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## CIVIC

Community

Inclusive

Vital

Influential

Creative



### CIVIC DAY 2018

Thursday June 21st

Shaftesbury Civic Society will be holding a very special event this year.

We shall be joining thousands of other communities to



share, debate and celebrate our democracy and our pride in our special town, whilst commemorating 100 years of universal voting rights.

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## **CIVIC DAY THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2018**

### **SHARE, DEBATE, CELEBRATE**

Thursday June 21<sup>st</sup> also brings the Shaftesbury Civic Society's AGM, this is your opportunity to join with us and help to make this the year when the society makes its voice heard in our community.

The **AGM** will take place in the **Town Hall at 6.15pm** and will be followed by the presentation of the first ever *Rachel Caldwell Award*. This award will be presented annually to the group or individual who has made an outstanding contribution to Shaftesbury and the surrounding area. We are proud to be able to celebrate the life of an extraordinary lady who devoted her life and energies to keeping Shaftesbury special.

Thursday June 21<sup>st</sup>, our Civic Day, has a number of elements that we believe bring the various aspects of life here together. We are inviting clubs, societies and local organisations to contribute to the debate and share with us two things. An object that represents their group and a sentence that sums up why they think Shaftesbury is special for them. Please let us know if you would like to contribute. The displays will be open to the public throughout the afternoon and evening. Email: [Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com](mailto:Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com)

During the afternoon, from 2.30 pm, we shall be taking part in the UK Parliament EqualiTeas event with our own tea party in the **Garden Room at Gold Hill Museum**. A real treat will be our Honorary President, Sir John Stuttard discussing his forthcoming biography of *John Rutter (1796-1851) Publisher, Social and political reformer, Public Servant, philanthropist and lawyer* who lived in and worked in the Shaftesbury area, and who instituted real social change for our community. We hope to have other distinguished guests during the afternoon and to debate the meaning of democracy at a time of social change. Look out for our posters with more information.

Our evening session, from **6.45pm at the Town Hall**, will include Dr. Andrew Murrison, MP for West Wilts, talking about his book, *Redemption*, a novel set during the English Civil War and featuring our local landscape. Discussion around the theme of living on a county boundary will follow, fueled by refreshments. A lively and full Civic Day which we plan to be the first of many such events celebrating our vibrant community.

### **SHARE, DEBATE, CELEBRATE**

Contact Us:

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## SHAFTESBURY CATTLE MARKET SITE

Members will now be aware that North Dorset District Council's cabinet voted on Monday to sell our cattle market site to a supermarket chain. We have been kept in the dark as much as other groups in this community. We are dismayed that such a strategically important site, in the heart of the town, is apparently about to be sold with no communication with our expanding population. The decision is looking like a shockingly bad example of how Localism is failing us. Our district councillors have been notable by their absence from the local stage and not one jot of proactive communication has seemingly reached local groups and people.

We do not presume to know the 'right answer' but do feel that there are important points to be made.

- Shaftesbury's cattle market site is an iconic link with Shaftesbury's past and future roles as a small, historic market town
- The cattle market site strategically links the old town (largely Conservation area) and new
- Christy's Lane cuts our town in two and further heavy traffic movement will further emphasise this
- Traffic issues will dominate Christy's Lane
- Walkways through the site unite the town centre with its outskirts
- Our town centre retailers will be placed at further risk by another supermarket and the logic of placing two side by side defeats us
- There is an empty supermarket site within easy walking distance of the town centre, development of which would encourage shoppers to sample the excellent town centre retail offer. Will we now be left indefinitely with a derelict site?
- Did NDDC's decision take a holistic view of the needs of our town?
- This sale will block any attempt to address the town's infrastructure deficit on this site.
- The car park is an important amenity which has been in use for more than 40 years

We cannot see any evidence that these points were considered when the District Councillors made their decision. The whole situation increasingly looks and feels like a series of disconnected piecemeal reactions made by a distant group rather than placing Shaftesbury's residents at the centre of one unified plan for this growing community. Where is the democracy here? How can a community be sustainable under these challenges?

We believe that in the short term, until the people of Shaftesbury have been allowed to speak, the site must, with immediate effect, have the site registered as an **Asset of Community Value**. This is a right under the Localism Act which seeks to give communities some control over important assets.

The implications of this are considerable and we feel that our members should have a chance to comment on whether the trustees take this step on behalf of you all. By registering the land as a 'community asset' time is bought to consider what the community can do to safeguard the site and develop it according to our needs. We do not have very long to register the land and following that just 6 months to find the resources to take the project forward. The committee would undertake to work with partners throughout the town to find ways to ensure that the car park remains just that and works as a support for the businesses and events in the town centre.

