



The Community Newsletter of TOTSOC - the Totnes and District Society

Dartington Hall Gardens

Jeremy Logie

TotSoc members who enjoy walking and visiting gardens have been particularly grateful that there continues to be free access to the grounds on the Dartington Hall estate. The jewel in the crown is the garden behind the Great Hall, looking so spectacular at this time of the year.

Like all gardens, it needs hard work and on-going replacement of plants. The gardeners do a great job, but there is no budget for new plants.

In this Issue

Dartington Hall Gardens	1
St Mary & St Gabriel Church	
Stoke Gabriel	3
Baltic Wharf	8
Leechwell Garden	14
Joining TOTSOC	15
TOTSOC Committee	16
Photo Credits	16





An independent fund has just been set up so that new plants can be purchased. The money raised will be spent entirely for that purpose and not lost in the coffers of the Trust. Totnes Trust has offered to act as bankers for the funds raised and has donated £500.

TotSoc members are invited to join Dartington members at a special tea party to be held on Saturday 19th June from 2.30pm in the Private Garden behind the Great Hall to celebrate the gardens and to thank the gardeners for their hard efforts. There will be a plant stall. Make a note in your diary now! We need some help to make cakes to serve on the day and we need plants for the plant stall. Please consider offering your services!

Please let us know if you would like to attend, so that we can cater for the correct numbers. Send an email to Jeremy Logie at: jeremy.logie@talk21.com

or call him on 01803 863433.

The fund has now officially opened and donations exceeding £1,000 have already been collected. If you would like to send a donation now, this can be done by BACS transfer:

Account details: Totnes Trust; CAFBank: sort code 40-52-40 account: 00025901.

Or send a cheque, made payable to Totnes Trust, to

Jeremy Logie at 15 Heath Way, Totnes, TQ9 5GP.

St Mary and St Gabriel, Stoke Gabriel

Lawrence Green

This typical Devon church is hidden away at the far end of the popular village on a bluff overlooking the River Dart and the Mill Pool. Parking is difficult if you come by car but the effort is well worth it. The best access to the church is by a wide footpath beginning at the ancient Church House Inn, passing the verger's cottage and other old houses with a playground with apple trees over a wall to your left.



View of the Church Tower from the churchyard

Once inside the lych gate tall slate grave markers can be seen with many local names on them such as: Baker, Ball, Churchward and Collings.

The white rendered church seems sunk down on its foundations below the magnificent yew tree which is well over one thousand years old. Some of the spreading branches are propped on wooden posts.



The 1000-year-old Yew Tree

The churchyard is extensive and sloped. Among the graves is a monument to George Jackson Churchward, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Western Railway between the wars. He is buried in Swindon where he was the first mayor of the new town.

Stepping down into the church the first thing to be noticed is that it is a busy space, much used and cared for. We were shown round by the very knowledgeable Norman Betts, the latest in a long line of vergers that go back over four hundred years. He unlocked the church with a key the size of a small saucepan dating from 1823.

The wide nave is only three beer stone arches long. The fourth Perpendicular arch extends beyond the magnificent screen into the choir.



The barrel-vaulted Nave



Lower Screen Panels

One of the glories of the church is the screen which dates from the first half of the fifteenth century and was skilfully restored by Herbert Read of Exeter in 1930. The original parts of the screen retain their mediaeval pigments. There are faint painted figures on the lower screen panels.

Above the screen on the capitals of the pillars are carved flying angels carrying shields, a very faithful Victorian restoration.

The floor of the nave consists mainly of dark red Victorian encaustic tiles, relieved at the crossing, in front of the screen, by light stone slabs. This church is unusual in having both pews and benches: Georgian pews in the north and south aisles, Mediaeval and Victorian benches in the body of the nave. There are three original fifteenth or sixteenth century bench ends in situ as well as some sensitive Victorian copies. The later benches incorporate fragments of the earlier pews.

Nearly all the windows are Victorian restorations with unusual plain designs. Some are clear glass, some opaque glass, and some are good Victorian stained glass. Restoration of the mediaeval church began in 1855 and was well and carefully done. The fine barrel vaulted ceiling avoids the usual Victorian heaviness and is painted in Pugin-esque style in the choir and sanctuary. Only the west window, hidden behind the tower screen, is original.

The fine wine-glass pulpit on the south side of the crossing has a foot of spreading palm-like panels and was also extensively and sensitively restored by Herbert Read.



The Wine Glass Pulpit

The most obviously Victorian part of the church, and unashamedly so, is the sanctuary. The Ashburton marble altar step is a sure sign of this. The sanctuary is raised above the original level; the piscina at ground level shows the extent of elevation.

Behind the altar is a reredos with the Ten Commandments and symbols of the Four Evangelists. Three fine seventeenth and eighteenth century monuments are mounted on the sanctuary wall where there were once windows.

Particularly fine is the 1663 plaque to Tamosin and Peter Lyde, an unusual heart-shaped monument with a verse written before the standardisation of English spelling. A piece of wavy stone at the top of the heart appears to be part of a much older work. Some research needs doing on this fragment.



