



The Community Newsletter of TOTSOC - the Totnes and District Society

Report of the Secretary

Tom King

In normal times TOTSOC would be holding its annual general meeting at about this time. These are not normal times as COVID-19 restrictions prevent us holding an unrestricted meeting of members.

The Committee has considered the guidance from the Charity Commission and decided that it would be in the best interests of the Society to cancel this year's AGM and instead publish the treasurer's and other reports

normally presented to an AGM and provide an update on the membership of the committee.

This will mean that the officers and other committee members will not offer themselves for re-election this year. However the Committee would welcome new members: there is currently a specific vacancy for the role of Membership Secretary. Any member interested in joining the Committee should contact the secretary as the committee can co-opt new members without the need for a general meeting.

Sue Bennett did not intend to offer herself for re-election this year and has now stood down. At the next meeting of the committee our chairman, Paul Bennett will hand over to Jim Carfrae but remain a committee member. Sue and Paul have given many years of service to TOTSOC. The committee wishes to express its appreciation of their contributions over the years and is grateful that Paul will remain a committee member with a particular interest in town planning issues.

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St George's Church, Dittisham

Lawrence Green

Dittisham is a village that touches the River Dart in two places and is very popular with the boating fraternity. Although not far from Dartmouth it is difficult to reach through narrow, twisty lanes and down steep hills.

St George's Church sits behind a high wall on a shelf of land with magnificent views over the Dart and surrounding countryside. As in many Devon churches the red sandstone font reveals that an older church once stood on this site. The church was rebuilt and rededicated in 1333. The chancel and base of the tower date from this period. The four bay Beer Stone arcade and the two aisles date from the fifteenth century, as does the beautifully restored screen and the ornate porch with its parvise room with double window into the nave. The north vestry, built at an angle to the chancel, predates the Fifteenth Century work.



St George's seen from Riverside Road

Entering the porch from the narrow path beneath the wall, two bays of fine vaulting can be seen as well as some witch marks scratched on the doorframe. It is obvious that the stones forming the arch are more recent than the other stones of the doorway.



The Nave and Rood Screen

Inside there are steps down into the church and the Norman red sandstone font which features a frieze of arches. The interior space is uncluttered and spacious with Victorian restorations of the large perpendicular windows fairly close together. Some of the glass is admirably plain, some obscured by patterned stained glass, some, like the east window, attributed to Pugin. There are many signs of the 1846 restoration. The mainly wooden parquet floor is relieved in the aisles and nave by encaustic tiles with lines of triangles leading up to the screen, rather like the warning lights on the floor of an airliner. The only other place I have seen this feature was at St Nonna's Church at Altarnon, near Bodmin Moor.

The benches are standard Victorian pine. The woodwork of the screen top, barrel vaulted ceiling, choir stalls, and reredos is wonderful early Twentieth Century by Herbert Reed of Exeter. Most of the lower part of the screen is original early Fifteenth Century with scratched-out painted figures on the wainscoting panels. Reed matched the outspringing for the absent rood loft perfectly to the original mediaeval work. There are some Roman numerals scratched on the screen as well as some witch marks.



Wine Glass Pulpit

There is a very fine carved and painted stone pulpit in the north crossing near the screen. It rises on fluted columns like a wine glass to a bowl with rustic painted figures. It is very hard to date, my guess is somewhere between the Fifteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Pevsner ducks the issue; so will I!

In the choir the two north and south parclose screens are original and date from later in the Fifteenth Century than the screen. There is evidence of a blocked window in the sanctuary on the north side. The Pugin east window retains the unusual Fourteenth Century shape at the head of the arch. There are some fine slate ledger stones on the floor of the sanctuary around the ornate stone altar and an unusual step halfway up the choir.



Parclose Screen

Back in the nave, under the lofty barrel roof, the grey Victorian stencilled screen separates the tower from the nave.



