

OTTERY ST MARY HERITAGE SOCIETY

# **COLERIDGE MEMORIAL PARK**

DRAFT PROPOSALS  
JULY 2009

## **Introduction**

This draft proposal arises from discussions over a number of years among the Trustees of the Heritage Society. To date we have skirted around a major focus solely on Coleridge (although we do have an annual lunch or dinner in his honour) because our principal aim, mentioned specifically in our constitution, is the establishment of a Museum and Heritage Centre in Ottery, which we imagine would have covered the Coleridge interest in any case. Recent experience has taught us that our Museum will probably remain in abeyance for a while (particularly as we most often find ourselves lacking sufficiently tangible or quantifiable aims, and time, to secure grant assistance), and that in the meantime we could, and should, develop other heritage issues connected with the Town independent of our museum ambitions. On the other hand we do see a Coleridge Memorial project as not solely a Heritage Society project. We would want to be confident that other groups in the town and parish would be prepared to join the effort of propelling this forward, if it progresses beyond this initial stage.

## **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

It is evident, we believe, that the status of Ottery as the birthplace of Samuel Taylor Coleridge has not been fully recognised in terms of its potential economic and educational gains for the community. We think there is a simple answer to this, which need not cost vast amounts of money, and which could be quickly implemented, at least in its early stages. That is the reformulation of the existing Canaan Way open area into a new entity entitled The Coleridge Memorial Park.

The point of this document is merely to explore the potential to develop the scheme, identify opportunities and problems, and to work towards a more concrete set of proposals for submission to the planning authorities and grant aid bodies.

## **Aims**

To establish a recreational area named "The Coleridge Memorial Park" in the area currently occupied by the Canaan Way park. The object would be to retain all the existing amenities in the area but with the addition of appropriate statuary or other memorial features, primarily in "development zone A" (see sketch plan) to justify and strengthen the case for renaming the area (which in itself is a useful step towards the aims of the proposals). The detail of what would be appropriate by way of memorial has yet to be decided and that process would need to involve wide consultation (an educational process in its own right).

## **Implementation**

An outline of the process might look something like this...

- 1). Approach OTC / EDDC to rename the existing park area to "Coleridge Memorial Park".
- 2). Agree with OTC / EDDC and other stakeholder organisations the scope, detail and cost of implementing the memorial infrastructure in the short, medium and long term.
- 3). Publish draft plans for public consultation
- 4). Obtain planning consent for initial work
- 5). Raise funds
- 6). Appoint contractors (with EDDC?)
- 7). Monitor and review progress
- 8). Tidy-up meetings and explore potential for further development.

## **Costs and Maintenance**

The aim here is to carry forward the existing amenity and maintenance regime at Canaan Way park into the new Memorial Park so that the eventual running costs of the new park are as close as possible to the status quo ante. The principal costs for this project would be for memorial stonework or statuary. Once the memorial infrastructure is installed, the additional maintenance required would be minimal. If more lavish funding were available then more significant landscaping work could be undertaken to change the shape of the park on the car park side, install more garden interest and so on.

The current thoughts on memorial infrastructure extends to statuary and / or stone monoliths engraved with Coleridge aphorisms / famous couplets etc. Other ideas will no doubt emerge during consultations.

## **Benefits**

The clear benefit of this scheme is its low ongoing cost and high sustainability. The opportunity to involve other community groups in the development of suitable memorial artefacts, whilst helpful in itself, also helps in attracting grant assistance, particularly from the current Making It Local AONB project, which has expressed some interest, we believe, in the Coleridge aspects included in a museum-based summary bid we have already submitted. Not only Ottery-based groups might be interested in collaboration - the Friends of Coleridge (an international group of Coleridge enthusiasts), Coleridge Cottage in Nether Stowey (National Trust) and the Coleridge Way in North Devon/West Somerset (which includes a statue of the Ancient Mariner at Watchet) are all elements which might link with a Memorial park project in Ottery and, inter alia, promote West Country / Devon / Ottery-based tourism activity.

It would offer a more concrete focus for visiting Coleridge enthusiasts, and stimulate a more Coleridge-conscious town (it is truly remarkable, in this author's view, that there is not even a public house in Ottery called "The Ancient Mariner") which in turn will have an economic benefit for local service and other industries.

It is accepted that there may be problems along the way, but this draft is intended merely to gather support for the draft proposals identified here, and to generate input for a more considered proposal and wider consultation.

## **The Plan (see next page)**

The plan included here offers a view on the potential for development of Canaan Way park area. If funds are available the park could be adjusted to include a statue of Coleridge next to the road in Development zone A. This could be a railed off area to prevent vandalism but the statue would be elevated to make it visible throughout the park. The costs here would be solely for fabrication and erection of the statue and railings.

If more lavish funds are available then it may be possible to make a controlled visitable central area (avoiding the flood channel but using the flat space on either side of it - Development Zone B - pale green on the plan) which would contain memorial artefacts, although these will be visible from outside this area too.

If EDDC would release some of the car parking area, the memorial part of the gardens could be extended further (Development zone C - darker green on the plan).

Comments to [otteryheritage@gmail.com](mailto:otteryheritage@gmail.com)

Chris Wakefield  
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# Sketch Plan Coleridge Memorial Park

Potential areas for "memorial" developments.

Not to scale

— Shows possible eventual extent of Coleridge Memorial Park

