



The Community Newsletter of TOTSOC - the Totnes and District Society

Chairman's Chat

Judy Westacott



In this Issue

Chairman's Chat	1
Atmos Totnes – Decision Time	2
St Leonard's Church, Halwell	5
Marking the Lost Chapels of Totnes	8
A new Play Structure for the Leechwell Garden	10
Devon's Ancient Bench Ends	12
Progress on the Baltic Wharf Arts programme	13
Joining TOTSOC	15
TOTSOC Committee	16
Photo Credits	16

Many of you will have walked along New Walk on your way to the Steampacket Inn or the footpath to Ashprington. However I doubt that you will have noticed the remains of a 19th century monument where the path beside the river joins the main road.

So, next time that you are in the area see if you can spot it. Have a look by the rubbish bin and you will see a block of stone, rounded at the top and partially hidden by ivy. If you look carefully you can still make out some of the lettering.

Hard to believe that this insignificant lump of stone is all that remains of the Taunton Monument, also know as the Castle and Keys. It was erected as an ornamental gateway into the park when a bowling green was opened there in 1824. This was erected during the Mayoralty of William Doidge Taunton – hence the name – and stood at the end of a magnificent avenue of trees which were planted between 1784 and 1795 to the north of the Steampacket Inn.



The monument was a splendid, but totally out-of-place, construction, which resembled a castle with a tower on either side, both of which were topped with a large ball. It was demolished by a timber lorry reversing on what had become Reeves Timber yard. Sadly, the trees were felled to enable the railway line from the cider works on the Plains to be extended.

Unfortunately there is very little detailed information available about the monument, but some is available at the Archive Centre behind the Totnes Elizabeth Museum. The Totnes Image Bank may also be a source of further information.

So, the next time that you are in New Walk, spend a few minutes locating all that is left of the Taunton Monument, and imagine what the park would have looked like before the timber yard or today's houses put paid to it.

[Atmos Totnes - Decision Time](#)

Kate Wilson

This month sees the Regulation 16 consultation on the Atmos proposals for a Community Right to Build Order in Totnes. It's been a long journey to get this far on a project that began with the closure of the Totnes Dairy Crest site in 2007. The closure of a working creamery with the loss of many jobs was seen as another nail in the employment coffin of this small town and many were fearful of the future prospects. It took the vision of some determined people to harness the energy that Totnes is famed for that finally got this site into the arms of the local community.

The news that Dairy Crest was closing is similar to stories repeated in many small towns across the country, and Totnes is not the first town to have to deal with a significant loss of employment. It is, though, the first town in England to have taken this factory closure and turned it into a Community Right to Build Order – a

The vision for the project was powerful and attractive: a locally managed development that would be carbon neutral, have a good relationship to the historic town, complement what is already working well, be inspiring and be financially viable.

The journey has not been without its sticking points. One of these almost from the start was the Brunel Atmospheric Railway Engine House. Although the Atmospheric Railway trains never made it as far as Totnes, the Engine House did, and was eventually converted for use as part of its milk processing plant by Dairy Crest. English Heritage had decided the building didn't need listing and Dairy Crest, once it closed the creamery, had decided that it didn't need the building. The public outcry that followed the removal of the building's roof encouraged English Heritage to look again, and the Engine House was listed; people power won the day. It was a taste of things to come.

Now, in the Regulation 16 Consultation which is open until April 8th 2016, we all have our final chance to make comments on the plans. These comments will be fed into the continuing design process to allow any modifications to be made and the revised Draft Order will then be sent to an Independent Examiner. The last stage of the process will be a referendum, of those of voting age living in the parish of Totnes, on the final Community Right to Build Order.

For more information about the Regulation 16 Consultation, the plans, the history, and in fact the whole story, visit the Atmos Totnes website at:

<http://atmostotnes.org/crtboreg16/>

The plans are also accessible via the SHDC website

<http://www.southhams.gov.uk/>

Planning Application Details:

0440/16/CRB Former Totnes Creameries, Totnes, TQ9 5JP

A printed copy of the Draft Order with supporting appendices is available to view, at Follaton House during office hours - 09:00 until 17.00 weekdays, until 8th April 2016.