The Barrel Roof

In the north aisle a war memorial commemorated the seven Dittisham men who never returned from the First World War. Among them is William Robert Came, whose separate monument to the left was paid for by his parents, the village blacksmith and his wife. Sapper Came emigrated to Australia but answered the old country's call to arms. He was sent to France with the Australian Imperial Forces and killed at the Battle of the Somme on August 3rd 1916 at Pozières in the final phase of the capture of the windmill, the highest point on the battlefield.

In the south aisle near the tower is a model ship and a bell, a representation of HMS Dittisham which served in the Second World War. Diagonally opposite, in the north chapel behind the screen, five old heavy iron keys are mounted on a board to show how hard the churchwardens must once have worked when opening and closing the church. The whole interior of the church is spacious and well cared for, reflecting the lively and active life of the church in this parish.

Outside the porch in the churchyard I wondered if the high wall was built as the result of widening of the road outside. It is too high and too close to the church to

be original. The main entrance lies up the sloping churchyard where an oak lych gate features two doors which each swing from a rod in the middle of each, an unusual arrangement. There is no slab on which to rest a coffin. On both the south and north sides of the church the original churchyard has many fine slate and sandstone gravestones and an angel pointing the way to Heaven. Many local families like the Tuckers and Tozers are represented. There is a superb view over the new part of the churchyard several feet below a wall to the Dart beyond.

The grey slate masonry of the tower and the exterior of the church were probably rendered at one time. The tower is plain; the lower part dates from 1333, the upper from the fifteenth century with four Victorian finials. Although it is not visible from much of the village it can be seen from miles away from the far side of the river.

Both church and churchyard are well worth a visit. The perils of the roads on the way to Dittisham are soon forgotten when one sits on a bench in the churchyard listening to the clock strike and admiring the view.

Treasurer's Report

Jeremy Logie

Totnes and District Society

Abbreviated accounts for the year ended 30th June 2020.

| INCOME | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Subscriptions | £476.00 | £523.00 |
| AGM, members evening | £49.00 | £105.50 |
| Quiz night, donations | | £246.00 |
| Bank interest | <u>£22.18</u> | <u>£19.16</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>£547.18</u> | <u>£893.66</u> |
| | | |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Printing CONTACT | £274.20 | £337.00 |
| AGM expenses | £45.00 | £60.00 |
| Donation | £50.00 | £200.00 |
| Bank charges | £60.00 | £60.00 |
| Website | £47.84 | £34.74 |
| Postage, etc. | <u>£12.20</u> | <u>£26.86</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>£489.24</u> | <u>£718.60</u> |

Follaton House, Totnes

Judy Westacott (with help from a booklet published by SHDC)

Follaton House is the home of South Hams District Council, where our Council Tax goes, where planning decisions are made. Ignore the Council add-on buildings and consider the history of the building and its grounds,

There has been a Follaton settlement/barony since at least Norman times and it was owned, at one time, by the Norman Judael - of Totnes castle fame. In the 14th Century the manor was given to the monks of Totnes Priory and remained in their ownership until the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th Century.

If you have been in the main building you will be familiar with the room names Smyth, Carey and Repton. Why were they chosen? Well towards the end of the 16th Century the freehold was purchased by Walter Smyth, a landowner and former Mayor of Totnes. On his death, ownership passed to his son Bernard, who was also a past Mayor.

The next longstanding owner, Andrew Hilly, sold Follaton to Edward Cary and his family lived there for the next 130 years. By this time a house had been built, a modest stone building with a garden and stable.

Edward's son George commissioned a new house - enter Mr George Stanley Repton who built it in 1826. His house was built in a neo-classic style with a four columned ionic portico.



Follaton House in 1827 (one year after it was built)

Eventually Totnes Borough Council bought the building for its water rights which provided the main source of water for the town. It then passed to the Co-operative Holidays Association and, during their ownership, was 'listed'. In 1965, it was purchased by the Totnes Rural District Council and passed to the south Hams District Council following the government re-organisation in 1974.

