Impressions of Poundbury: my visit, February 2019

Written by Max Herford, to be presented with a visual record of   
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NEO-TRADITIONALISM AT POUNDBURY  
Poundbury in Dorset, UK is town extension to Dorchester; it has around 2500 buildings, most erected in the last ten years; almost all are traditional (pre-modern) in appearance. It has been designed as an example of Neo-traditionalist Urbanism, a movement dedicated to the accurate recreation of historical buildings within a master-plan. According to classical architect Quinlan Terry, it is a tendency with marked similarities to conservative religious groups. The academic high priest of this movement was David Watkin (1941-2018) the professor of architectural history at Peterhouse College, Cambridge. [[1]](#footnote-1) He argued that modern architecture in the 1960s had assumed a closed, prescriptive position due to a line of closed ideological thought. He believed that this had started with the publications of A.W. Pugin in the Late Victorian period, connecting architecture to an absolute moral and religious condition; Gothic was morally good, while everything else was morally inferior. Pugin concluded that, as the Classical Revival had occurred in the same century as the Reformation, that they were causally linked. As the British Reformation was to Pugin a rejection of his beloved Catholicism, it was immoral, and so was Classicism, for the simple reason that it had come to England around the same time. [[2]](#footnote-2)  
 Then, around 1960, Nikolaus Pevsner, the eminent architectural historian, saw links between the Gothic Revival movement, through the Arts and Crafts Movement, to early Modernism. He became a passionate spokesman for the Modern Movement, taking a similar moral position to Pugin. To Pevsner, modern architecture was honest, of its time, functional and efficient, while new-built traditional architecture was dishonest, extravagant and unacceptable.[[3]](#footnote-3) Over time, this Pevsner line became the accepted position in the architectural schools. Thereafter, around 1975, the writing of Sigfried Gideon took up the cause for the advancement of Modernism, without allowing for any possibility of historical reference in new buildings.[[4]](#footnote-4) Students were taught that Modernism was recommended while traditional architecture was unacceptable. There was no school of traditional architecture in the UK (or in Australia) at this time.   
 The architectural profession in the 1970s had adjusted to the postwar disappearance of the wealthy private client and the emergence of the public authority and the corporate developer as the main sources of work. According to historian Paul Thomson, architects started to assume and claim authority for design. With private clients, there had normally been a discussion about options (modern or traditional), however, in this new era, design tended to be left up to them. This position was taken up as the expected process in the architectural schools, with the result that young architects commenced practice with a modernist prescriptive mindset.[[5]](#footnote-5) This was the unpromising architectural background to the design and development of Poundbury.  
 Neo-traditionalism as it is seen at Poundbury had several starting points: some scholars nominate Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) as the last Traditionalist working in the 1920s. Then the first Neo-traditionalist was probably Raymond Erith (1904-1973) whose younger partner Quinlan Terry (b.1937) became prominent in the design work at Poundbury. [[6]](#footnote-6) Around 1977 Robert Adam joined an established practice, and he worked on projects to do with classical and traditional architecture. By 2000 there were a number of younger expert Neo-traditional architects who worked, and in many cases honed their skills, at Poundbury.

THE UK HOUSING CRISIS: FROM 1990 ONWARDS   
 Professor Michael Pacione (The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow) posed a critical question in 2002: how and where to provide the estimated 3.8 million new houses needed in England between 1996 and 2021? This he saw as one of the most pressing challenges for policy makers and planners at that time. The factors that contributed to this state of affairs were: changing attitudes to marriage, later retirement, longer lifespans, and the adjusted expectations of homeowners. [[7]](#footnote-7)  
 When in 1987 the Dorchester Council approached the Duchy of Cornwall to see if there was a possibility for a town extension on Duchy land, a conversation about various options followed. As is now a matter of historical record, the Prince of Wales had deplored the state of modern architecture in his famous ‘carbuncle speech’ at RIBA in 1984. He felt that most housing estates in provincial England were unimaginative, predictable and depressing. The creation of more estates to meet pressing housing needs, without trying a different approach, was not a good idea. [[8]](#footnote-8) However, a radical new approach to town planning had been developed shortly before in Florida, USA.