To make comments, contact South Hams District Council.

Email: strategic.planning@southhams.gov.uk

Post: South Hams District Council,

Follaton House,

Plymouth Road,

Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5NE

(clearly marked for the attention of Strategic Planning)

St Leonard's Church, Halwell

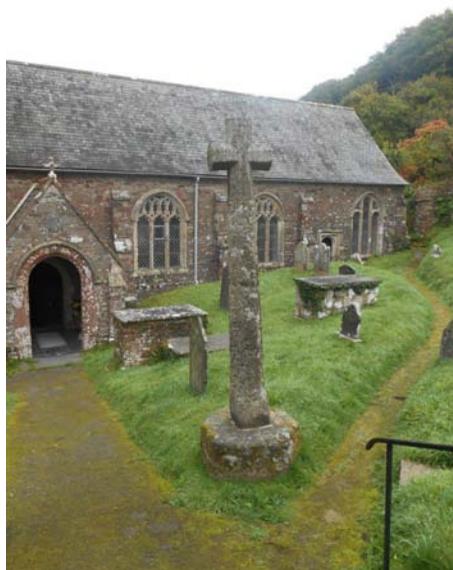
Lawrence Green

Halwell is an unusual village bisected by the main road from Totnes to Kingsbridge. The church is set in a hollow where the Dartmouth road turns from the Kingsbridge road and is easily overlooked behind its dark yew tree. Fifty years ago a row of cottages and a forge were demolished to widen the road. A sloping grass bank now replaces the houses. There is a good pub on the corner opposite the church and an estate of new houses behind it at Crockadon Farm.

The name 'Crockadon' is a rare Celtic name in Devon. It indicates prehistoric burial mounds or tumuli which are found on top of the hill off the Dartmouth road. This road also cuts through a circular Iron Age hill fort, one of three defensive hilltop forts in the area. 'Halwell' indicates a Celtic holy well, possibly the one in the grounds of the Old Rectory across the road from the church.

The church path slopes down from the lych gate to the church porch passing a high granite cross with a restored plain head. It is said that the shaft and base of the cross once lay just outside the lych gate and was used as the parish whipping post.

St Leonard's church was once a chapel of ease in the parish of St Andrew's, Harberton. It became the parish church when Halwell grew in population and importance. St Leonard's tower is similar to that of St Andrew's, but smaller, with its



external tower staircase and eight vertical buttresses. It is built from Devonian shale, contrasting with the random stones of the nave and choir which are mainly red sandstone.

The windows are perpendicular granite and the glass plain but unfortunately frosted. The interior is uncluttered and consists of a nave with one north aisle. The roof is a good Victorian restoration, not too heavy with carved bosses above the sanctuary. Early nineteenth or late eighteenth century numbered box pews fill the front half of the nave, some set at right angles to the others, others having been removed from the rear half to create an open space. When we were there tables were set for Harvest Supper with room for forty-two parishioners. Most of the floor is stone slabbed with some good eighteenth century grave slabs. Most traces of a short rood screen have vanished but the shape of the doorway to the rood loft can be seen in the north wall near the organ. There seems to have been no north, or 'Devil's', door on that side.

Following the granite arcade with its tall pillars with plain capitals and almost round arches to the back of the church we see the coved Victorian screen that separates the base of the tower from the rest of the church. Behind it is a small kitchen and six bells are hung in the tower, most dating from the eighteenth century. There is an active group of ringers with two young people presently mastering the art.



Curiosities found in the church are the date 1639 carved neatly into the granite window frame above the altar, a set of stocks of unknown age near the organ and a parish map dating from 1840 on the west wall of the north aisle. The scale on this map is measured in 'chains to the inch'. Sadly the ancient pulpit was removed from the chancel step forty or fifty years ago and replaced by an undistinguished Victorian object which looks as if it could have been flat-packed.