Since then, there have been several extensions now fortunately replaced by a solid construction. I wonder who the new owner/s will be after the next government re-organisation!

Reform of the Planning System

White Paper August 2020

Paul Bennett

"The Planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development."

What does this mean? The close relationship between members of the government and major developers has inevitably influenced the tone of the document with its emphasis on making more land available for development in the shortest space of time. What it fails to recognise is that unless the public sector is involved in the direct provision of housing the amount of development and its timing will be determined solely by commercial interest and not community needs.

At the heart of the White Paper is the introduction of a 'zonal' planning system that would see permission granted automatically on sites that have been allocated for development with little control by a local authority and even less by the local community.

The new system would instruct local authorities to divide all the land within its area into three categories: growth, renewal and protection. Growth areas will be categorised as suitable for substantial development, with permission being granted automatically to developments that meet the requirements of a council's local plan. The detail therefore which is required to be negotiated in the sensitive areas existing within the South Hams at the time of a planning application presumably would be lost with developers having the upper hand.

'Zoning' is a concept alien to England because of the complex needs of its close-knit structure. However it is an established concept used by many countries across the world where the landscape remains the same over wide areas. Why the Government seeks to introduce it here indicates a lack of thought being given to

our landscape history.

Our own South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is perhaps the equivalent of 'zoning' as of course is Dartmoor National Park. We do have the equivalent of zoning where it is appropriate.

Our system is more 'discretionary' with decisions being taken on a case-by-case basis. The imposition of a broad-brush national zonal system would be wholly alien to a small-scale land like the UK.

Perhaps a further purpose of zoning is to reduce yet further the cost of local authority planning departments already lacking in resources to enable them to function properly, reflected in the number of complaints already generated.

One of the stated aims of the White Paper is to meet the housing needs both of the private and public sectors. However until this obligation is removed from the private sector this will never happen. On every planning application submitted by private sector housing developers there is always a long drawn out argument as to the number of dwellings to be provided in any development for the public sector.

Taking a figure of say 30% of the development to be allocated to the provision of public housing the developer will inevitably plead that this figure renders the proposed development unviable leading to lengthy argument and consequent delay.

This system of involving Developers in the provision of public sector housing is totally flawed. Developers have as their principal objective the making of maximum profit achievable as their duty to shareholders and consequently it is unreasonable to expect them to behave otherwise. The timing of their undertaking any development is governed by market conditions and not the needs of the homeless. It flies in the face of reason to expect them to behave otherwise. Whilst the government has complained that the current system is slow and cumbersome it doesn't get away from the fact that more than one million homes for which, in the last decade, planning consent has been granted have yet to be built. In the majority of cases that is the profit motive at work. 'Land-banking' is common practice amongst developers i.e. retain the land for which consent has been granted until the maximum profit by proceeding with the development occurs.

What is to be done? The provision of public and private sectors of housing should be separated. The responsibility of providing public sector housing should be passed back to local authorities which in turn would work with Housing Associations where this is appropriate e.g. where the local authority is small and it would be more economical to work with an existing Association.

Not being obliged to provide affordable housing (which in any event here in South Hams has never been affordable) will result in higher profit for developers and therefore a means of taxing this profit should be devised. The amount raised should be passed to local authorities to offset some of the cost of their affordable

housing provision.

To meet the requirements of public sector housing compulsory purchase powers would need to be given to local authorities. This would be particularly important in areas like the South Hams where there is insufficient land available to meet the need of affordable housing.

The Right to Buy under the Housing Act 1980 was a disaster. It destroyed the accord existing in the post war years where the two major political parties both supported the provision of social housing and vied with each other to provide more.

The discounts on buying council owned dwellings ranging from 31% to 50% was excessive and coupled with none of the sale money being returned to the local authority to replace those sold has resulted in no small measure in the present huge lack of affordable homes.

