27393 RLY E8.00 (delete one) October 2015 I you cancel this instruction)

Please return this completed form to Jeremy Logie, TOTSOC Treasurer,

15 Heath Way, Totnes, TQ9 5GP

He will then send the lower section it to your bank.

In Memoriam - Donald Bishop and Richard Davies

Totnes and District Society is sad to announce the death at 93 of long standing member Donald Bishop CBE. Donald, who grew up in Totnes and attended KEVICC in the 1930's, had an illustrious career in various government departments and organisations and as a Professor at UCL. He was an active member of TotSoc with a wealth of experience and chaired the planning committee for many years. Without him it is doubtful that the Southern Area development would have gone ahead and the Leechwell Garden established.

We were also sad to learn of the death of Richard Davies recently. Richard worked for several years for the Totnes Times and was a much respected reporter who was both fair and accurate in what he reported. No doubt members will remember his post-retirement article in the Spring edition of Contact earlier this year.

We extend our condolences to both families at this time.

The TOTSOC Committee

The current TotSoc Committee Members are:

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Chair

Paul Bennett paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com

Secretary

Sue Bennett paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com

Minute Secretary

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Public Art & Design Subcommittee

A form for joining TOTSOC is on the previous page.