

A Horse and Three Cruck Arches

General description and research for the proposed artworks/themes for Bellway Homes Development, South Road, Banbury.

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The *Horse* provides a focal point within the Deserted Medieval Village area - the specific location within the North West part is still to be agreed - this will be the first sculpture to be constructed and installed.

The *Arches* will be made and installed to a timescale and sequence related to the development building phases, and to be agreed with the panel. Each *Arch* will be a stand-alone sculpture with its own historic and subject theme - all with associated seating. However, the *Arches*, containing elements that link thematically, will also form a trail to enable school pupils to use the artworks educationally, and in a quiz format.

The artists would source green oak boughs for the main curved components of each sculpture. Smaller lengths would be used for collar beams and the seat frames for example. The oak would be shaped and jointed into each structure in our workshop, or local rented outdoor workspace may be needed for the larger structures. Joints would be secured with stainless steel through-bolts, and stainless steel internal brackets fixed within the lower ends of the structure supports would enable bolting down to below-ground concrete bases.

The English Oak species gives a strong and durable heartwood timber which is naturally resistant to weathering and decay, and of course is the same timber as used in medieval times. It may be relevant to make limited use of Sweet Chestnut timber which has similar properties to oak. The timber would be allowed to weather to a natural silver-grey.

The following are more detailed descriptions of each artwork together with extensive quotes from local historical sources, researched online and shown in *blue italics*.

Horse



Medieval horses were used for a variety of purposes and the big cart horse breed only appeared later on, after selective breeding of horses for different purposes. This horse sculpture can refer to the variety of horse types used in Medieval times. Also it would be good to differentiate this horse from those we made for *Arrivall* in Tewkesbury, which portray larger heavier war horses.



Complaints in 1352 of the abduction of some 33 horses at Banbury suggest that there was already a trade in horses there.

Street-names suggest the division of the Thursday market (in Banbury) into sections:Horse Market was recorded in 1525

Certain market days came to be associated with particular products and those specialised markets came to be known as fairs.....For the same reason the street-name Horse Market became Horse Fair, first recorded in 1606. The change in usage explains why various sources naming Banbury's fair days appear contradictory.

In 1675 John Ogilby listed five fair days at Banbury: Thursday after Twelfth Day (a four-day fair, starting the previous Monday), the first Thursday in Lent.....Richard Rawlinson, in the early 18th century, gave the same list, describing the first two as great horse fairs

There was a reference in 1739 to the purchase of a mare at Banbury Fair on Ascension Day

In effect the late 19th century saw the special fair days once more merging into the weekly markets from which they had developed three hundred years earlier. By the end of the century the January horse fair, another horse fair on the third Thursday in September, and the October hiring fair were the only specialised fair days. The January Horse Fair still extended over four days; the best horses were sold on the first two days, second-class horses on the third day, and donkeys and the cheapest horses on the fourth, known as Gipsy Day. Some horses were auctioned, but most were sold by private treaty.

Ridge and furrow pasture is a characteristic feature of this grassland. These fields are sometimes used for pony grazing. In visual terms, we feel that this lighter, more open-structured horse, would be appropriate for a wild flower meadow environment.

The horse would be constructed from Oak and its mane 'spikes' would be copper or bronze.

Phil would use the *Horse* maquette in looking for the oak boughs to match the maquette's form.

Three *Cruck* Arches

Description of each *Arch* in detail below, including the general themes that they will have in common to aid the linking of each to a trail/quiz for the school.

- All *Arches* overall height 4 metres.
- At the apex of each *Arch* will be a finial in the form of a carved Oak head supporting a bronze face/mask.
- A square, triangle or circle frame fits within the tympanum - space at the top of each arch. Each geometrical frame will hold a bronze, glass or aluminium sculptural element based on animals - the number of animals will increase from one to three.
- Short quotes from the 'Banbury Shepherd' carved on the crossbeams - one for each arch.
- The orientation of each *Arch* carved into the structure - e.g. N.W.
- Corbels with relevant carved nature imagery supporting the cross, or collar beam - these could also incorporate bird nesting habitat.
- A band of two matching collars, 25cm deep, carved around the arch supports featuring decorative patterns relevant to each of the finial heads.
- The theme of the carvings on each of the seats will relate to the period and character of the finial head on the *Arch*.
- A cast bronze *Shoe*, each one relating to a particular *Arch* finial head, also referring to the old custom of a shoe bringing luck when included in new buildings.

Cruck Arch One - Medieval Woman - Widow, Brewster and Baker



These images are taken from Adderbury and show women in Wimples carved on the capitals in St Mary's Church.