Although clearly of benefit to those buying their own freehold it has resulted in a considerable number of purchases being funded by rental companies who contracted to buy the dwelling after the restriction on re-sale had ended. These were subsequently let out at full market rent thereby negating the purposes of the Act.

In the mid -1960s house building reached a peak of just under 350,000 units being built in a year with approximately one third of these being provided by local authorities. By 2018 that figure had been reduced to a total of 150,000 units with virtually none being provided by local authorities with small percentage only by Housing Associations.

The present system with regard to housing has failed with the proposals in the White Paper containing nothing to cure that failure.

With regard to Planning the proposals contained in the White Paper are facile and inappropriate for a complex country which England is. The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 has served us well as a basis for our planning laws. Sadly it has been undermined in recent years.

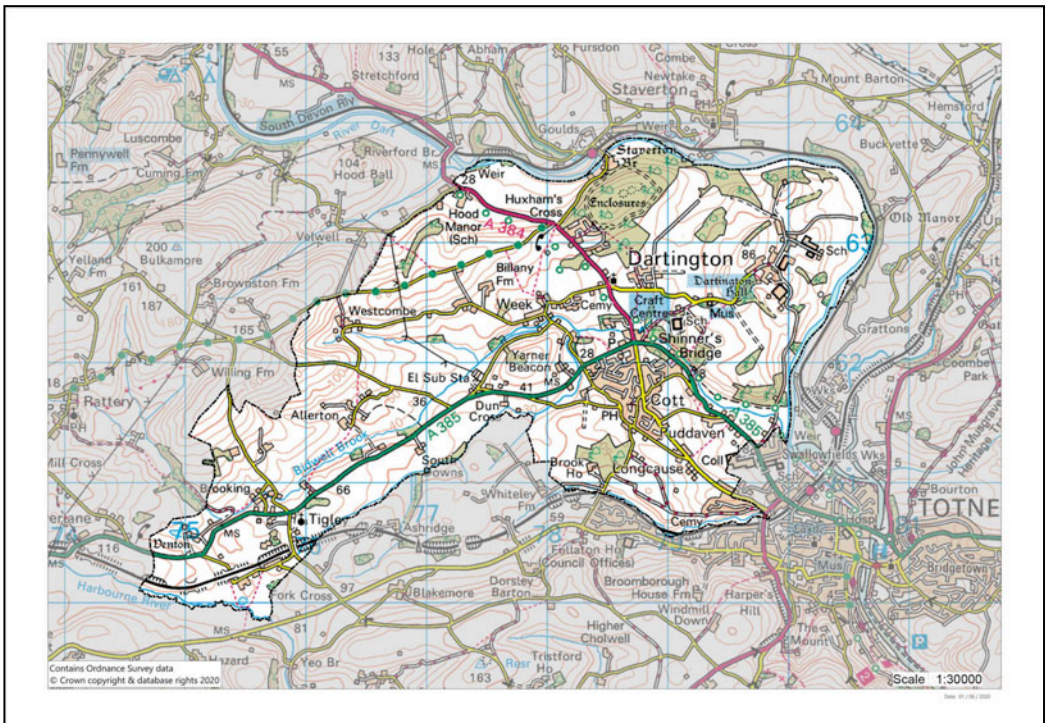
Heavily deregulated and underfunded, the notion of public interest planning focused on sustainable development is effectively dead in England. We need to relearn the principles of 1947, as relevant today as they were then.

Neighbourhood Planning and the “Planning for the Future” White Paper

Kate Wilson

The most successful of the community rights brought in by the coalition government in the 2011 Localism Act has been Neighbourhood Planning. Over a thousand Neighbourhood Plans (NP) have been adopted by Local Planning Authorities and are contributing to planning policies. NPs are not without their problems: too much expertise is expected of amateurs and aspirations about what can be achieved are often unrealistic. Nevertheless, Neighbourhood Planning is a right which allows communities to play a role in addressing local planning issues. The White Paper, “Planning for the Future” threatens to take this right away in all but name.