SEASIDE FLORIDA: PRECURSOR TO POUNDBURY   
In 1978 in Florida, USA, Robert S. Davis had inherited a parcel of land from his grandfather, and aimed to transform it into an old-fashioned beach town, with traditional wood-framed cottages of the Florida Panhandle. Davis, his wife Daryl, and architectural partners Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk toured the south studying small towns as a basis for planning Seaside. The final plan was complete around 1985. By 1985 Seaside been designed by a town planning group with original ideas; this group included European master planner Leon Krier, who became central to the innovative planning at Poundbury. Seaside was designed on lines that were described as neo-traditional. There was much timber and clapboard detailing painted in white or certain designated pastel tones. It gave the development the look and feel of an old-fashioned Panhandle settlement. In the interests of creating a viable and healthy community all houses had to comply with strict building and design codes.[[9]](#footnote-9)   
So-called ‘modern’ rectilinear architecture (of glass, steel and concrete) was expressly excluded from these codes. The vision shared by the architects and the owner of the development was to promote psychological security through a feeling of a connection with an idealised version of the past. [[10]](#footnote-10)

THE CONCEPT OF AN URBAN VILLAGE  
 Leon Krier argued against Modernism and Suburbanism, and for Traditional Urbanism. He wrote that traditional architecture and urbanism represented a global theory of organizing humane settlements in intelligent and aesthetically pleasing ways. Modernism had not only challenged the validity of past practice, but has nearly succeeded in destroying traditional urbanism worldwide. [[11]](#footnote-11)  
 He developed a theory of urban development based on the division of urban centres into parts (he called quadrants or sectors) of manageable size rather than the conventional process which had been directed to growing a high-rise city centre. The sectors of an urban village used high density ratios, urban rather than suburban to achieve a relatively compact unit of around 800 residences with a small scale shopping facility in amongst the housing of each sector rather than in a remote drive-to large shopping centre. This was designed to enable reduced car dependence, because all shopping and services could be reached on foot. [[12]](#footnote-12) In 1985, Krier received an invitation to join a new consultative group headed by the Prince of Wales directed to the creation of an English neo-traditional development. A number of prominent traditional architects were approached to prepare traditional designs. In consultation with the council over twelve months, this lead to a decision to develop the area around Poundbury Farm. Rather than simply provide land for housing to be designed and developed by others, the opportunity was taken by the Poundbury consultative group to create a Neo-traditional community using ideas on community planning which were quite different to the conventional thinking of the day.

Leon Krier, first concept drawing of Poundbury (date).

MY VISIT TO POUNDBURY FEBRUARY 2019  
 I have been thinking and reading about Poundbury for over 12 months, and was finally able to arrange a visit in February 2019. I went there as an independent visitor, curious to see it for myself and to reach my own conclusions. I wanted to see if it lived up to the descriptions found online and in the literature on urban planning. Accordingly, to retain an impartial, objective position I did not seek any funding assistance for the visit, but was assisted on the day of my visit by the Prince’s Trust. I was met by Simon Conibear who had been a key member of the master-planning group since the first days. His opinions were forthright, where the development had fallen short of its ideals he was ready to acknowledge this reality; at the same time he believed strongly in the integrity of the ‘placemaking’ ideals that had underwritten the project. To Simon, comprehending the full possibilities of the idea of ‘place’ were essential, as he maintained that “everybody recognises *an authentic place* when they are there.”   
 As an architectural historian, I enjoyed my visit to Poundbury, I was fortunate in that the weather was sunny even though it was February. I spent around five hours walking around the different sectors, camera in hand. I was impressed by the general layout and the range of building styles I saw, far more than I expected. It is in places eccentric and surprising, certain parts appear to be less effective than others, but unlike most UK housing estates, it is never boring. Its ideas about sustainable urbanism appear to be working well, and according to most measures, it is a success. It has always been seen as an experimental development and many lessons have been learnt as it evolved. However, it is vital to remember, that it has only been a recognisable proto-community since the opening of Queen Mother Square in October 2016. It is still a community in formation, in a region where the ages of communities are measured in hundreds of years. Importantly, Poundbury has inspired other initiatives. There are now over twenty master-planned, traditional housing estates in various parts of the UK. All were modelled to some degree on what is now seen as the prototype, Poundbury. [[13]](#footnote-13)

DORCHESTER AND POUNDBURY  
 Dorchester is the county town of Dorset on the south-west coast of England. It is a long way from prosperous, busy London: around 3 hours by train, way out of commuter range. It looks and feels rural and agricultural. Dorchester, has an ancient history going back to Roman times; it was originally a town called *Durnonovaria.* In the nineteenth centuryit was used as a setting by Victorian author Thomas Hardy in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Many references describe the coastal county of Dorset as possessing areas of outstanding natural beauty, marked by large fields of grass supporting sheep and dairy herds. However, there is a lack of local manufacturing industry and hence avenues for employment, and agriculture as a viable industry is in decline. Tourism and education are being promoted as new sources of employment.   
 Poundbury is built on around 165 hectares of land divided into 100 hectares of mixed-use buildings and 65 hectares of open green space. It is planned to increase the population of Dorchester by at least 25% by 2015. To be clear, Poundbury is not designed as a self-sufficient town: it is an extension to Dorchester with an existing population of 3,800 residents and provides employment for over 2,000 people in over 180 businesses. The town-extension is expected to be completed by 2025 with its population estimated to increase to approximately 6,000 residents. The population of Dorchester at that date will be approximately 20,000 residents, so the population of Greater Dorchester will be 26,000.

