

Report to Council 7 January 2020

From Cllr John Crockford-Hawley

Heritage and Regeneration Champion

Members holding positions of added responsibility are busy people but it's sometimes difficult for others to gauge the workloads. Apart from attendance at formal meetings how do we get to know what they're up to? Though this 'champion' role is loosely defined and attracts no allowance (nor am I seeking one) I hope colleagues might appreciate occasional reports which highlight what the role entails.

Heritage events or sites of local heritage interest attended since Council of 24th September:

'Revealing the Secrets of Yatton's Past': Yatton Rugby Club sponsored by Bloor Homes and Wessex Archaeology (organised by NSC)

Blue Plaque unveilings: The Tropicana WsM and Fairfield House Bath in recognition of Emperor Haile Selassie's wartime exile in GB (organised by WTC)

Middle Engine Pitt, Nailsea: an important NSC owned feature from Nailsea's industrial past (organised by NSC)

NS Heritage Forum: a well-attended event held at Banwell with representatives of numerous North Somerset heritage groups (organised by NSC & Banwell PC)

Archaeology of the Severn Estuary: All-day conference held in WsM with eight guest lecturers including Cat Lodge. Unfortunately I was unable to attend.

Birnbeck Regeneration Trust: attended with Cllr Payne

Along with Executive and other colleagues I participate in the NS Design Panel, Regeneration Advisory Group, Weston Place Making Strategy Board, and North Somerset Heritage Forum.

NSC continues to appreciate the work done by the Worlebury Hillfort Group who twice weekly clear 'the glade' and attend to other parts of the Iron Age Fort. Other volunteer groups throughout North Somerset help in many ways to maintain sites of heritage interest and engage in research. This high level of community assistance helps protect, maintain and enhance the past for the benefit of future generations. We should not underestimate the importance of community engagement.

Meetings attended as heritage guest speaker

Banwell Society of Archaeology: 11 Oct

Hutton Friendship Circle: 28 Oct

Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society: A day symposium in Taunton studying Somerset's Victorian architects. 9th November

Milton Methodist Ladies: 12 Nov

Guerrilla Media Unit / Terrestrial: 'Severn Serpent' film presentation in which I had to lie convincingly on camera about the Bristol Channel's version of the Loch Ness Monster! 14th Nov

HAZ / HE: 20th Nov (*see below*)

Clevedon Torc: 28th Nov. Though I did no more than introduce the speaker (Dr Julia Farley, Curator of the European Iron Age at the British Museum) who managed to turn a potentially dry academic monologue into a highly entertaining and informative evening, I feel the event ought to be highlighted in this report. The Clevedon Torc is a unique Iron Age solid gold treasure discovered at Walton near Clevedon and, though incomplete, sufficient remains to show exquisite workmanship from this prehistoric era. It is on long-term loan from the British Museum for display in Weston Museum. This is the second national treasure to be loaned from London to the museum and North Somerset. We are grateful to the British Museum, Imperial War Museum, South West Heritage Trust and WsM Town Council. This event attracted a large audience

University Centre Weston: Interviews with media students making a film about local history 29 Nov

Milton Ladies Fellowship: 5 Dec

Multi-Cultural Friendship Association: AGM 10 Dec

Raising Awareness Lectures: The Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), Historic England (HE) and North Somerset Council (NSC) are sponsoring a series of five free-to-attend public lectures to 'raise awareness of Weston's unique heritage'. Thus far three lectures have taken place and each has been well attended. Alex Hearn (Assistant Director of Place Making & Growth NSC), Johanna Roethe (Architectural Investigator HE) and John Crockford-Hawley (H&R Champion NSC) have participated. Allan Brodie (Author of HE's best-selling book 'Weston-super-Mare and its Seaside Heritage) and Mark Bowden (HE senior archaeological investigator) will speak on 15th January and 19th February. Many thanks to Weston Museum staff and Weston Civic Society for making everybody so welcome.

Weston Museum is now owned and operated by Weston Town Council. It houses and displays parts of the wider North Somerset Collection (owned by NSC). A long-term working agreement between our two councils and the South West Heritage Trust (curator of the NS collection and formerly part of Somerset County Council) ensures North Somerset's heritage collection remains available for appropriate public display. Proposals for this very popular museum's next development phase are likely to be approved in the near future. WTC has recently created a Heritage Arts and Culture Committee with responsibility for the Museum, Blakehay Theatre, Blue Plaque placements and other matters relative to heritage, the arts and culture. This dovetails perfectly with NSC's new approach to heritage, arts and culture. Cara MacMahon and Richard Blows attend and participate on behalf of NSC. I am aware that a number of NSC colleagues will not have had an opportunity to visit the museum and am hoping to organise a spring time visit. Though located in Weston the museum's area of interest is not constricted by 'modern' local government boundaries

Future Heritage and Regeneration talks

I have been invited to speak on local history and regeneration topics at:

Yatton History Society 4th Feb 2020

Weston Notable Club 6th Feb

Worlebury Residents' Association 20th Feb

Cambridge Society of Somerset 23rd April

North Sedgemoor Local History Group 13th May

Weston Clevedon & Portishead Railway Group 15th May

NHS Retirement Group: 1st Sept

Weston Homemakers: 1st Sept

Uphill WI: 9th Sept

Nailsea & District Local History Society: 14th Sept

Since becoming Heritage & Regeneration Champion I have researched and published three more local history books: (1) 'The Heart of Weston - Emmanuel Parish Church', (2) a new guide to St John the Baptist, Weston's parish church and (3) a facsimile of Weston's first tourist guide published in 1822. I'm always happy to help any North Somerset heritage group with advice regarding research, writing and production of local history books and guides.

Archive Workshop: 6th March. Organised by NSC for all NS Heritage Forum members at Weston Museum

North Somerset Heritage Forum: 1st May at Weston Museum

Recognising local heritage improvements

Weston Civic Society holds an annual Awards Evening where certificates are presented to those who've restored original building features (both large and small), created appropriate extensions, built inspiringly anew or attended to our natural environment with care and commitment. This year NSC received a couple of commendations. I am gradually getting to know the heritage and environmental groups which operate in North Somerset but need to engage with more of them. Ward Members might care to facilitate such contacts.

Heritage *AND* Regeneration

When Council changed the champion's 'job description' to include regeneration it signalled our determination that heritage should play a respected and meaningful role in the social and economic future of North Somerset's varied communities.

Staff

A word of praise for our heritage and regeneration staff. It is a real pleasure working alongside these professionals. To say they are dedicated is to state the obvious but it is also to understate their commitment and team comradeship. I doubt many Members of Council (or the public) realise the work load placed upon their collective shoulders. There are times when I fear too much is asked of them.