Under the new proposals, NPs are supported, but it is not at all clear what they will be able to do. There is a suggestion that they could operate at “street level”, but what this means is uncertain.



Parish Map of Dartington

There is also a suggestion of “new digital co-creation platforms and 3D visualisation technologies” being made available so that people can “explore proposals within the local context”. It seems it’s not enough that those working on NPs become adept at negotiating the planning system, now they must learn another set of skills. Perhaps the aim is to encourage younger people to be involved in NPs, but if this is the case, I’m not sure it’s going to work.

So, what is to be done? The White Paper consultation has only recently ended, so nothing is going to happen very quickly; there is probably time to get a NP finished before any changes take effect. There is always the possibility of a back-bench revolt with MPs rising up to demand that these planning reforms be shelved, but I’m not holding my breath. The best thing to do is to make sure that the NP tells the right story. This is probably what people want anyway if the experience in Dartington is anything to go by. Dartington Neighbourhood Plan had a parish wide consultation in July and a significant number of the 300 responses noted that heritage, design and an accurate description of the parish was almost completely missing from the Plan. Somewhere along the nearly 6-year journey it had taken to get to this point, the NP had forgotten to tell its history. This is being addressed now and Character Area assessments with photographs and maps are being written by volunteers who recognise the importance of describing the heritage, landscape and green spaces that exist. Perhaps out of this exercise will come Conservation Area designations (shockingly, Dartington parish currently has no such designations – not even the Dartington Hall Estate) Consultations are taking place with a view to designating Local Green Space in the NP which will offer future protection. With the way things are going, the only thing an NP will be able to do is to help the Local Planning Authority produce its design guides. I fear that any NP which doesn’t clearly describe the essence of the place as it exists and clearly explain how this should inform the future will be almost worthless if these “Planning for the Future” reforms are enacted.

More information is on the Dartington Neighbourhood Plan website:

<https://dartingtonnp.wordpress.com/>

Chair’s Report

Paul Bennett

Covid -19 has I suspect left none of us entirely unaffected and that is true also of TOTSOC where our AGM has had to be cancelled and committee meetings held by courtesy of Zoom (via Tom) which is fine up to a point but where is the tea, coffee and chocolate biscuits?

The Neighbourhood Plan process was inevitably delayed by the inability to hold face-to-face meetings. Nonetheless we have been able to influence the draft plan

which has now been submitted to SHDC which now takes the document forward for its six week final consultation period which must have wide publicity.

The District Council will then appoint (in consultation and agreement with the neighbourhood planning body) an independent examiner experienced in planning matters. Whilst he/she will consider matters raised during the final six week consultation period this consideration is limited to technical points of procedure rather than considering any new matters which might have been raised on the plan itself.

If the Plan passes this examination the process is handed back to the local authority to arrange a referendum. 28 days before the date of the referendum the local authority is required to publish information about the Plan and then give 25 days notice of the date of the referendum itself and where to vote etc.

Before “Lockdown” we had been involved with Churchill Estates in discussing its proposals for Retirement Homes on the Brutus centre. However the majority of Churchill staff were furloughed and most others working from home. Consequently work on the proposal has been limited.

However following the refusal by SHDC of Churchill’s application an appeal was lodged which was validated by the Planning Inspectorate on 21 September. When the hearing of the appeal will take place is not yet known but depends on the availability of Planning Inspectors. Churchill themselves estimated it would probably be in Spring of next year.

Churchill have always said that the application was not “set in stone” and that they would be happy to continue negotiations. The Totsoc view is that the design of the buildings is not good enough for this important centre of town site and I very much hope that work can now continue to improve this during the period between now and the appeal hearing.

This is my last report as Chair as I feel it is time for me to step aside after my many years as Secretary and latterly Chair. In doing so I would like to thank you all for the kindness and support which you have given to me during these years and to wish you all well.