On a more positive note was the fairly recent removal of a modern glass screen which divided the front from the back of the nave. The present arrangement works much better and is closer to the mediaeval idea of the church building as a multi-purpose hall. In this unencumbered space the plain granite font looks well in place.

I was told that St Leonard's church had always been a 'poor' church in that it had not been endowed by wealthy patrons. This, in my opinion, can be a good thing and is reflected, in this case, by some delightfully plain and even crude monuments on the wall. A few years ago the lettering on two of the monuments was picked out by a lady who lived in the parish. She did it very skilfully and her work has made them attractive and easy to read.



On the north wall is a delightful little slate plaque with a crude face at the top and a curiously stylised angel at the bottom. Between these symbols are the words:



Underneath
Lieth the Body of
Mr Iohn Edmonds of
Ashbrington who
Depa^rted this Life the
28 day of May in 1754
Aged 52
Also Elez^ebeth his wife
Who departed this Life the
29 day of may in 1764
Aged 52

This monument tells us a lot: when Elizabeth Edmonds died she was one day older than her late husband who predeceased her ten years and one day earlier. 'Ashprington', a neighbouring parish, was spelled phonetically with a 'b' instead of a 'p'. The semi-literate stone carver had to insert the 'r' into the word 'departed' and the third 'e' into 'Elezebeth'. Another, older, plaque in the choir has the date 1301 but I doubt that it is as old as that.

Leaving the church by the ancient oak door we experienced a marked rise in temperature. The churchyard is peaceful despite the adjacent traffic grinding through the valley towards Totnes or Kingsbridge or turning into the Dartmouth road. It has a remote feel, lying beneath a ridge covered by oak trees. Victorian and older houses surround the sunken churchyard on two sides giving the impression of the slower and quieter village of a hundred years ago. The irony of a mounting block beside the lych gate brings to mind the difficulties of riding a horse in the Halwell of today.

[On marking the Lost Chapels of Totnes](#)

Robin Lacey

Often, that which now lay covert in our modern environment, gave reason for, and shape to, its present form. Rivers, springs and wells are notable midwives that gave birth to places that were sacred, healing or even mundane, such as crossroad or fords. These cradled the chapels and hostelries, and the later communities that developed into our present towns.

Just as we need to draw meaning from our personal journeys, we need similar from the place where our lives daily breathe.

Being reminded of the bones of the past and the corpus that even now sustains our present, can aid us to create “places” from the spaces we have. A place, being a space that possess meaning, that reflects past and present, the sublime and the mundane. Particularity of place can foster a belonging to the locale by its community, a present day struggle for many urban developments.

How do we make aware these bones carapaced in our urban environment, already swamped with oversized, overstated signage and street clutter? With symbolic language. A symbol can be small and humble, yet have a distinct clarity. It offers an expansion of meaning than a sign, which tends to reduction. It doesn't point, it opens a window.

There appear to be four chapels that existed in Totnes and that are now “lost”, or erased from the consciousness of our daily lives. For both visitors and ourselves, I feel that it is of value to return their identities to the daylight.

They are:

- St. Catherine the Virgin & The Holy Ghost: Placed on the site of 8, 9, 10 Warland
- St. Mary Magdelene & Maudlyn Hospital: Placed just west of Albert Terrace on Maudlin Road
- St. Edmunds & Edward the Confessor: Placed by the bus stop opposite the Severn Stars
- St. Peter's: Placed around the Steam Packets' beer garden



If they are to be marked, then some questions need be asked.

What: the form and nature of the marker.

It is desirable not to add to the visual clutter of the urban landscape. The markers could be uniform or individual. Apart from the latter being more costly, uniform markers possess a visual literacy. There are three main forms of markers. One, set flush in the pavement surface, as in utility covers. This requires Devon Highways consent, determining it is not a trip hazard, and its setting. Another is an upright form. This also requires Devon Highways consent and setting and may be something to navigate around in a limited space. Wall fixing possibly creates the least issues, save the permission of the wall owner.

Where: until there has been some archeology to determine the exact location it would seem reasonable to site markers within the chapels believed locale. A wall fixed marker possibly creates the least issues, save the permission of the wall owner. The marker should be vandal and graffiti resistant, robust and demand little or no maintenance.

