

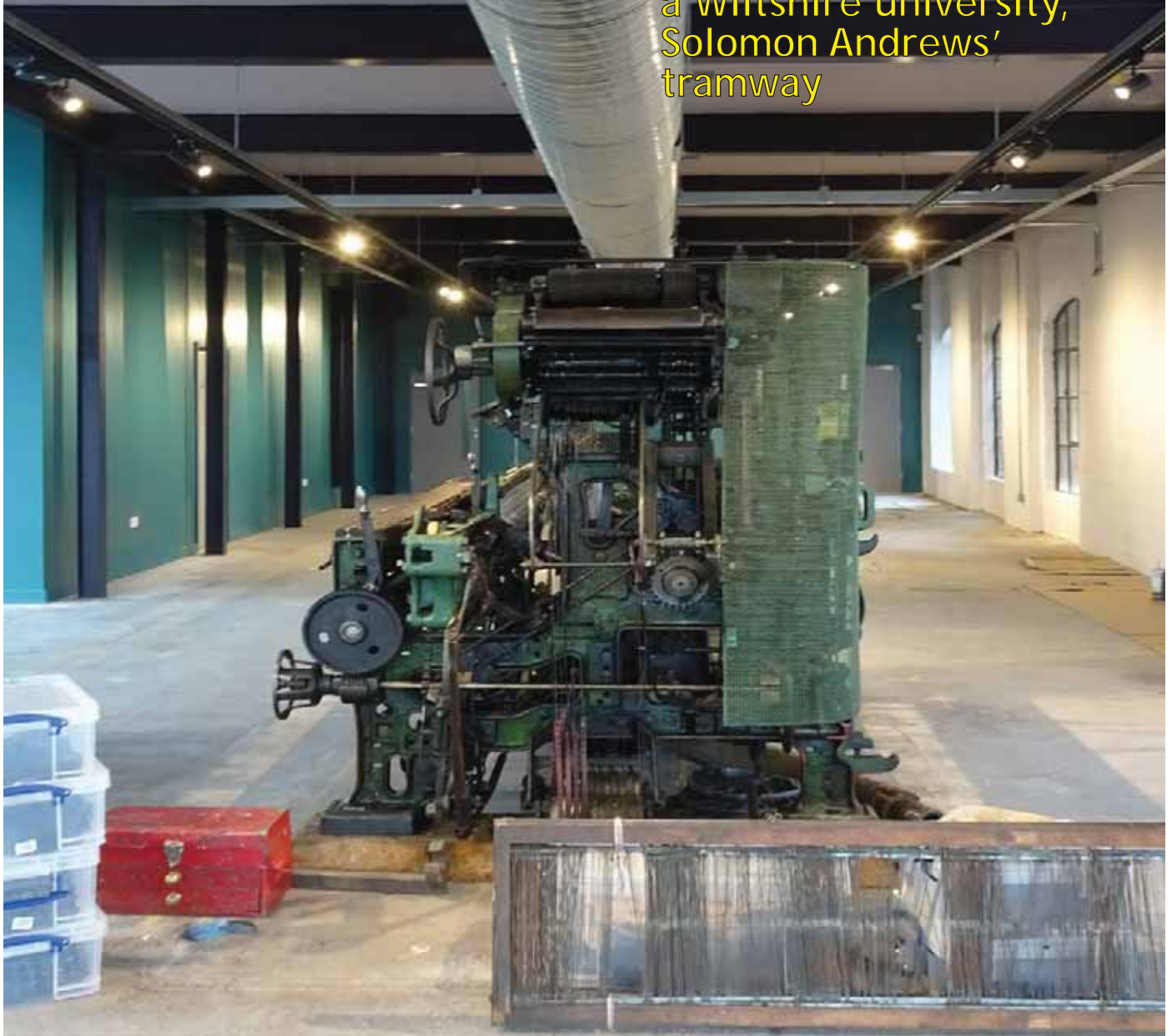
# Trowbridge Civic Society NEWSLETTER



Spring 2020

In this issue:

Update on the Trowbridge  
Museum,  
Eyesores of Trowbridge,  
a Wiltshire university,  
Solomon Andrews'  
tramway