I am very pleased to tell you that subject to ratification at our next AGM (whenever that is held) Jim Carfrae will succeed me. Most of you will of course know Jim as he is that rare person, a true Totnesian being born and educated here having attended both KEVIC and Dartington College of Art. His mother practised as an Architect in the town. Jim currently lectures at Plymouth University and has been involved in several innovative housing schemes. He is also Chair of the Totnes Image Bank. TOTSOC will be in good hands.

Those were the Days

Paul Bennett

Ed: Paul wrote this piece in 2007!

Whilst we wait for South Hams District Council to put forward its specific proposals for Totnes why not come up with some ideas of our own?

The Council's Local Development Framework ("LDF") is the overall policy document for the District and quite properly is concerned with the lack of affordable housing. Amongst its strategic objectives therefore is the aim to provide affordable housing to meet the needs of local communities. It acknowledges that Totnes is one of the areas experiencing the greatest level of need and that it is one of the most sustainable locations for additional housing. However when it comes to meeting this need almost every site which may be chosen will be met by fierce opposition, some of it well founded but in large part based on "nimbyism". One only has to look at the controversy generated by the Southern Area plan to appreciate the difficulties over any sites which may be selected by the Council.

Maybe it is time for some "blue sky" thinking. At Follaton the Council has a considerable area of land under its direct control and whilst in part its buildings provide the Council's own offices it is mostly used as a giant car park for the benefit of its employees who because of its location have to come to work by car rather than public transport, entirely contrary to the transportation objectives of Devon County Council.

Properly planned and imaginatively designed Follaton could make a wonderful satellite village for Totnes and at a stroke perhaps meet the whole of our housing needs.

Where would the Council's administration go? There is a huge area of "air" space above Totnes station which could be leased from Network Rail and developed leaving the operational part of the station intact. Within the development above the station there would be offices for the District Council and local area offices for the County Council and central government plus a major bus/train transport interchange.

Such a scheme would:

- Meet the local housing needs
- Improve the economic prosperity of Totnes
- Meet the transport aspirations of the County Council
- Enable Local Government employees to travel to work by public transport
- Enhance the railway station's status as the railhead for the South Hams

Application to join TotSoc (The Totnes Civic Society)

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).....bank

Please set up the following Standing Order and debit my/our account accordingly

1. Your Bank Account details

Account name..... Account Number:

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Your bank branch..... Sort Code:

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| | | | | | |
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Postal address of your branch (please print)

.....Post code.....

2. Payee details

Name of organisation you are paying: **Totnes & District Society**

Sort code of TOTSOC: **20-60-88**

Account number of TOTSOC: **50878642**

3. About the payment

How often are the payments to be made: **YEARLY**

Amount details: **£5.00 / £8.00 (delete one)**

Date of first payment: **on or after 1st October 2020**

until further notice (payments will be made until you cancel this instruction)

4. Confirmation Customer signature(s)

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Date.....

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.

TOTSOC on Facebook

TOTSOC now has a Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/Totnes-and-District-Society

The TOTSOC Committee

The current TOTSOC Committee Members are:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Paul Bennett Chair | paulbennett1935@gmail.com |
| Tom King Secretary and Minute Secretary | secretary.totsoc@gmail.com |
| Jeremy Logie Treasurer and Membership Secretary | jeremy.logie@talk21.com |
| Kate Wilson Planning Officer | katewilsondeane@gmail.com |
| Jim Carfrae | jim.carfrae@plymouth.ac.uk |
| John Keleher | john.keleher@virgin.net |
| Dave Mitchell Webmaster and Contact Editor | dave@zenoshrdlu.com |
| Anne Ward Public Art & Design Subcommittee | irishannie1949@gmail.com |

A form for joining TOTSOC is on the previous page.

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| Page 7 | Ackerman's Repository of Art |
| Page 11 | Ordnance Survey |