**We need to hear your views urgently, please can you email: [Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com](mailto:Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com)** Whilst we are waiting to hear from you we will undertake the ground work required and prepare the paperwork to register the land. Clearly, if the membership is opposed to the committee taking this bold step then there would be no further action. Discussion amongst members and others to date clearly indicates that Shaftesbury Civic Society should be involved with the future of the cattle market site and inaction could prove to be a cause for regret. You, the members, have a clear part to play and if the land is registered will need to step forward to shape the project.

## **Please act today**



### **A walk among Shaftesbury's Trees**

Shaftesbury's Trees group was established in 2002 to safeguard the significant trees around the town. Last month, saw the publication of their map to help walkers explore these special trees. A guided walk to launch the map also took place led by members of the Trees Group.



### **St Georges Day lunch – meeting with Blandford Civic Society – *Mike Madgwick writes***

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April Louise and I were guests of Blandford Civic Society at their St George's Day lunch – travelling down to Blandford there were certainly a few flags out.

The event was hosted in the Masonic Hall in Blandford and after lunch we had a fascinating talk by a Grand Master about the work, history and current function of the Freemason movement – one piece of information that certainly stuck in my mind was that after the National Lottery, the Masons are the next most generous donors to charitable causes nationally.

The guest speaker was John Young, the immediate past High Sheriff of Dorset. As many of our members will know High Sheriffs fill the ancient office of 'Shire Reeve', which dates back over 1000 years and was a Royal appointment to oversee the monarch's interests, especially the collection of revenues and the maintenance of law and order. The High Sheriff's

extensive powers ranged from judging cases, through raising the 'hue and cry' in pursuit of felons, to summoning and commanding the 'posse comitatus' – the military force of the county.

The first recorded High Sheriff in Dorset was Hugh Fitz Grip, appointed by William the Conqueror, who denied any Englishman, who had fought against him, any position of authority or the right to own land. The ironically named Fitz Grip took his King's command to heart, seized most estates and pillaged and sacked most of the manors in the county – thankfully times have changed.

We were entertained with a delightful anecdote about how in a robing room, when both senior male appointees were down to their boxer shorts, pulling on their tights, they began to discuss the issue of Dorset murder cases being heard in the same county rather than Hampshire. Their deliberations were cut short when the Mayor of Bournemouth, apparently a very imposing lady, came in to be greeted by two men in tights and not much else!

It was refreshing to hear that this ancient post had a modern role in highlighting concerns about domestic abuse and that an innovative short film, prepared with Bournemouth University, and offering advice, achieved 2 million hits within 10 days. A very up to date example of the power of an independent office to champion a major social issue.



*Mike, on the right, is pictured with Terence Dear, Chairman of Blandford & District Civic Society and John Young, immediate past High Sheriff of Dorset.*

On Civic Society matters we are looking forward to working far more closely with our neighbouring groups as it became abundantly clear the same messages are coming out from that community regarding their need for far more traction for localism, to make local involvement and direction meaningful. I will be looking to host a working meeting soon.

Building on the above theme, Jackie and I will also be looking at other Civic Societies and aligned groups, to open-up lines of dialogue, as

a further common area is opening-up with local government changes. We as neighbouring communities, will have a far greater need to work constructively on solutions with others as partners, rather than as competitors. This theme is perhaps amply illustrated by the continuing concerns of many around what will be the strategic solution for the Shaftesbury outer bypass and how road routing of HGVs and ever more vehicles will be addressed – seeking out self-serving single community actions will, I suggest, be ultimately destructive, when we need our decision makers and planners to think big and act even bigger and bolder still.



A final note regarding St George, as it was his day we were celebrating, I am sure most know, is reputed to have been a Roman soldier of Greek ancestry, whose father came from Cappadocia (Turkey), and, mother from Syria Palaestina...

## Engaging Young People in Heritage – War Memorials Trust Workshop – Bristol – March 2018

In March I spent a day in Bristol in a workshop run by the War Memorials Trust explaining how they have engaged more young people in heritage items. Of course, their theme was around war memorials and the topicality of 2018 being the 100-year anniversary of the end of WW1.

The themes though, had many threads that can and need to be applied in our work as a local Civic Society that is looking to change its membership profile – bluntly make us more appealing to younger members of the community.

