

Distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen welcome. What does Dorchester mean to you? If you are perhaps an infrequent visitor you may think of it as a quaint tree lined market town with lots of history, the Poundbury development, Brewery square and Thomas Hardy. I think the strongest connections are made when you are growing up?

My strongest memories are built from the Dorchester of the late 1960's and the early 1970s before teenage angst and the 'Clash' took hold. The town has undoubtedly changed as you can imagine. Let me take you on a quick tour to that time.

To the western entrance of the town stood the GPO Dorchester Radio Station beaming signals around the world with giant aerial arrays towering over the landscape. I was thrilled as child to see the original Marconi Transmitter in the Science Museum. To the north there was no bypass heading to the Yeovil Road - and no Charlton Down just the imposing Herrison Hospital where my wife Carolyn did her mental health training in the early 1980s and it was a big employer at the time. To the east there was no West Stafford

Bypass a tiny Crossways and remnants of the war time airfield easy to find. Of course Kingston Maurward remains in its splendour. To the south out towards Came there was no bypass either but apart from ugly pylons (now long gone) otherwise much the same. On the south west corner remains the largest hill fort in Europe where in later school years we used to do cross country running once bumping in to an American tourist who wanted to know where the castle was! With Maiden Castle on our door step we have often taken for granted our very own Poundbury Hill Fort and Roman Amphitheatre Maumbury Rings scene of public hangings and political rallies in later years.

Now moving into the town, the Poundbury development as we know today didn't exist the collection of farms and estate in sleepy isolation at the end of farm tracks. Castle Park didn't exist either in the south. For a population half the size it is today it had significantly more pubs. Long gone are the Swan, New Inn, Great Western, Marabout Castle, New Compasses, Antelope, Three Mariners, White Hart and Exhibition. Thankfully the Kings Arms,

famous for its Hardy connections and overnight stays of the Rolling Stones and the Beatles is being saved from the same fate.

A walk down South Street was full of traffic and busses belching out totally unregulated amounts of diesel fumes no doubt.

Throughout the town were many butchers a large fishmonger, several ironmongers, television rental shops and my personal favourite Foots seed merchants (now a Turkish Barber) where men in brown coats dealt with the serious business of seed distribution.

Smells also hold in one's memory with a walk past the old cattle market being quite powerful. If the Eldridge Pope brewery was brewing on the same day it could be quite overpowering. Parsons (now long gone) the oldest shop near the Kings Arms sold every variety of coffee beans you could imagine and the smell of roasting coffee beans could waft half the way up the high street. While a walk in to Templemans the second oldest shop where my mother worked for some time (now Toni and Guys) would hit you with the smell of leather and sheepskin from the coats and gloves.

Daily would be heard the hooter at the brewery signalling the change of shift and on quiet summer evenings and with less traffic the town hall clock be heard as far away as Manor Park where I grew up. On one occasion I clearly remember the ghostly wail from the testing of emergency sirens in Trinity Street and Coburg Road only later did I realise they were there to warn of a nuclear attack it was the Cold War after all.

Steam trains were still running until the late 60s and to around 1972 you could travel to Bridport and Swanage by train from Dorchester (and as a child I did) the journey to London was actually quicker!

If you were lucky in the summer you might see Elephants being walked through the town from a travelling circus. Quite rightly animals in Circuses don't happen now but the memory of Elephants walking up Weymouth Avenue was a sight to see.

So as you are sit here in the Corn Exchange steeped in history you may be sitting where Thomas Hardy once sat who knows. You equally may be thinking where is this all leading!

Well what is clear is that many things have changed, but a clear thread running through has been this Town Council, with the right to have a Mayor granted by King Charles the 1<sup>st</sup> in 1629. Its ancient ceremonies have continued largely unchanged but with the issues facing it very different. As a newly elected town council looking to plan its priorities we should look around to what we value and what we cherish which in my view is our community, heritage and environment. How can we protect these and allow a thriving but sustainable economy? The impending proposed development to our north has aroused passions and drawn the biggest demonstration I can ever remember in the town. We are as the expression goes living in 'interesting times'. We must also step up and do our part to reduce our environmental impact spurred on by international concerns for the health of our planet. We look forward to working with the new Dorset Council and wish them well

and signal that we should be willing to consider new delegations and responsibilities providing funding is forthcoming.

Finally I should mention my main charity this year. In coming here today you will have left your home leaving other family members, many of your worldly possessions maybe loved pets and probably driven across the highway. Nobody likes to think what would happen should a fire break out or getting involved in a road traffic accident. However the local Fire and Rescue Service based in Poundbury will be there to answer the call for this area 24/7. They are, 'On Call' Fire Fighters which means that they are volunteers with other full time jobs but put their life on the line for us as well as carrying out vital preventative work with the vulnerable. Last week I attended the annual awards ceremony in Salisbury to see Fire Fighters honoured for pulling people out burning cars, the rubble of a house following a gas explosion, rescuing people clinging to a tree in a raging flood and dealing with the Salisbury nerve agent attack. I will be supporting the Fire Fighters Charity to look after the brave men and women both serving and retired.

It is a pleasure and an honour to serve as this years Mayor.

Carolyn and I look forward to it very much. David's hard work and boundless enthusiasm will be a hard act to follow.

I look forward to meeting you all shortly upstairs over a glass of wine and refreshments thank you.