



Wells Civic Society e-news June 2021

Dear Members

As we begin to see 'the light at the end of the tunnel' and (as I write) some sunshine too, I hope we can look forward to some Society activities.

Firstly though, I am very sad to confirm that Bishop Peter, who has retired due to ill health, has written to me to say that he is no longer able to hold the role of President of the Civic Society. He and Jane have been very supportive and have joined us many times during their residence in Wells. I am sure you will join me in wishing them a peaceful and happy retirement.

Although we have not been able to meet for some time, please be assured that members of the committee have continued to carry out many of our commitments - such as planning scrutiny, monitoring the trees and green environment, and working with a number of other groups and organisations, including the Neighbourhood Plan, the Portway Annexe Community Group, Wells Coronavirus Network, Sew Buntiful Wells and the Alliance of Cathedral Cities and Towns.

Although we are not yet able to meet as before, there are a number of events that we are in the process of planning for the next few months.

The Project Factory is planning a **Community Day / Big Picnic on July 24th** to celebrate the amazing voluntary efforts over that last year and a half. As well as activities on the Cathedral Green, the Market Place and at the Bishop's Palace (forgive me if I have left anything out!) the Cathedral nave will be filled with 'stalls' showcasing many of the organisations and community groups in the City. www.projectfactory.uk/projects-events/wake-up-wells-community-day

We have booked a stall and I would very much welcome your support and help with this. As part of this event there will also be a number of street performances, including our very own *Gert & Daisy* (aka Hilary & Clare) and the **Monmouth Pageant**.

Jon Jefferies, who is leading the plans for this, writes:

Wells is known worldwide for its stunning medieval architecture, so often featured in films and TV dramas, however the historic events which happened here are less well known.

One such event is the Bloody Assize Court held in the Market Place in September 1685 to mete out punishment to anyone unfortunate enough to have been a supporter of the Duke of Monmouth in his failed attempt to seize the Crown from his uncle James II.

Wells was the largest of the seven assize court sessions held throughout the West Country and sitting in judgement was the notorious Judge Jeffreys.

Wells Civic Society has teamed up with actors from the Wells Little Theatre who will perform a series of brief re-enactments telling the story of the Bloody Assizes in Wells.

The first performances will take place as street theatre during the Wells Community Day on Cathedral Green on July 24th.

On behalf of WCS, I have been asked to coordinate this year's **Heritage Open Days between 10 - 19th September** in Wells. This is an annual opportunity to visit and to enjoy the incredible built and cultural heritage across England. There will be a programme of events city-wide over the ten days which will be publicised nationally as well as locally. (www.heritageopendays.org.uk). If you would like to get involved, please contact me for more information.

I was delighted to be invited recently to the opening of the revamped **Museum Gardens**. A team of volunteers has worked so hard to make the gardens not only beautiful to look at and enjoy but also more accessible. There has also been a lot of working going on during closure, behind the scenes, to create new exhibitions in the **Museum**, ready for re-opening. I do hope we will be able to return to the Museum soon, but would urge you to visit when you can to support all the hard work. See www.wellsmuseum.org.uk for opening dates and times.

Rosemary Evans continues to monitor **trees and green spaces** for us; she reports:

The two dead trees on the Moat Walk have now been replaced. The two trees in the Deer Park planted by WCS in 2015 seem to be OK.

Both play areas are in good condition; the Council has started cutting the grass regularly, and both are well used by children and young people.

The old quarry site on Constitution Hill owned by Stephen Caldfield of Serious Stage is very busy with many new buildings and plenty of storage going on.

I believe Cllr Adrian l'Anson, through the MDC, is aware of what is going on at the Serious quarry and the very large mound that has been made. The soil may have been removed from a new housing estate development. I spoke to Stephen Caldfield about the very large and sharp stone just inside the kissing gate on the field he owns.

Also, there is quite a lot of the timber left from the removal of trees with Ash Die Back by the National Trust Woods off Tor Furlong. I am not impressed by the way the contractors have left the woods; it looks a bit of a mess to me. Not all the ash trees which were marked have been cut down, perhaps the contractors will come back again. There is also quite a lot of earth that has been dumped in the bit of wood that belongs to one of the Ponting brothers, which is near the golf course. I believe the MDC has been informed, but I don't know whether permission has been granted for this.

Here is Adrian's **planning update**:

Last month, a Planning Inspector held a hearing to consider the refusal of a proposal to build 148 housing units west of Underwood Quarry (2019/1883). His decision may also influence the future of two recent refusals - 90 units west of Bovis Homes on Wookey Hole Road (2020/0484) and 68 units north of Elm Close (2020/2217). We wait with baited breath!

The Wells Neighbourhood Plan is wending its way and, following consultation, hopefully will be made at the end of this year. Anyone interested in planning issues related to Wells is asked to contact adrianianson@yahoo.co.uk.

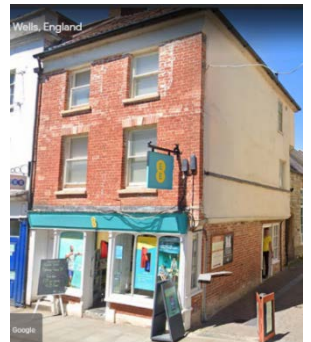
Patrick Brown's involvement with civic societies continues into its eighth decade and his contributions are still hugely appreciated! He brings our attention to parts of the historic built environment that we often miss – even in our home city. He writes:

Not just a pretty face: 40 High Street (Listed Building - 662 - 1/7/112)

Wells High Street presents mainly eighteenth or nineteenth century facades to the passer-by: sash windows and parapets predominate. But all is not as it seems. Look at No 40, on the corner of Union Street - brick facade, sash windows. However, at the upper floor irregular jointing in the brickwork suggests an earlier, more horizontal opening, probably a seventeenth or early eighteenth-century casement: at the ground floor, through the shop window you see a diagonal early beam - a 'dragon beam' - provided so that a jettied (overhanging) upper floor could be provided both to High Street and Union Street. Also on this side street the plaster conceals what is below, but a few years ago a damaged upper corner revealed wooden laths as sub-structure - a clear indication of a timber frame beneath. This is basically a typical late medieval timber-framed building, only the rear wall, containing fireplaces and staircase, being in stone. Until the late seventeenth century most buildings in Wells were timber framed, plastered or lime-washed, with jettied upper storeys, and No 40 was but one in a fairly homogeneous-looking Main Street.

My thanks to everyone who has contributed and I wish you all well and look forward to seeing you soon. If we are able to arrange a Summer Social in the Museum Gardens, later this summer, I will let you know as soon as possible. Other events are dependent on recruiting more help to the committee to arrange these. Do get in touch if you would like any more information or would like to get involved with our activities.

Chris Winter



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