This first Arch will feature a finial head of an imaginary medieval widow who brewed ale, baked bread and made Banbury cakes and cheese which is what medieval Banbury was famous for.



The town's most distinctive products at that date were held to be cheese, cakes, and ale. Banbury ale was widely known in the Middle Ages; in 1265 Eleanor, Countess of Leicester arranged for a Banbury ale-wife to brew at Odiham (Hants) and an early-14th-century list referred to drink (beverie) as the town's distinctive product. Rhymes recorded in 1609 and 1658 refer to Banbury ale but no other evidence has been found for its sale outside Banbury in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Accounts of Banbury's cheese and cake are given elsewhere, but two points concerning the cheese should be mentioned here. The first is the antiquity and fame of this product. As early as 1430 14 Banbury cheeses were among the provisions sent to France for the Duke of Bedford's household; subsequent recipients of gifts of Banbury cheese, as a particular delicacy, included Thomas Cromwell, who was given two sorts, soft and hard (1533 and 1538), Sir Joseph Williamson (1677), and Horace Walpole (1768).

"In the "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (1597), Shakespeare has Bardolph I address Slender as "You Banbury Cheese". This is not just some local reference by a Warwickshire man: at the time, Banbury was nationally famous for its cheese. Indeed, it was better known for its Banbury Cheese than for its Banbury Cakes.

Banbury Cheese is variously described as having a keen, sharp savour, soft, rich and creamy. It was golden yellow in colour with an outer skin that needed to be pared off. In the sixteenth century at least, there were hard and soft versions. It was round, and only about one inch thick' — hence the Shakespearean insult. Surprisingly, perhaps, given Banbury's long association with the wool trade, it was made with cow's milk, not sheep's milk.

Women could not be tithing representatives, be pledges in court, bring litigation, or plead courts until a widow and termed 'femme sole'. They were also excluded from the office of alester regardless of the fact that they, as brewers, were best qualified and most knowledgeable. Enforcement records of the assize of bread and ale show that women were some of the most active of commercial brewers and bakers in the countryside.

As late as the 13th century, English records from a single town show that less than eight percent of brewers were men. Beer remained an essential part of diet and selling surplus beer became important to the economy of most households. When a housewife had extra beer to sell, an 'ale-stake'—a long pole or broom handle—would be placed over the front door or in the road. Sometimes appearing as a garland of hops atop a broomstick and hung over the front door or road, the ale-stake is found in one form or another throughout the world..

Description of Cruck Arch One

- Medieval Widow Woman's Head carved in Oak at the apex of the arch, her face will be modelled in clay and cast into bronze and set closely into the oak. She is a widow as it was only in those circumstances that a medieval women could have more autonomy to be a brewster.
- The tympanum at the top of the arch will contain a triangular oak frame, within which three bronze hares run around, joined by the three ears that they share. It is an ancient symbol shared by many cultures, so can symbolise many things. A good way to reflect on Banbury with its range of different communities.

- Striking depictions of three hares joined at the ears have been found in roof bosses of medieval parish churches in England, 13th century Mongol metal work from Iran and cave temples from the Chinese Sui dynasty of 589-618. Academics are intrigued at the motif's apparent prominence in Christian, Islamic and Buddhist holy contexts separated by 5,000 miles and almost 1,000 years.

In numerous ancient traditions, these animals were archetypal symbols of women, femininity, female deities, and women's hedgerow magic, associated with the lunar cycle, fertility, longevity, and rebirth.



- Hares within a circle is the most common image but we wish to use the triangle to show three different geometric shapes, one per Arch, and have chosen the triangle for the 1st Arch, as the three hares form fits neatly into a triangle. The hares will be modelled in clay or direct plaster and cast into bronze by Castle Fine Arts Foundry. This single bronze form will be fixed within the triangular oak frame.



Here hares are set in a square format, so the image can have variations.

- The collar beam to have lettering cut into it - a quote from the 'Banbury Shepherd' *If the Sun rise red and firey. } Wind and Rain* possibly with relief carving of the weather illustrating this.
- On the collar beam a medieval women's shoe
- Under the collar beam, where it joins the arch, two carved corbels on a bird theme - to also have integral bird habitat - from here hopefully bird droppings would fall into the grass.
- The orientation of the *Arch* carved into each arch. The location of each arch to be discussed.
- A band of two matching collars, 25cm deep, carved around the arch supports featuring medieval tile patterns, we would prefer to find some local tiles as a source if possible. At a height where children could make wax rubbings on paper.



Tiles found at Westgate Oxford possible inspiration for the collar design.



Fifteenth Century woman's shoe

Arch One - Associated Seating

- The seating linked to the arch will have an oak carved cat sitting upright on the post where the Hare was drawn in our outline proposal - it will be staring at a carved mouse somewhere on the seat. A local name for part of a nearby ridge was Catbrain Hill!