Under the guidance of Leon Krier, Poundbury has been master-planned to a high-density urban pattern, not to a less dense suburban one like the suburbs of Dorchester. The model is an integrated community of shops, businesses, with both privately owned and social housing side by side. There are no designated zoning areas, so small shops are located in rows of houses. The development is socially balanced: it allows for 35 percent social housing integrated side-by-side with owned housing. It is designed at every level for sustainable development.

ENTERING POUNDBURY: MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS  
 There seemed to be a marked change of ambience on entering Poundbury from Dorchester. There are striking differences when you cross over the boundary line. The streets in the new development have irregular width and tend to be angled or curved, they are apparently random, unplanned. The houses are built close together, although the avenues are wide. What is missing? No parking meters, no satellite dishes or aerials on houses, no traffic lights, no visible advertising, no overhead power lines, no solar panels, and shops are clearly visible amongst housing. There are very few mature trees. Parking appears to be readily available on every street, and the light vehicular traffic appears to be moving quite slowly.   
 Apart from the Damer’s First School complex and the nearby Dorchester Community Church, there are no modern looking buildings: they have all been constructed in traditional, historic styles ranging from early Georgian through to the Arts and Crafts Movement. I later found out that the architectural forms used at Poundbury were, for the most part, found close by in Fordington, a suburb of Dorchester, and in outlying villages near the town. In the UK, all provincial towns seem to have a similar High St displaying the shop fronts of well-known national chains. In Poundbury there is no corresponding High St and the national chains are not dominant in anything the same way as in, say, Dorchester. This seemed to me to underscore the importance placed upon individual enterprise as a key factor in community formation.   
 As well, new business creation, job creation, mental health indicators, crime rates, and accident rates when measured, indicate a successful project. House prices are on average 20% higher than similar centres in Dorset. The development is designed for the middle market, definitely not high end, the average price for housing is around 400/500K Pounds. That is a fraction of an equivalent house in suburban London. The notable exception is The Royal Pavilion with its most expensive apartment currently on offer at 2 million Pounds. [[14]](#footnote-14)

THE URBAN VILLAGE CONCEPT AT POUNDBURY  
 Krier created a four quadrant plan, avoiding an orthogonal grid, and using an organic approach to town planning based on the ideal of permeability between houses. This meant allowing a maximum ten minute walk for residents from their home to key shopping and service locations. The layout of each quadrant shows a striking similarity to well-known medieval town centres. [[15]](#footnote-15) It is easy to see that the houses are clustered around the centre without any orthogonal grid layouts. The houses come first then the roads are filled in between the houses.  
 In 1989, the Poundbury Masterplan was exhibited in Dorchester. Local residents and interested parties were invited to share their opinions and the feedback was reflected in the scheme designs before planning consent was sought. The resulting masterplan divided Poundbury into four distinctive quarters– with construction work commencing on the first phase in October 1992. This was presented to public review and critique as it has at the beginning of each phase. The number of sectors has now exceeded four, so the term ‘quadrant’ may be redundant.  
 Critics argued that home buyers would be uninterested in houses that shared a dividing wall with council housing. As well, the dense housing environment was out of keeping with the expectations of middle-class British house-buyers, usually attracted by detached houses with wrap-around gardens. Others predicted that business would not want to move to the middle of a residential area, and that Poundbury would end up as a ‘glorified council estate.’ In many ways, the masterplan for Poundbury went directly against conventional planning orthodoxy in the UK. The residential streets with their close proximity to shops, workshops and factories, enabled residents to live and work in the community without the need for commuting. Its fundamental tenet, mixed use, ran counter to conventional zoning practice, which prefers to concentrate business in designated business parks, housing in housing estates, and shops in shopping centres dominated by the established national chains.  
 Having conceived Poundbury as a carefully planned recreation of a traditional organically developed village, the planners did not expect to encounter the problems facing other suburban developments. This is not to say that it has been stress-free or easy. Examination of the Leon Krier interviews makes quite clear the continual need for compromise and accommodation during the lengthy evolution of the development from plan to built environment.[[16]](#footnote-16)