And above all, it should add visual value to the place offering a poetic, rather than mere a literal utility.

Replacing the Play Structure in the Leechwell Garden

Dave Mitchell – chair of the LGA



Since the Leechwell Garden opened in October 2010, the play structure has proved one of its most popular attractions. Largely constructed from a large eucalypt that used to stand at the highest point in the garden, it has been climbed on by thousands of children (and quite a few adults).

Unfortunately it has not aged well – the outer layers of wood have crumbled and rotted and are covered in fungus. It's also quite slippery when wet, and is in danger of failing a Health and Safety Inspection within a year.

The Leechwell Garden Association (who manage the garden) and South Hams District Council (who own the land) have decided to replace it.



It is planned that the new structure, aimed at children between 4 and 12, will:

- provide play experience that is dynamic, challenging and stimulating
- offer a broad range of physical and intellectual opportunity for children
- encourage creative, collaborative communal play
- accommodate those with disabilities where possible
- integrate well with the natural surroundings of the garden

The LGA has commissioned designs from three contractors – Wicksteed, EarthWrights and Sutcliffe Play and in March 2016 conducted a community consultation (a two-day exhibition in the garden itself and a display at Totnes Library for a week).

The total cost of the new structure is expected to be around £37,000 (including VAT). The LGA has just obtained a £30,000 grant from the SHDC Community Re-Investment Projects Fund but needs a further £7000 in 'match funding'. We have promises of further financial support from local councillors and will be contributing £1000 from its own reserves.

In addition, TotSoc itself is applying for a £4000 grant from the Santander Community Plus fund for a specific piece of equipment for children with limited mobility.

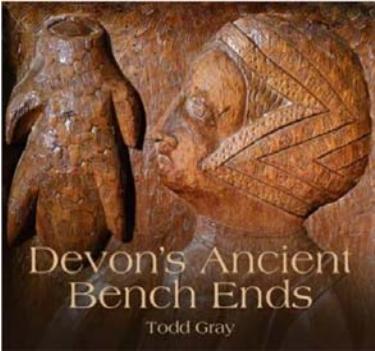
We expect to make a decision on the design by the end of March. SHDC will be removing the existing structure in April and we hope to have the new play structure installed by the time we hold our annual Spring Event in the garden in late May.

You can see the three proposed designs at

www.leechwellgarden.org.uk/newplaydesigns.html

“Devon’s Ancient Bench Ends” by Todd Gray (Mint Press)

Reviewed by John Keleher



Most of us crawlers take in the stained-glass, the plaques, the statues and tombs, the outside of the church and the tower and so on when we go into an old church, but how often do we look at the seating? In this book Todd Gray seeks to rectify this situation, especially for those of us who live in or visit Devon. We learn that in about a quarter of the four hundred and sixty four medieval churches which still stand in Devon there are about two and a half thousand of these ancient benches. To see some of these we in Totnes do not have to travel far, since some

can be seen at Churston Ferrers, Stoke Gabriel, Dartington, Staverton, Broadhempston, Torbryan, East Oggwell, Stoke-in-Teignhead and Cockington. (The map on page sixty-four will tell you where the others are.)

With constant reference to contemporary sources Gray guides us through the changes in church seating which have taken place over the centuries: from virtually nothing (except for the officials and clergy), to forms (backless and sideless four-legged seats accommodating more than one person) to fixed benches (ditto but with backs and sides,) from the early fifteenth century; to box-pews from about a century later, and back to benches in the nineteenth century. (Is the next stage in the evolution of church seating, one wonders, to be the stackable plastic chair?)

Having a seat in church correlated with status. Apparently as early as 1287 the Exeter synod ruled that only members of the nobility and patrons of the church could claim any kind of priority when it comes to sitting down, and there are numerous instances of men paying good money so that their wives could sit down. Perhaps it was inevitable that the box-pew should evolve in order to meet the needs of such a status-conscious society.