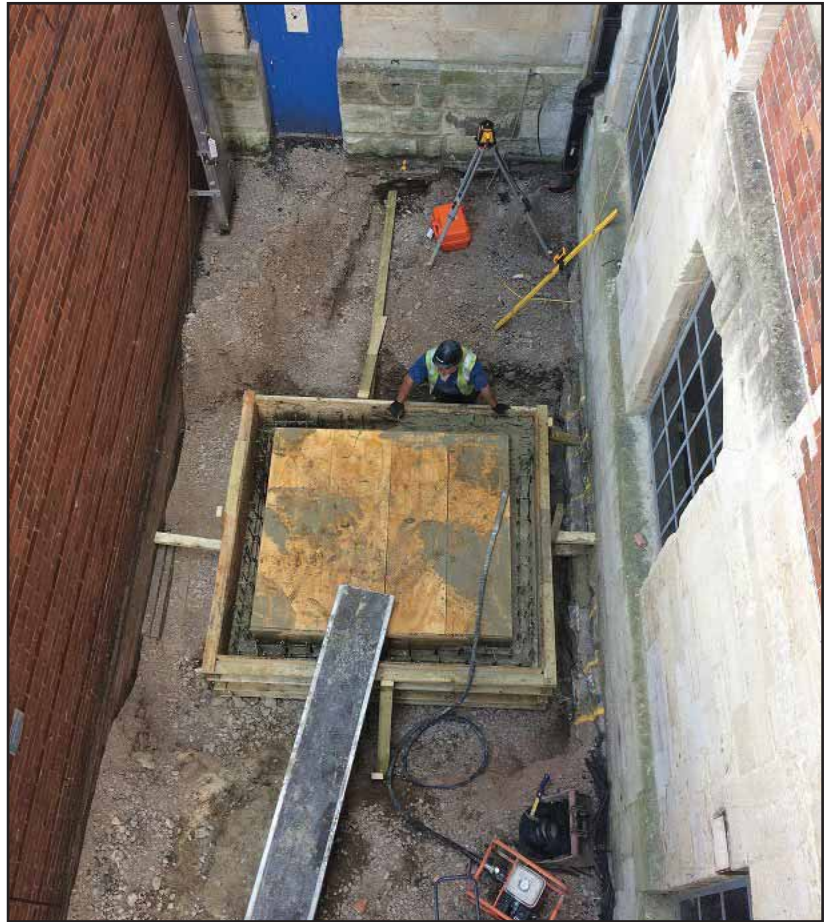


Registered Charity Number 276765  
Website: [www.trowbridgecivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.trowbridgecivicsociety.org.uk)  
Member of Wiltshire Building Record, ASHTAV and BALH



## Trowbridge Museum

Laying the foundation for the new museum lift.



Over the Christmas period the Civic Society had a lovely decorated tree in St James's Church, and we would like to thank our member, Celia, for the tree. It looked wonderful with photos of the buildings in the town, sandwiched in plastic and cut out into rounds and ellipses. It was very well done.



Newtown cottages.

See Chairman's Notes

Cover picture The Dobcross weaving machine is already in place in the expanded Trowbridge Museum while building work continues.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

In this issue we have an article about the refurbishment of Trowbridge Museum with interesting photographs showing some of the work being done.

We also have three articles by David Feather, one of which is about eyesores in Trowbridge. The local U3A architecture group recently discussed members' opinions about two buildings in Trowbridge which were regarded as eyesores and in need of urgent attention, and a modern building which stands on the site of an older building which, if it had not been demolished, would probably have become a listed building. I wonder if any of our readers can think of other eyesores in the town. Let us know, please.

We have another in our series, Trowbridge Connections. This, again, is about someone born in Trowbridge who made a name for himself further afield. Again, please let us know if you can contribute something to this series or suggest a subject.

## TROWBRIDGE CIVIC SOCIETY INFORMATION

President:	Kenneth Rogers
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Web Site:	Jonathan Hawkes

**Subscription Rates have now gone up -**

**Single £7 Joint £12 Corporate £35**

**New members welcome - please contact  
Membership Secretary**

## From the Chairman

Glyn Bridges

It will be good for the town if we get a share of the Government's Future High Street Fund. Should this come about Trowbridge would receive in the region of seven million pounds to be spent on projects within the town. Meanwhile, it is good to see the St George's Works apartments and the town houses at Courts Mill now complete. In both cases the developers have done a good job in converting former industrial buildings. The last major site for development in the town is the Innox Mills site but there are several smaller ones as well: the United Church, Courtfield House, Rosefield House and the Manvers Street office block. We can only hope that these sites are not left to decay for much longer. Already ornate lamps have been stolen from the United Church and a similar lamp was stolen from St Thomas's at about the same time.

