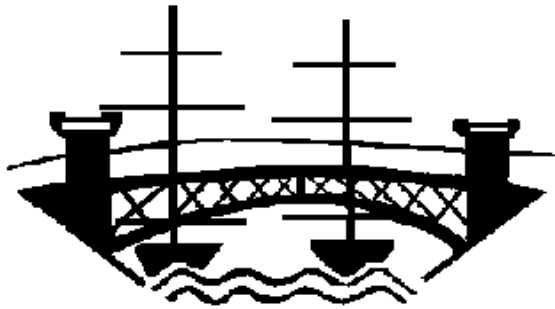


BRIDGWATER & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

(Established 1972)

Patron: The Rt. Hon The Lord King
of Bridgwater C.H.



Registered Charity No. 265031

NEWSLETTER

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Society website: www.bridgwatercivic.org.uk
Newsletter email: newsletter@bridgwatercivic.org.uk

January 2012

President's New Year Message

At the start of this new year of 2012, we look forward with hope and some trust for a successful Society Year of 2012/13, which was under consideration at the first meeting of the Executive Committee held on 18th January. Those present are now following up suggestions put forward for our Members' Programme of summertime visits and later speakers, the print-out of which is traditionally anticipated at the Annual General Meeting, now forthcoming on 25th April 2012.

It is however with deep regret to myself, as the Society's founder Secretary and my longtime service with the Society, to report that we have now reached the crossroads, when the route has to be chosen as regards our future role in the Community of Bridgwater and its associated villages. I feel I am yet again putting on a well-worn gramophone record, when it has to be said that new and younger blood must be injected into our Executive Committee. With our Chairman Philip Smeed announcing he cannot continue in his present role, due to health problems, *it is essential that we find and select a leader who will contribute enthusiasm for our objects, and pro-activity in representing our voice in the community.* In present circumstances such person may not currently even be a member! In addition, and in the main, current members of the Executive are either busily engaged in providing voluntary service in other areas, and/or are of advanced age which is now diminishing their capabilities, so that maintenance of the Society's representations on important environmental issues is more and more difficult to sustain.

I would hate to see a decision made to disband the Society, but without attracting newer and importantly YOUNGER members, such a decision could well be needed in future months. It is up to all *current Members please to address this issue, and come forward with constructive thoughts and even action.*

Do we sufficiently care for our local town and community?

With that in mind, I am delighted to welcome new members - Mr Dave Chapple, Ms G. Burrows and Mr & Mrs F.S Hill to the Society.

Finally, what better news can we possibly receive than to appreciate that our loyal Secretary Bernice Lashbrook, after so many frustrating months of waiting, has had her hip operation, and is now back with us, picking up the all important tasks of seeing that we all do what should be expected. No-one does it better. Welcome back Bernice.

- Derek Gibson, MBE -



To: STEVE ATKINSON

With Greetings for Christmas 2011, and in grateful thanks for requiring so many of my colleagues to "adorn" new buildings in Sedgemoor!

I know that the
Bridgwater & District Civic Society
deplures my usage!

sent by HADG.

Unsightly black-top Tarmacadam

The decision of the County Council to replace broken paving slabs with unsightly black-top Tarmacadam is deplorable. It has resulted in a *squalid look* and we are now in danger of it overwhelming the county. It makes nonsense of the time and trouble taken by local authorities to enhance the environment by laying attractive paving and brickwork in the first place.



The current policy of the County Council, according to its Chairman, is that *where paving slabs become dangerous to make a temporary filler with tarmac in the hope that these can be replaced with the real thing in the next financial year.* He adds that if damage is caused by one of the service industries then of course the slabs are required to be replaced. I can't comment on how the latter is enforced, but I can on future hopes. Given the rate at which the black patchwork appears to be spreading then quite apart from aesthetics, a policy of doing the work twice cannot make economic sense.

It is worth noting that so incensed were our colleagues in Frome that they organised a team of volunteers, found a source of paving slabs and replaced the tarmac themselves. In Bridgwater our members see this issue as one of the more critical in protecting not just the environment but our heritage. This policy needs to be changed now and appropriate new direction given to council officers.

- Peter Braine -

Parrett River Wall

We are all concerned at what happened to the river wall in the town on Carnival Night, and the unacceptable delays by the District and County Councils, and the

Environment Agency (River Works), accepting responsibility for leadership in action. With Sedgemoor District Council being the Harbour Authority, such fact surely indicates, despite any agreed sharing of remedial costs, Sedgemoor District Council holds the principal responsibility. With an indication that remedial works are now being put in hand, a wall of secrecy now appears to be paramount, with no publicised detail of intentions other than a suggestion that the wall (in what actual location?) will be anchored back to a firm ground strata which is some way behind the wall. It is clear that one cannot practically anchor any structure to mud, rubbish and clay behind the wall, with no known rock structure in apparent evidence; and to link any anchors to wallings of existing property basements would be totally inadvisable!

Planning Matters

Our indefatigable Vice-Chairman Dr. Peter Cattermole has continued in his champion role of reminding our Planning Authority of its continuing inadequacies in caring for our listed building heritage, for which service we must be truly grateful. In addition, the Society has received several comments on the dilapidated state in Penel Orliou of the original Cinema façade.

The former Wesleyan Chapel has been converted into four houses, i.e. flats: Listed Grade II. This was a surprising decision, which overruled the advice of the Planning Officer, the Conservation Officer and the Civic Society!

Previous progress on advancing preparations for the Durlleigh Brook project by the Bridgwater Heritage Regeneration Partnership, chaired by our President Derek Gibson, has now come to a grinding halt, with one of the riparian property owners alongside the Brook having had a change of mind regarding participation. The prospect of a walkway link suspended over the watercourse, linking St Mary Street, at the Town's Southern gateway location, to Blake Street with its museum and old mill, thus appears to be firmly in abeyance.

2012/13 Programme

Executive Committee Members are currently putting together a programme of visits and speakers for our 2012/13 year of activities, notwithstanding the all important decisions needing to be made as outlined in the President's New Year Message. As is customary, the programme will be available at our Annual General Meeting on 25th April 2012

Dates for your Diary

All talks take place at the Blake Museum, commencing at 7.30pm.

Wed 22/02/12: *New YMCA Tour/Talk*

Wed 21/03/12: *The The Abode of Love- Agapenome by Dr. Joshua Schweizo.*

Wed 25/04/12: *AGM followed by Talk by Alan Hurford, BTC Town Clerk.*

For further information about meetings/events visit the Society's website or call Bernice on 01278 459659

Newsletter

Our next issue is due on 1st May 2012. Members are kindly requested to email their contributions to newsletter@bridgwatercivic.org.uk by the 24th April 2012.