



ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY Reg. Charity 269308

PRESS RELEASE

Arts Council funding for Charter Stone

The Romsey & District Society has been awarded an Arts Council grant for its planned Charter Stone in Church Place. The Arts Council, which has stringent criteria for making such grants, agreed to fund about one-third of the cost. "This prestigious award from the Arts Council," said project leader Clive Collier, "reinforces our belief in the project, the artist (Gary Breeze), the chosen location and the work itself. It will help to bring about an exciting addition to Romsey and a permanent commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the Town's Charter."

Throughout the application process, the Arts Council insisted that access to the arts should go hand-in-hand with excellence, and that people in England should be able to experience arts activities of the highest quality. The Society was delighted to hear that the Charter Stone fulfils that demanding vision.

"Our task now," added Clive, "is to manage the project. That means getting the project stages and milestones agreed, the foundations specified and laid, the installation and unveiling plans defined and of course close liaison with the artist to ensure the work is on track for the unveiling on 23 March 2007!"

The Romsey & District Society launched its plan early in 2005, with a call to artists to respond to a design brief emphasising Romsey's history and its links with the River Test. Two shortlisted artists' ideas were displayed in King John's House last August and also in the town's two secondary schools. By a 2-to-1 majority the 300 responses favoured Gary Breeze's imposing Romanesque column with the names of Romsey's streams and mills spiralling down it.

Other sources of funding are contributions from developers including those of the former Brewery site (Stanborough Developments) and the Society itself. No funding will come from Council Tax receipts, although Test Valley Borough Council has been very supportive of the project. Planning permission was granted last month.

Works by Gary Breeze can be found at the Hillier Arboretum in Jermyns Lane and at the Roche Court Sculpture Park, East Winterslow, as well as in the new Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. He is now carrying out a commission to create the British memorial to those who died in the Bali bombings – a large granite and Portland globe to be placed in St James's Park near the Foreign Office, inscribed with 202 names.

Romsey's Heritage Centre will feature a display about the Charter Stone next week.

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