We are soon to lose a very insignificant but unique group of buildings if planning goes ahead, I refer to the two 'cottages on the waste' in Newtown at the junction of Gloucester Road. The Baptist Church owns the building and has tried unsuccessfully to find a use for it even offering the building to NARA but they were unable to raise sufficient funds for its restoration. Hopefully, the building will be recorded by WHBR before demolition takes place.

## A fantastic re-developed and expanded museum for Trowbridge

After 5 years Trowbridge Museum is nearing the end of the most exciting phase of its existence.

The project really took off when Clare Lyall, Curator and Head of Cultural and Neighbourhood Services first secured funding of £25,000 from the National Lottery Fund in 2003. The focus on weaving and local heritage helped to raise the Lottery's awareness of Trowbridge's rich textile heritage.

Securing a major grant from the National Lottery Fund is highly competitive and involves two rounds of applications. In December 2015 Clare successfully secured a Round 1 pass and a grant of £100,000 for the Development Phase of the Project. This Phase enabled us to develop detailed architectural drawings and designs, heritage research, an access audit, audience development, an activity plan, fundraising and the production of a Business Plan.

Following the Round 2 application, we secured a National Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1,172,500 towards the £2.4 million expansion in September 2017. Trowbridge Town Council contributed £900,000 towards the Project and we had secured a grant of £40,000 from Garfield Weston and a generous donation of £150,000 from the Friends of the Museum. We also had contributions from the Parishes of Hilperton, North Bradley, Keevil and Bratton Great Hinton's Women's group also chose the Friends of Trowbridge Museum as their charity of the year, supporting the Project.

In preparation for the build, Museum staff packed approximately 22,000 objects to be decanted to a specialist storage facility located on the site of a former airfield in Upper Heyford. After clearing out the museum ready for building work to commence, the museum staff relocated to the Civic Centre.

E W Beard Ltd started construction work in June 2019. After stripping out much of the old infrastructure, they removed the fire retardant flocking from the steel girders which formed the skeleton of the original Mill building and united both floors.

A key phase of this construction work was the beginning of the foundations of the new external lift shaft. The original lift was designed for use in a residential home and continually broke down.

[See photograph on inside cover]

A crucial part of Trowbridge Museum is our Learning and Outreach Service. It has a fantastic reputation and supports a wide range of activities including: running workshops for schools, working with adults with special educational needs, developing holiday activities and craft activities for adults, and supporting lifelong learning. During this phase the foundations for our Learning and Outreach facilities began. This has been doubled in size to meet the



demands of our service and will be a great location for talks.

Alongside the building work, the Museum staff have been busy developing the plans for the Museum's interpretation, preparing for the return of the collections, and finalising the plans for the collection's storage system. They have also maintained their programme of guided historic walks, holiday activities and outreach services!

The end is in sight with the summer opening looming. The new roof and lift are nearly complete. Our new Library and Research facility is ready and when opened will contain some of Ken Roger's meticulous research on Trowbridge. Parts of the original mill building within The Shires have nearly been uncovered; the Museum entrance will be joined by the two approaches from Court Street and from near Boswells café, highlighting that the public are actually walking through the mill itself.

Trowbridge's last working woollen cloth mill has been preserved and we have created a museum of regional significance. Once the Museum staff are back in the Museum the date of our summer opening will be released. In the mean-time check out our website: [www.trowbridgemuseum.co.uk](http://www.trowbridgemuseum.co.uk)



Celebrating the Lottery Fund award



The new entrance in the Shires

## Can you help?



## Peter Collier

I am currently writing an article about the avant-garde film maker, Jeff Keen (1923 - 2012) who was born in or near Trowbridge. His father, who became a butler at Holt Manor provably lived in Staverton as a child. Jeff went to grammar school, probably the High School. His daughter has sent me a photo of a house, labelled Hilperton Marsh. Does anyone know where it is? Or does anyone have any information about his life in Trowbridge?