But the focus of the book is, of course, the carved bench ends. Despite an ever-increasing interest in this area we have had to wait for Dr Gray's book to provide a serious and thorough study of the subject. The clear, well-written text is accompanied by superb colour photographs, which, incidentally, the author took himself, of the carvings. Every time you turn a page there's at least one to excite your imagination. In fact I'm tempted to say that this is one of the best-illustrated book I have ever come across.

As a result I will certainly, I hope, in the future look at the interior of churches with a somewhat broader vision than in the past.

Progress on the Baltic Wharf Arts programme

Suzanne Heath, Project Manager

I can hardly believe it is now 18 months since I last wrote for Contact magazine. A lot seems to have happened since then, and some of you may have noticed that phase 1 of the Baltic Wharf development has come a long way since Bloor Homes started construction, with the first residents expected to move in very soon.

In terms of the arts programme, we successfully raised funding from Arts Council England, Awards for All and Devon County Council. We then planned and delivered a series of arts events and activities based in and around Baltic Wharf. These included a popular cyanotype workshop (cyanotype being a very early form of photography) and a botanical walk by artist Rebecca Chesney exploring the flora and fauna particular to Baltic Wharf. Rebecca's mini artist residency, which she spent exploring Totnes in September, resulted in her producing a series of delicate pressings of plants she discovered while in Totnes. We hope to show these works when we can find a suitable exhibition venue.

Artist and writer Phil Smith was commissioned to develop a 'Mis Guide' walk exploring the real and imagined history of Baltic Wharf.

We also brought Plymouth-based photography experts Fotonow to Totnes with



their camera obscura inside a camper van, as a way to enable us to share news of our activities and the art strategy. We look forward to welcoming back Camper Obscura one more time following its current refurbishment - at a date to be announced.

Last July artist Kiran Chahal was appointed to design a natural play space for Baltic

Wharf. As part of her research she held a series of play workshops for families in Leechwell Gardens and around the large tree at Baltic Wharf. The workshops enabled her to meet local children and parents and examine how they play and explore the area, as a way of informing her design approach. Kiran has produced some exciting designs and we are now trying to get these nailed down with a contractor ready to build this Summer.

In February we installed Saw Waves, the first visual artworks (albeit temporary ones) at Baltic Wharf. The artworks by Juneau Projects function as points from



which you can download a new song written by the artists about the history of the river pilots in Totnes, who used to guide ships delivering timber up the Dart. The two download points are located in Bloor's show home garden and on the steps on the lower footpath that runs around the back of the development. Juneau Projects launched Saw Waves with a live performance of the new song on their custom-built instruments, held in Drift Records on Totnes High Street.

We have researched potential artists for the street furniture commission and written a brief and hope to appoint an artist in the coming months. We are currently seeking a suitable venue for The Makery project, with the aim of providing somewhere for local artists to work, exhibit and come together.

Find more information and images of the work we have done so far on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/BalticWharfArts

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).....bank

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

1. Your Bank Account details

Account name..... Account Number:

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

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: **40-52-40**

Account number of TOTSOC: **00027393**

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 2015**

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

4. Confirmation Customer signature(s)

--

--

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.

The TOTSOC Committee

The current TOTSOC Committee Members are:

Judy Westacott Chair	tq9jude@gmail.com
Paul Bennett Secretary	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
Sue Bennett Minute Secretary	paulandsuebennett@btinternet.com
Jeremy Logie Treasurer and Membership Secretary	jeremy.logie@talk21.com
Kate Wilson Planning Officer	katewilson.totnes@gmail.com
Jim Carfrae	jim@carfrae.com
John Keleher	john.keleher@virgin.net
Dave Mitchell Webmaster and Contact Editor	dave@zenoshrdlu.com
Anne Ward Public Art & Design Subcommittee	mail@anneward49.plus.com

A form for joining TOTSOC is on the previous page.

Photo Credits:

Pages 1, 2, 10 and 11	Dave Mitchell
Pages 5, 6, 7 and 8	Kathi Green
Pages 9 and 14	Robin Lacey
Page 12	Todd Gray
Page 13	Photonow