17th and 18th century monuments

Another good monument is the Champernowne plaque on the south side of the sanctuary, dating from 1700. It has, at its foot, a flanking pair of fine skulls with laurel wreathes, salutary memento mori. South of the choir is a fine Pomeroy monument dating from 1660, the Restoration Year. Next to is a fine organ by Harrison and Harrison, built in 1919. It has two keyboards and was played beautifully for us by Norman.

Back in the north aisle of the nave monuments and a window commemorate the ancient Churchward family who were great benefactors to the church. At the back of the nave, in the south aisle is a new polished granite Roll of Honour of the Stoke Gabriel men who were killed or died during the Great War.

We were privileged to be taken behind the tower screen, up the narrow circular staircase to see the clock mechanism which dates from the early years of the twentieth century. It has a vertical shaft and gearing for the two clock faces on the tower. One storey below, the ringing chamber has six ropes. The oldest bell dates from around 1440, unusually old for a Devon church. The modern wooden and glass screen resembles the wooden east window of St Peter's Church, Cornworthy, with its early decorated style intertwined glazing bars. There are four small examples of good modern stained glass in this screen: a lifelike salmon reminds us of the Stoke Gabriel seine netters, a crown of thorns, lilies of the field representing the Virgin Mary, and an unusual St Gabriel's horn.

This church is very fortunate in having a verger who is keen and knowledgeable on church matters and local history. Norman has seen his village grow to around fourteen hundred people, with new houses and housing estates springing up over the last many years. Stoke Gabriel is a favoured village lying above the River Dart on one side and the sea two or three miles in the other direction.

The church, a hidden treasure, is well worth a visit. It shows that the Victorian architects could get it right. The sensitive restoration of this church made me scratch my head a few times trying to determine what was original and what was restored.

Baltic Wharf –

has the time come at last to complete its redevelopment?

Paul Bennett

Although the site had been designated for renewal in several successive local plans and had been the subject of a major consultation exercise culminating in the grant of a consent, the site has remained dormant other than the completion of Phase I.

However the site owners TQ9 Partnership entered into a joint venture agreement with Acorn Property Group earlier this year with the intention of pursuing the site's development beyond the Phase I residential development completed over

the last few years.

Outline Planning Consent was granted in 2012 (with detailed Consent for Phase I in 2014) for a mixed use development with one of its principal components being a continuing care retirement community which would include a 60 bed nursing home. This appears to have been one of the main stumbling blocks to the development proceeding beyond the first phase of the development comprising some 90 houses and apartments. Even here the planning permission had to be modified because of the failure of a “community living scheme” which

would have had common facilities including a “common house” providing community facilities.

A retirement care home provider had been involved in the consultation discussions which preceded the final version of the outline planning application and fully supported it. However it seems that in the detailed work following consent being granted the financial viability of the scheme was brought into question and means of resolving this failed.

Because the outline consent (56/1939/10/O) is likely to form

the basis of any new proposals it is worth revisiting now.

The plan on the right highlights the parts that have not been built – including the retirement home.

An earlier application was made in 2009 but with little effective consultation undertaken by the applicants it generated considerable opposition and was rejected by the planning committee in January 2010. TQ9 Partnership learnt very quickly from its mistake and engaged in substantial and meaningful





Baltic Wharf in 2019

consultation. As the Officer's Report stated in the report to the planning committee:

"The applicants have subsequently been working with the Council and key community stakeholders (through a forum established for the purpose, G4BW) to seek to revise the scheme so that members are able to support the proposals".

The Developers have made it clear that they will (and have already started to do so) adopt a similar collaborative approach to consultation which was successful in leading to the existing planning consent.

Baltic Wharf, as its name suggests, was for most of the last century a timber yard importing timber from the Baltic but this trade ceased in the mid 1990s and the site has yet to achieve a new form of life which would enhance its situation as a gateway to the town from the River Dart.

Whatever is proposed now will clearly have considerable reference to the 2012 planning consent but at the same time recognise the changes which have affected and continue to affect employment and the environment.

However it is worth looking at some of what was considered within the 2012 consent.

Sustainability: The site was regarded as "the most sustainable site" within Totnes and the aim was for it "becoming an exemplar site with the highest possible standards of sustainability". Although the application was outline only some thoughts were expressed as to how reserved matters might be dealt with.

To reduce travelling needs it was suggested that homes would be designed with working spaces such as studios and offices and managed office facilities in the Marine and Business Centre for local people who like to work close to but not at home. The mixed-use nature of the site would aim to deliver real choice for people seeking to live and work in close proximity and will reduce the need to travel for those involved.

Linked into this was the Draft Full Travel Plan agreed with County Highways which was a comprehensive and effective strategy to minimise car use and encourage walking, cycling and alternative means of transport such as buses, car clubs and car sharing schemes. The measures would reduce traffic to and from the site. It was intended that it should be managed by a site Travel Plan Coordinator and enforced through wide control of the site “with sticks and carrots to effectively encourage uptake of the Travel Plan initiatives.”