Replies to  
[pcollier@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:pcollier@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Planning report by Sue and Kevin Eames

Permission has been granted to extend Wetherspoon's Albany Palace to include offices in Park Road currently used by the Alzheimer's Support Society. The Friends of Trowbridge Sensory Garden had expressed several concerns about the application. They feared that the change of use would detract from the peaceful ambience of the Sensory Garden and would impact on a key corridor to the Park and all its events and amenities. They also worried that it could open the way to the use of the forecourt as a Beer Garden and thought that having an extension with a door to the forecourt would add to problems of noise, control and management which could spill into the road and even into the garden. Maybe in the light of these comments the decision notice includes the following conditions

*No sound-amplifying equipment, loudspeaker, or public address system shall be installed/operated or music played within or outside the premises hereby approved or its curtilage.*

*REASON: To ensure the creation/retention of an environment free from intrusive levels of noise and activity in the interests of the amenity of the area.*

*The existing front door into No 1 (which is shown on the proposed ground floor plan as "a means of escape") shall only be used as an emergency fire door and not as any formal point of entry or exit into the building in perpetuity.*

*REASON: In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area, the setting of the listed building and in the interests of neighbouring amenity*

Permission has been granted to install gas central heating in the Lady Brown Cottage Homes in Polebarn Road and in numbers 1-4 Union Street, which are all Grade 2 listed buildings. The case officer's report states:

*The impact on the fabric of the buildings would be small bore holes drilled to let in the gas supply. This would not compromise the historic integrity of the listed buildings and therefore no harm would be caused to the fabric of the listed building.*

We were concerned at the resubmission of an application for the development of land at The Grange, Hilperton Road, Trowbridge. The proposal is to allow for an amended materials palette, removal of chimneys to plots 1-6, amended window opening positions and the addition of a single-bay oak-framed carport to plots 7 and 12-20. The Society has just submitted the following objection to the re-submission, drawing on the National Planning Proposal Framework (NPPF):

*On behalf of the Trowbridge Civic Society, I object to the removal of chimneys in this re-application, as it seems contrary to NPPF 127 (c) which states that decisions should ensure that developments ... are sympathetic to local character ... including the surrounding built environment. Hilperton is a village with many traditionally built houses, and if chimneys were to be removed from the development, it would make the houses less sympathetic to the surrounding built environment. Furthermore, we feel that more details are needed about the 'amended materials palette', as such information is necessary to ensure that the development remains sympathetic to the local character. In addition, we should like to know what provisions are envisaged for electric vehicle charging points.*

## Trowbridge Connections - Solomon Andrews Peter Collier

[On a recent holiday on the Lleyn Peninsula in North Wales I visited the Plas Glyn y Weddw Gallery in Llanbedrog. The main exhibition was about the entrepreneur, Solomon Andrews, and to my surprise, he was born in Trowbridge. One of the main reasons that the exhibition was here, was that his company had constructed the Pwllheli and Llanbedrog Tramway. Intrigued by his connection to Trowbridge I decided to find out more about this "son of Trowbridge".]

On the 13th November 1908 the Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent reported the following story.

"News reached Pwllheli on Monday of the death of Mr Solomon Andrews, of Cardiff, at the advanced age of 73 years. [He died on 9th November 1908] Mr Andrews was a remarkable man in many respects. As a self-made man there were fewer more interesting examples in the whole country than he. He had not the assistance of a good education. Indeed, it was only in his later years that he learnt to read and write, and yet he had at his fingers' ends the particulars of each of his varied undertakings, involving the culation

of hundreds of thousands of pounds annually. He controlled each concern with such success that he not only became a rich man, but aliso gave employment every succeeding year to a larger and larger number of people, and other men of wealth bowed to his judgments."

