

CURRENT ISSUES – MARCH 2020

Conservation

Members will have seen from the winter issue of InDownton magazine that Moot Trustees decided to consult the public on the question of erecting a fence on an historic Bridge in the Moot gardens. One of our charitable objectives is “to influence the preservation and/or improvement of historic sites and buildings in the village”, and in view of our Conservation interests, the DS Committee has been following this issue fairly carefully. ***Our formal response to the public consultation is shown in full under the “Conservation” tab on this website.*** The main points raised were that:

We understood the Trustees had a duty of care to the public, but noted that Historic England guidelines on historic sites warn against adopting an overly risk-averse attitude which might blight enjoyment and viability of a site

We would not normally favour modern structural protection being fixed to an historic feature; unless a properly conducted risk analysis concluded that such a barrier was the “only reasonable way” to protect the public

We recommended that a further safety report was commissioned with a company properly qualified in assessing heritage sites; and that the report should take full account of the Heritage context of the Moot, and result in a fully informed risk analysis.

Any proposals for mitigating action should be guided by a full understanding of the impact of H&S recommendations on historic assets; should include a range of options (from signs to route mapping to fences) and be informed by discussion with Historic England and planning Inspectors whose agreement would be necessary to protect the integrity of this historic site.

Planning

In other areas, planning has been fairly quiet, but there were two cases in the Conservation area on which we commented:

(19/10972/FUL - 20a Lode Hill) The Parish Council had similar views to our own about this retrospective planning application for garage and wall – and recommended refusal because previous planning conditions had been completely and wilfully ignored. Wiltshire Council also rejected the application and it now remains to be seen whether they will take any further action in this case of a breach of planning.
(19/10527/FUL – The Tannery) In another retrospective planning application four canopies had been installed on the front of the tannery building. Though not objecting to the canopies themselves, it was considered unfortunate that the material used did not match existing on the building. We agreed with the Parish Council that the views of the Conservation Officer would be accepted on whether these changes were acceptable on a street-facing building in the Conservation area.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)

In 2019, after some years of campaigning, the Society handed over to the Parish Council the question of HGV vehicles flouting weight limit restrictions. It was agreed that a Downton Lorry Watch scheme would be initiated to confirm the extent of the problem. In January this year we asked what progress had been made and understand that the Police (who had previously lacked the resources to deal with this issue), would now be addressing it. We will see. ***(For full background on the HGV issue see under “Campaigns” on this website)***

Downton in Bloom 2020

Following registration for the RHS South West in Bloom competition, a small Downton Society working group has been co-ordinating practicalities, developing ideas and sourcing funds. We are delighted to have support from the Parish Council, the Green Group, Moot and Millennium Green, the Horticultural Society and local Schools; individual residents and businesses are also engaged.

RHS judges will come to the village in early July to assess floral displays, environmental awareness and community engagement - so, in the meantime, there is much to do. The official route will focus primarily on: The Borough and Memorial Gardens, The Moot, and Millennium Green; but other smaller areas could also be included - for instance, the entrance to the village, around St Laurence's Church, the Millennium Beacon – as the rest of the village will not escape the judges notice.

As a result of Downton In Bloom (DIB) many improvements are being made to the village : the PC have ordered new litter bins, the bridges will be painted or cleaned; there will be new tubs on the Borough and planters on the bridges ; the schools are engaged with their own projects, as is the Green Group and Millennium Green. We have also ordered a topiary cuckoo. Even if we don't win any prizes, we are sure that Downton in Bloom will benefit the village – and that was part of our purpose in initiating it. ***(For updates and further information - from plans to planting – see the In Bloom section on this website)***

Moviola

The 2020 season of films started well with good audiences for “Yesterday” and “The Good Liar”. This is encouraging as, in 2019, the box office ran at a slight loss which meant that we had to increase the ticket price – still good value, though, at £7. The Downton Society has donated to a fund to purchase a new screen for the Memorial Hall (MH) and with a MH fund-raising event and contributions from the Parish Council, and, we hope, the Area Board, the film goes experience will soon become even better. ***(For programme and further details see the Moviola tab on this website)***

Footpaths

A new programme of walks has been organised by the Footpath Group, the first one being on 21st March. Meanwhile, the Ramblers are calling on walkers nationally to help identify 10,000 miles of historic footpaths that are missing from the map in England and Wales. All Rights of Way must be identified before a government deadline of 2026, after which it will no longer be possible to add old paths to the official record, and footpaths could be lost forever. If you know of any hidden or unidentified walks in our area please let someone in the Footpath group know ***(see details in the Community/footpath section of this website)***

SALISBURY and WILTSHIRE COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS

In response to the initial Salisbury Maltings consultation , the Downton Society agreed generally with the line taken by Salisbury Civic Society and expressed certain concerns (see under letters on this website) .The architects' revised planning application for phase 1 of the Maltings project (for a library, gym and hotel), which addressed some of the issues, was finally approved by the Strategic Planning Committee in September . We continue to take an interest in the plans for Salisbury, insofar as they affect conservation and the interests of residents in our parish

Wiltshire Council , meanwhile, is engaged in a process to create a new Wiltshire-wide Local Plan, which will guide the overall scale and pattern of development in the county up to 2036 . The new plan will replace the current Wiltshire Core Strategy. Development decisions will be made on the basis of evidence gathered on local economic issues, infrastructure and housing need, as well as ongoing consultation, **At present, WC does not envisage additional housing for Downton.** However, locations for future growth and development will have to be reviewed in the light of any new government planning guidance as well as the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework. We will continue to monitor this, particularly in the context of the Downton Neighbourhood Plan (NP) as it has become clear that NP's will have to be reviewed every few years to ensure that they remain in line with government and local authority policy.