The belief was that all elements of the proposals for the site would mean that the revival of Baltic Wharf would be likely to have the least relative impact compared to any other development of this site also any other potential development site in Totnes.

The authors of the Travel Plan stated that it should include a package of measures designed to promote access to the site by sustainable modes of transport and reducing reliance on single occupancy private car usage. Travel Plans would be site specific and tailored to the individual requirements of the type of development and intended users of the site,

Had detailed planning consent been granted the aims of the Travel Plan would have been taken forward by its Objectives as part of this process.

An extract from these Objectives is set out below to show just how far reaching these Objectives were.

“Travel Plan Objectives

2.1. The objectives of the Travel Plan have been identified as follows:

Seek to minimise the number of single occupancy car journeys made to the site, to promote travel by the more sustainable modes of transport, and to manage the overall transport impacts of the development.

2.2. Beneath this headline objective it is possible to identify several other related objectives as follows:

To ensure that the predicted vehicular trip rates and car parking demand (as predicted without amelioration measures being implemented) remain worst case, with annual reductions achieved in both;

To achieve annual increases in public transport, walking and cycling trip rates;

To reduce those traffic and parking loads predicted as a result of development of the site;

To transfer car park spaces released by the effectiveness of the Travel Plan to other better uses;

To raise the awareness of Travel Plans across Devon and to promote the Baltic Wharf as an example of best practice in effective travel planning

2.3. *Wider environmental, economic and health objectives also apply such as :*

To help reduce local road congestion in Totnes;

Reducing carbon emissions;

Reducing dependency upon the car;

Reducing living costs for site residents and employees;

Improving individual health and fitness

2.4. *These objectives should guide the setting of targets and the types of measures that are implemented. If individual travel plans are eventually created for the different land uses, they should complement, not conflict with, these overarching objectives."*

This extract from this draft Full Travel Plan produced in 2012 is an illustration of the forward thinking that went into the production of the 2010 Outline Planning Application; this continued until the Outline Consent and ancillary documents were given consent in 2014.

Workshops were held right up to the time when the final form of the Application was placed before the District Council for consideration and approved in July 2014.

What is pleasing now regarding the revival of proposals for the remainder of the Baltic Wharf site is that the site owners are intending to undertake consultation with the community in the same way as was so successfully done for the earlier application. The Facilitator will be the same as will the Architects both of whom therefore will be able to capitalise on the work and experience gained during the period leading to the 2014 Consent.

It would seem sensible to work, so far as appropriate, within the parameters of the previous application. However the outline consent granted would have had a considerable amount of detailed work still to be done and this is likely to be the case here.

The absence of the Retirement Village will be a major area requiring reconfiguration. This will be re-designated for housing and inevitably will be a major source for potential disagreement. Social housing for rent is a particular need for Totnes in order to maintain a population balance between young and old. However it is encouraging to note that agreement was reached on this thorny issue in the 2012 Consent.

Viability will of course always be an issue and inevitably there will be conflict between community wishes and what a developer believes can be afforded. However the experience gained during the previous consultation is encouraging.

With the skills of the Facilitator and a reasonable approach by those involved towards reaching agreement one hopes that together a major 21st century

contribution to the Town can be created - it is the last site within the Town where this can be achieved.

The Leechwell Garden Sandpit

David Mitchell (chair of the LGA)

In 2017 the Leechwell Garden Association (LGA) decided to replace the existing play facilities. These were built around the large trunk of the tall eucalypt which was felled when the garden was being constructed in 2009. Unfortunately the trunk did age well – it split and decayed so the play structure became unsafe. As a result of the consultation about its replacement it was decided to incorporate a sandpit that has proved immensely popular with toddlers.

Unfortunately, because it is located near the lower pools, filling buckets with sand and dumping them in the pool has also proved very popular. So much so that approximately **six tons** of sand has been moved in this way over the last four years and the LGA and SHDC has had to pay several hundred pounds for its replacement.



The lower ponds – 2016 on the left, 2021 on the right

The moved sand has not only caused problems with the leat that runs between the two terraces of Heath Way it has also killed the water plants and the tadpoles. In conjunction with the residents of Heath way, the LGA has decided to put a low picket fence and hedge around the sand pit, with a gate in the fence opposite the lower pools. We hope that this will deter much of the sand transfer.

Planning is in the early stages – we have sketches of what we want to build and preliminary estimates of the cost. Of course this will not be cheap and since the LGA is entirely dependent on donations and the sale of plants we are actively searching for funding. We have already received generous offers from the Totnes Trust and local SHDC councillors.

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:

--	--	--	--	--	--

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 2021**

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:

Jim Carfrae Chair	jim.carfrae@plymouth.ac.uk
Paul Bennett	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
Dave Mitchell Webmaster and Contact Editor	dave@zenoshrdlu.com

A form for joining TOTSOC is on the previous page.

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