The value of a kitten from the night it is born until it opens its eyes, a penny, and from then until it kills mice, two pence, and after it kills mice, four pence. C1 250



On the back of the seat will be a long, low carved relief

showing medieval pottery, ale, cakes bread and a banbury cheese on a shelf. Or a carved low relief showing samples of pottery from neolithic times, through to medieval ware and contemporary ceramics.



Cruck Arch Two - Farmer John Salmon

1787 the tenant of Hardwick, John Salmon, was apparently the largest arable farmer in Banbury in 1799. Hardwick farm contained 465 acres inclosed by a ring fence, and in 1852 520 acres, all but some 50 acres of the township's total area.

Arch Two Description

- Eighteenth Century Farmer John Salmon's head carved in Oak set as a finial at the apex of the arch, his face will be modelled in clay and cast into bronze and set into the oak.
- The tympanum at the top of the arch will contain an oak circle frame, containing a glass relief of a swimming salmon - an obvious pun on his name.
- The Banbury Shepherd's quote cut into the cross beam
If large Clouds decrease } Fair Weather.
Possibly with relief carving illustrating this.
- Under the cross beam where it joins the arch, two carved corbels on a local plant theme - needs more research. Also to incorporate bird nesting habitat.
- The orientation of the Arch site carved into each arch - the location of each arch to be agreed.
- A band of two matching collars, 25cm deep, carved around the arch supports featuring Banbury plush fabric patterns - again more research needed.
- An eighteenth century, bronze man's shoe set onto the cross beam. A symbol for good luck and to represent the shoe trade that used to exist in Banbury





Associated Seat for Arch Two

- This bench will have references to farming, a carved low relief showing a man and oxen ploughing, on the back of the seat. (close to the design shown in our outline proposal).

Of the crop-rotation practised in Banbury in the Middle Ages the only indication is the record of two fields at Hardwick in the 14th century, and four fields at Neithrop and Wickham in the 17th century, implying two and four course rotations respectively.

In the late 18th century there were two inns in Great Bourton and two in Little Bourton. One of the latter survives as the 'Plough' and is still called, as it was from at least 1778, the 'Dirt House'.

There are lots of references to sheep and the woollen trade in and around Banbury.

In 1851 there were ten farmers and one grazier in the Oxfordshire part of the parish, of whom four, at Easington, Crouch, Wickham Park, and Hardwick farms, farmed over 150 a. Between 1870 and 1880 the number of farms in the parish dropped from 14 to 9, and the urban expansion of Banbury in the 20th century has steadily reduced the cultivated area of the parish.

- A carved oak sheep sculpture, will sit on the ground (fixed to a below ground concrete base) at the end of the bench to provide an arm rest.
- A carved Owl will perch on the end post of the seat.

Arch Three - Child's May Day Arch

Arch Three Description

We wished to add a recognition of the cultural diversity of Banbury people. Cultural sensitivity around artistic figurative depiction precluded acknowledgement of the prominent muslim presence in the town. However, the Polish national costume also fits with the nature theme of these artworks.

There are also some similarities between Hobby Horse festivals and the Lajkonik hobby-horse festival in Kraków, Poland. In particular the idea that young women may be captured or struck with a stick to bring them "luck" or fertility suggests at least medieval origin. Lajkonik is 700 years old.

Rather more recent is the Banbury Hobby-Horse festival, which started in 2000, and features ritual animals from all parts of the British Isles.

- A contemporary Polish girl's head carved in Oak set as the Arch finial. Her face will be modelled in clay and cast into bronze and fixed into the oak - with attached copper flowers head dress.

Crouch Hill was used for May Day celebrations



- The tympanum at the top of the arch will contain a square oak frame, containing two swallow sculptures fabricated from welded mild steel and galvanised. Each flies towards the centre from an opposite corner.
- The Banbury Shepherd's quote cut into the cross beam
If small Clouds increase } Much Rain.
Possibly with relief carving illustrating this.
- Under the cross beam where it joins the arch, two carved corbels on each side featuring a local insect theme - which needs more research. Also to incorporate bird nesting habitat.
- The orientation of the Arch site carved into the arch - the position of each arch to be discussed.
- A band of two matching collars, 25cm deep, carved in relief around the arch supports featuring sun images from Banbury.
- A twenty-first century, bronze child's shoe, set onto the cross beam on the other side from the Banbury Shepherd's quote. Symbol for luck.
- Fixed on the outer edge of each leg of the Arch - a low oak sculpture in the form of a sheep and a pig, each of which forms a single small child's seat.