Behind this is the harsh reality that the Trustees have debated on many occasions – who takes-up the challenge when ‘us lot’ have moved on? Where are they today? Do they even know about the Society – does it have relevance to them – do they have the same drivers? Alternatively, do we need to re-examine ours? Who will be the champions tomorrow of Pride in Place, and, be prepared to offer constructive challenges to what at times seems a never-ending onslaught which chips away at the historic, environmental and sense of community that develops around the way a location has evolved thus far? So, there is also a sense that things are not wrapped in cotton-wool never to change and that evolution occurs, but does that set of changes build upon valued assets or devalue them to the point where they become future burdens?

We certainly did not solve all the above challenges in one day – what was clear was that with the right setting and interventions, heritage could become exciting and engaging for younger people. The age groups that were particularly targeted by the War Memorials Trust were those 5-12years. This target range being just before school syllabuses swept up young folks in exams and all the tough later life career choices – earlier school curriculums offering more latitude for teachers to build-in social and local history topics that were interactive.

It also helps having a topical theme – the 100th anniversary and all the associated media coverage has built up a head of steam. Additionally, there has been a massive amount of personal interest as the generation that fought and died in that conflict have passed away – their names do remain on about 100,000 memorials across the nation. These have fared differently, some have all but been forgotten and were in danger of being simply destroyed, others still remain part of the national and local landscape. A huge number of people have, within their family, a relative who fought – so the interest is still very personal for many. The War Memorials Trust

tapped into this theme by providing survey and interest kits that allowed the youngsters to play an active role in national mapping and recording of all such monuments – they became part of that which of course provided the interest. Teachers saw this as an opportunity to also devise local interest trips and work that would play to curriculum-based learning outcomes.

Thus, one main theme was to involve people at a very early age as this has time and again been shown to sow the seeds that shape future and often distant interests when those once school children retire or look to pursue outside interests – the potency of fertile minds to absorb a huge amount worked well in this ongoing context.

The opportunity though was far wider than just school children – the scouting movement has activity skills that can utilise a good local history project, along with The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme that also looks to build a wide variety of skills in young people – local history when made relevant and personal can play an active role in engaging young people. The gap exists in the 20-40yrs olds, what is there in it for them? We did not address this and it remains an item to chew over.



*Thus, what could we use and do in Shaftesbury Civic Society to broaden our appeal and engagement with young people?*

One item that is covered elsewhere in our newsletters is mapping the greenstone walls of Shaftesbury. Barry Freeman is acting as our champion on this. I am sure that many of us who have moved to the Shaftesbury area remember our first visits and the sight of this iconic building material everywhere. Sadly, and of concern, the

walls are rather more than getting chipped-away at – ‘sledge-hammers’ appear to be a ‘weapon’ of choice, as

each week another section of wall is knocked down or simply falls apart through neglect.



Firstly, there is a need to define the scope of the project and Barry Freeman will lead this– our starting point is a map and brief description (length, height level of repair and distinguishing features) with photographs of all the greenstone walls (i.e. not parts of houses as that is often covered elsewhere). This will take time but what we will result is a growing record of the walls. We may ask which of these needs additional protection – not always a popular activity with owners. With limited resources local government is unable to support heritage groups debating and safeguarding our heritage.

The good news for those of us volunteering to do the work is that there are a great many lanes, roads and unexpected sights in the town and around to walk on a pleasant day and fortunately we still have a few pubs that might for those who may wish for a little refreshment along the way!

When we have discussed the merits of this project the common theme from the Trustee group, has been that if we do not do this, who else will, and, if it is not done then when we look back in say 20 years what will be left of this currently distinctive feature? Food for thought and we hope that a few of our existing or newer members will be enthused to join in, along with a plea – if there is anyone out there who’d like to build a theme for young people, such as the iconic greenstone walls and how a survey of such a heritage asset is mapped out – then do contact one of us.

Finally returning to the Bristol workshop day – I also met a fascinating volunteer from the Walled Town Heritage group who talked enthusiastically about the 5-30 such towns we still have in this country and how that method of community building was also very prevalent in Europe, where there are far more than we have preserved here. Now the cynic might say a lot about this – I’ll leave it to our membership to fill in their own narrative on that one! Mike Madgwick, Chairman

## **DATA PROTECTION**

**Don’t miss out on being a part of the Civic Society : If you want to continue receiving this newsletter please let us know by e mail at [Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com](mailto:Shaftesburycivic@gmail.com) or post to Hintock Hollow, Higher Blandford Road, Shaftesbury SP7 8DA .**

**We 'll soon be sending out membership/renewal details and AGM information.**