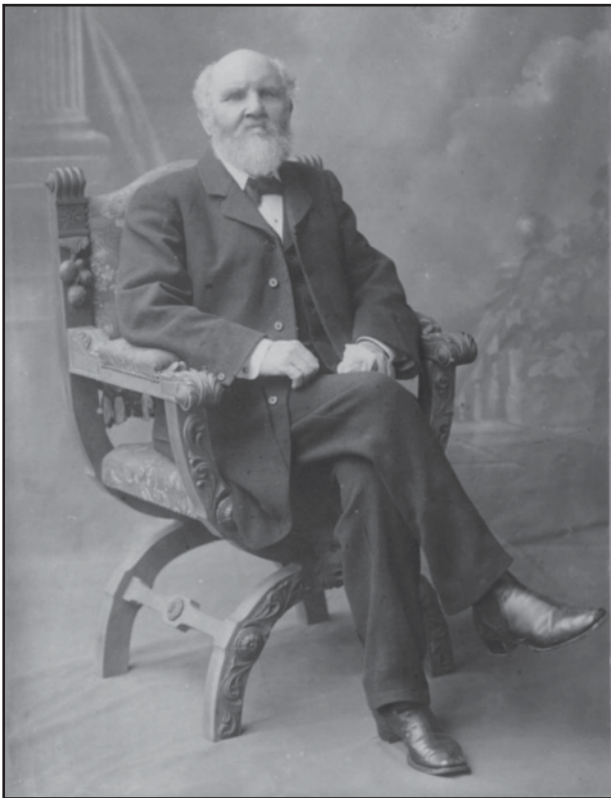
Andrews was born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, on 5th April 1835, the son of John and Charlotte Andrews and in June was baptised in St James's Church. By 1851 he had moved to Cardiff working as a baker and confectioner. The house was owned by George and Charlotte Asher, George being a baker and confectioner, so Solomon was presumably learning the trade. However, on 27 March 1855, he returned to Trowbridge where he got married to Mary Asher, daughter of John and Mary Asher, in Trinity Church. It is not clear whether she was the daughter of his landlord or some other relation. There were five children from the marriage but only two survived infancy.

Another account says that he arrived in Cardiff equipped with just a wooden tray to

sling around his neck and a stock of trinkets and sweets to sell in the street.

The newspaper obituary continues: "He commenced business as a reckoner in a small way in James Street, Docks, selling sweetmeats which he made himself. Those were the days when only a few people knew anything of the making of sweetmeats, for sugar was then very much dearer than now. On market days in fine weather, Mr Andrews paraded St. Mary Street and High Street, carrying the products of his industry on a large wooden tray, suspended in front of him by a strap over the shoulder."

He was obviously an ambitious and intelligent young man. On 24 November 1856 he leased a shop and house at 51 James Street. In December 1863 he obtained a licence to



## Soloman Andrews - continued

operate to operate a horse-drawn cab from the new residential districts of Canton and Roath to Cardiff Docks. By 1865, he had eight cabs and he is thought to have been an omnibus proprietor by December 1866. His business interests grew rapidly to include tramways, buses, draperies and collieries. His son Francis Emile joined the company and eventually became a partner, the business becoming known as *Solomon Andrews and Son*. For a while he was a Conservative councillor on Cardiff Town Council. In 1872 Andrews bought a coach building works and began constructing his own vehicles. Within a few years he was operating buses in places as diverse as Portsmouth, Plymouth, Belfast and London. By 1873 he was running 35 buses and coaches through the streets of Cardiff.

He was best known for the Andrews Star Omnibus Company and the Star Omnibus Company (London) which provided horse-drawn bus services in London.

Andrews built houses and business premises all over the country. The Market Buildings in St Mary's Street, Cardiff, opened in 1884, were just one of his major concerns, as were the shopping arcade in Penarth and many of the grander buildings along Windsor Road in the town. He opened the David Evans Department Stores in Cardiff and Swansea and even had business concerns in Australia.

In the early twentieth century he was instrumental in developing the north Wales town of Pwllheli. On holiday in Llandudno Andrews heard of land available in the town on the south coast of the Llyn Peninsula, and immediately laid plans to create a holiday resort.



His enterprises within the town included the Promenade, a public bandstand, a golf course and the West End Hotel.

He bought Glyn-y-Weddw house to the west of Pwllheli and then built a tramway along the sand dunes to run out to the place. The house was converted into an art gallery - in which guise it still runs - and a ballroom was

created out of the old stable yard. Evening dances at Glyn-y-Weddw remained popular for many years.

[References and acknowledgements:

Wikipedia, BBC Wales website.

Special thanks to Iwan Hughes and the John Andrews Trust and Plas Glyn-y-Weddw Gallery and Museum for the photo of Solomon Andrews

<https://www.oriel.org.uk/en/the-andrews-family>

Ashely Birch - <http://www.tramwaybadgesandbuttons.com/> Tramway photographs of he Tramways and Light Railway Society, with thanks to David Voice]



## Ashton Mill

You all know Ashton Mill. It is the best remaining example of a woollen mill in the town. It even still has its weaving sheds. Ashton Mill used to have four listed features but the chimney and the stove-rack building have sadly now gone. This unfortunately shows that listing is no protection.