THE URBAN VILLAGE CONCEPT: TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Prince Charle’s book *Vision of Britain* sets out a list of "ten principles we can build upon" in order to create a successful modern urban living environment. These are as follows:

1. Place. That planners should understand the local environment,   
 and design their projects to blend with it.  
 2. Hierarchy. That the design of buildings should always reflect   
 their hierarchical position in the community, that "public buildings   
 ought to proclaim themselves with pride", and others be designed   
 in function of their value in society.  
 3. Scale. That buildings should bear relation to the human scale, and the   
 scale of other buildings in an area.  
4. Harmony. That buildings should blend harmoniously with others in the vicinity.  
5. Enclosure. That spatial identity is of major importance, and that   
 new developments should incorporate such public spaces as squares and courtyards  
6. Materials. That building materials used should reflect the diversity of   
 local traditions, and not conform to any national or international standard.   
7. Decoration. That decorative craftsmanship should still be, as it always   
 has been, a major feature of the urban environment.  
8. Art. That artistic decoration has a major and a symbolic role to play   
 in the enhancement of the urban environment, and that artists as well   
 as architects should have a role to play in the designing of new living environments.  
9. Signs and lighting. That these also contribute to the success of the   
 built environment, and should be put up with care.   
10. Community. That a successful community is a place where residents feel involved,   
 and contribute to the planning and running of their environment.

However, it was stated by Simon Conibear and others in the Duchy office that it has not been possible to follow these principles in every case. Attempting to balance the ideals of urbanism with cost pressures, building regulations, local government requirements, marketing considerations, and critically, differing architectural preferences had been anything but easy. At every phase, Treasury officials who had oversight over funding would require that certain commercial results had been achieved before funding for the next phase was released. However, despite all these conflicting requirements, an authentic urban village has been created and, to a surprising degree it complies with the original Krier vision.

SUSTAINABILITY THE POUNDBURY WAY  
 Leon Krier argued that the term ‘sustainable’ indicates what is ecological - it has little to do with concepts of progress, Modernism, ideology, creativity, industry, or economy. Sustainability addresses ultimate purposes and the means used when we build cities and exploit natural resources. Modernist architecture and Suburbanism are to him the reification of a type of blind will, celebrating modernism’s ‘rational’ nature and its presumed technological genius.[[17]](#footnote-17)  
 Sustainability as a principle was key to the thinking behind the Poundbury masterplan. In common usage, the word ‘sustainability’ has come to mean many things. At Poundbury it seems to underwrite an approach to planning and building, to keeping as much as possible in the local area. It means, wherever possible, finding local suppliers of building materials, and building services. All builders are privately owned firms, and trade services are found locally. All building materials and the energy used in construction should, ideally, come from local, renewable sources. As far as possible, design concepts have been local.

It also means enlightened planning to enable easy local car-free shopping. All household shopping is located in each quadrant so that it can be completed on foot with no need of a car. A small local shopping complex for every 750 residences is the aim. The benefits are: reduced car use, increased exercise value in walking, and the purchase of smaller lots of groceries more often, thus supporting the local small businesses. The result is an average 15 minute walk, say three times a week; this, rather than a single weekly car trip with minimal exercise benefit, high car dependency, and considerable carbon cost. Poundbury allotments are available in several locations so that residents can be more self-sufficient in growing the food on their tables.  
 A part of the sustainability ethos was outlined by Tony Aldous in the foundational text, *Urban Villages*.

The quality of sustainability can be seen in this way: ideally the residents develop or bring a commitment to caring for their new community, neighbourliness leads to a degree of self-policing, the usefulness and value of buildings survives changes of function and fashion: they are flexible enough to adapt to new uses rather than stand empty. Places are not engineered for a single use age or social group. They give a cross-section of people the chance to live there.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Or ‘sustainability’ may mean that the new resident could become independent by starting their own small business. This can be done by taking advantage of Poundbury’s well designed low rental shop fronts; half the cost of a similar site in Dorchester. There is emphasis on artisan services such as electric bicycles, florists, home furnishings. Benefits include the reduction of commuting time, increased community involvement, the provision of employment and the maximised development of local possibilities. Virtually all houses sold are lived in by new residents who support local businesses, so there are no foreigner absentee owners holding empty houses.  
 Wide open green spaces are provided alongside the relatively dense housing, so that it is easy to walk pets and get healthy exercise without needing a car, or needing to visit a gym. Sustainability could also mean designing homes for today’s living conditions including high speed broadband for best communications, enabling work from home, again reducing the need for car use.   
 ‘Sustainable’ at Poundbury means obtaining energy from renewable sources. Biogas from anaerobic digestate provides winter heating for all Dorchester homes. The source material is all renewable without needing recourse to any fossil fuel. Simon Conibear says it is working well; more raw material is now coming from locally grown maize and similar crops. As well, at the AD plant, commercial food waste is turned into green energy. As well as heating, the process produces bagged fertiliser. Car charging points are stipulated on all new housing developments. As well, they recycle the packaging, whether it’s plastic, tin, glass or cardboard. It is claimed that heating for 4000 homes is provided, more than enough for all of Dorchester including Poundbury.