The remaining two features are the main mill building, which is substantially complete, and the Engine House. As the photograph shows, this latter has lost its roof and part of one wall. It looks a mess, as does the whole site.

The Engine House should be restored, but what are the planners in County Hall doing about it? I suppose I am wasting my time (and yours) in asking the question. The site looks unloved and desperately needs some TLC. The owners should be ashamed of the state of this historical gem. Picture back inside cover

## Town Bridge Garage

I used to take one of our cars to this garage about 30 years ago. Behind the fronting of the building, the garage seemed a real mess inside, very oily and dirty.

Surprisingly, the now-white building at the front has real historical merit. It was built in 1915 for Barnes Brothers and it was one of the first showrooms built specifically for the motor car. It is reckoned to be Art Nouveau in style with its pagoda roof and distinctive chimneys. It was originally brick with stone detailing. It lies within a Trowbridge Conservation Area and is considered a heritage asset, so it may have some protection. But should it be listed? It may be a unique survivor of the early car age?

What should happen to the site? Unfortunately an application to preserve the building as a retail unit and develop the rest of the site for housing was rejected in 2009. Surely it could be resurrected or something similar proposed? Picture back inside cover

## Union House - now Erskine House

If you are not familiar with these names, it is the building that lies in the angle of Union Street and Timbrell Street, and was built originally as a club (according to Pevsner) before serving as offices.. Renrod, the last occupants, moved to the Meridian Motor Park in North Bradley and the building is currently being converted to flats. The Renrod building was not an appropriate design for the site, lying as it does in the angle between the two streets. It has the Zion Chapel on one side and 50 Timbrell Street on the other. Regrettably, a most attractive and appropriately designed house was demolished to build it.

Now the question has to be asked - will the new treatment make it a better building that will sit comfortably with its neighbours? Sadly, the indications are that it will just be a different eyesore.

The illustration is an extract from the planning application. It shows the elevation you will see as you drive away from the town centre. Picture back inside cover

And Picture back inside cover of the building it replaced:

Hopefully, the Bowyers' site will be dealt with in the next few years but what about the Post Office building, the old Boots shop in Fore Street and the old Co-operative store in Silver Street? *We would like to hear if you have any suggestions of other Trowbridge Eyesores?*

# Trowbridge - Fit for the Future? David Feather

What will it be like to live in Trowbridge in 2026 or 2036? Shopkeepers may look forward to the bigger population, but will residents be able to get to the shops - and to work, schools etc?

On behalf of the Civic Society I was looking at the planning application for the Elm Grove Farm site between Wiltshire Drive and the railway. What I found in the Transport Assessment shocked me.

Wiltshire Council has a computerised traffic model, so various development situations can be tested for their effect on the traffic flow in the town. The developers' traffic consultants have used this. Buried fairly deep in their documentation is the revelation that the development, plus the housing areas that were allocated in the Core Strategy would result in 2026 of a traffic queue exceeding 400 vehicles trying to travel along Bradley Road from Frome Road.

With this worrying note I thought I would look further into the future traffic predictions. I found a consultant's study reported in 2011 which investigated the effects of the Core Strategy developments, i.e. the 2026 situation. They concluded: *The traffic modelling has demonstrated that the performance of the highway network would suffer from increased levels of congestion with the planned future developments in Trowbridge resulting in the following:*

- *Reduced reliability for both motorists and bus passengers (given that public transport has no priority over cars);*
- *Increased journey times and journey distances;*
- *Reduced traffic speeds;*
- *Increased car borne pollution.*

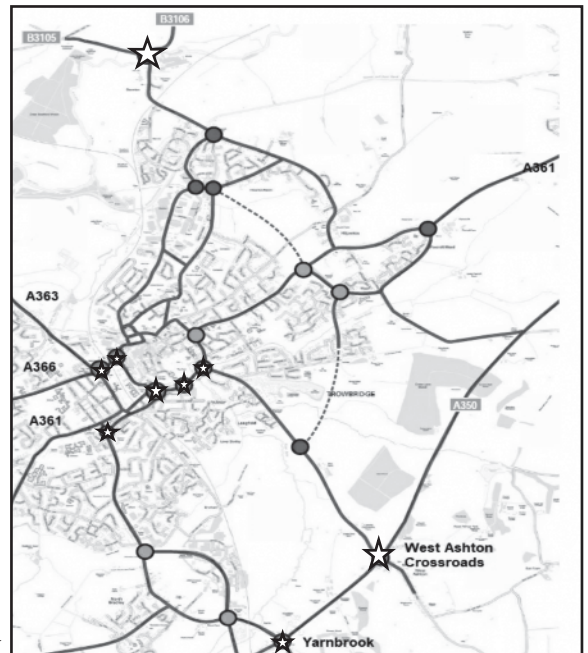
*1) Increased traffic volumes and congestion will likely result in increased noise, increased visual intrusion and deter walking and cycling modes of travel. It will also reduce the economic viability and attractiveness of Trowbridge as a place in which to live, work or visit.*

*3) Those key junctions on the local highway network which the modelling has shown to suffer from the greatest levels of queuing and delay include Staverton Bridge Signals, A350 West Ashton Crossroads Signals, A350/A363 Yarnbrook Roundabout and the A363 Bath Road and A366 Wingfield Road approaches to the Holy Trinity Gyratory.*

Now, in 2011 the consultants did not anticipate the WHSAP housing. This will make the problems even worse.

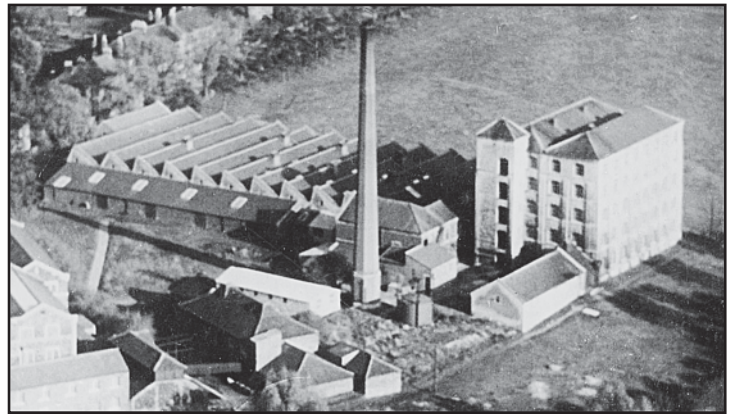
The Council appointed other consultants to advise on a Transport Strategy and they came up with measures to try to persuade drivers to use other methods of travelling. But what do you do if the buses are badly affected by congestion with no bus priority possible? The realistic approach would be to try to improve the congested junctions. Has the Council any plans to do this? As far as I can see, they have not. Worse than that, they are planning more housing. What a mess!

The diagram above e shows the Trowbridge road network; the stars indicate a congested junction.



# Trowbridge Eyesores Page 7

Union House - The Chestnuts  
Ashton Mill, Town Bridge Garage



# Wiltshire has a New University!

David Feather

Well, it's not quite a whole University but it is an important new part of the Royal Agricultural University of Cirencester. The Cultural Heritage Institute will be based in a building of the old railway works in Swindon. As well as introducing an important new educational establishment in the County, it will help conserve the old workshop buildings, with their northlight roofs.

Kevin and Sue Eames and I were lucky to be able to represent Trowbridge Civic Society at the November AGM of the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust when Dr Geraint Coles explained the proposed role of the Institute, whose teaching will be based mainly on his considerable personal experience in the heritage conservation field. His talk was eye-opening. His view is that the most successful projects involve the community in planning and running them. This is where the Civic Society can help to improve Trowbridge projects, by representing the community in discussions with developers. We do however need to know what the community is seeking, so information from members is important. If, therefore, you have any strong views on any matter please let the Committee know.

From next Easter, the Institute will also be running short courses and day schools for volunteers and heritage enthusiasts. The topics will include how to build a heritage organisation, strategy, planning law, finance, governance, fundraising, marketing etc. - a sort of mini MBA for heritage bodies. More information will be published in January. Some of us might be interested!

Incidentally, if age dictates that you are not really in a position to want to take a Master's Degree in Heritage leading to employment in the area, your grandchildren might be interested. Dr Coles advised that the salaries might not be great but the job enjoyment is excellent. For more information go to: <https://www.rau.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses-cultural-heritage-institute>.



*Picture of shed 5*

Inside the Cultural Heritage Institute, the various rooms are in a stand-alone structure built within the old railway works in Swindon. It has been designed on the principle of a reversible change. If there is another future use for the works then the offices and lecture rooms can be dismantled, causing no damage to the heritage structure.