DORSET ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY  
Anne Gray of the Dorset Council Economic Unit reported that Poundbury has had a positive impact on the Dorset area, adding approximately £98 million per annum to local revenue and supporting around 1,600 full time jobs. The new commercial facilities have also attracted a considerable number of businesses from elsewhere in Dorset. By the end of the project, Poundbury will be adding almost £105 million per annum to revenues in the Dorset area; and will be supporting 1,760 new jobs. Once the development is complete, around 2025, the development phase will have added on average about £236 million to the local economy and provided almost 5,000 person-years of employment. [[19]](#footnote-19)

CRIME STATISTICS COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGES  
One reliable indicator of community social health can be drawn from crime statistics. According to the report published on www.crimestatistics.co.uk and other similar sites Poundbury has a higher (130%) than national average incidence of anti-social behaviour: that is a broad category including littering, graffiti, noise, and minor property damage. [[20]](#footnote-20) In all other categories (robbery, car theft, violence, mugging) it is considerably lower, around 85% across the different categories. This suggests that the integrated social housing policy at Poundbury is not entirely successful. The mixing of council housing with owned housing has been tried very often in an effort to eliminate the distressing ghettoization seen in many UK cities. It confirms that Poundbury is a part of the real world, it is not an insulated, enclosed middle-class bubble. It may also be symptomatic of a newly composed rural community where the social groups have different degrees of choice, and have not yet established their cultural boundaries. [[21]](#footnote-21)

ARCHITECTURE: A PERSONAL VIEW

THE HIGH POINTS:   
 Queen Mother Square: being there is quite different to reading about it; when you are standing there it is most impressive, and the scale and placement of the buildings seems about right. The ‘square’ is not rectangular but is an irregular polygon. It provides a social hub for Poundbury and the increasing number of tourists who come from all over the world. The Duchess of Cornwall Inn designed by Quinlan Terry is magnificent, based on his restaurant block at Richmond Riverside. Strathmore House is impressive, well detailed, and intelligently scaled for the square. The Royal Pavilion is suitably grand and it provides the baroque tower element so important in the skyline and prominent in the original Krier drawings.

The Royal Pavilion: it has a colonnade of fluted Greek Doric columns of exceptional quality. The impressive base to the tower is clad in reconstituted stone with a limestone finish. It has intersecting barrel vault arcading finished with emphatic internal coffering. The ashlar stonework walling is chamfered with very fine joints. The tower structure has exact cornice work where such refinements as *guttae* and *mutules* have not been overlooked. Close by, at King’s Point House there is an excellent Doric frieze with *bucrania* (bull’s skulls) cast between the *triglyphs*. [[22]](#footnote-22) This is correct and scholarly, indicating a serious commitment to classical detail, way over the normal requirements of a commercial property development. As well, in the Waitrose frontage there is an interesting example of mannerist play; pilaster forms disappear and reappear from behind ashlar stonework.

Buttermarket: a long irregular public space between housing blocks in the southern sector. There is free parking in the centre, and shops and apartments on either side. This space slopes gently, with views towards the Iron Age hillfort Maiden Castle, surrounded on both sides by immense green fields. “Carolina” balconies are seen in many places particularly at Buttermarket and Laddock Terrace, with slender cast metal columns; this is an American idea introduced by architect Ben Pentreath. They are most attractive and economical while fitting in well with the traditional scheme. Buttermarket seems to me to be a good example of a fully composed ‘place.’

Ben Pentreath’s Regency villas: located in Woodlands Crescent near the original Poundbury Farmhouse (1878) are some of the best, most civilised houses, quiet and restrained. This is helped by one of the only stands of mature trees in the development. In general the trees have been planted right through the development, but they are very immature so don’t yet offer any much needed green canopy. Woodlands Crescent is another complete ‘place’ is aesthetically satisfying.

Neo-warehouse conversion: New-built facades inspired by Edwardian and Victorian warehouses are used in an imaginative way as frontages for of blocks of apartments. Expertly laid polychromatic brickwork adds considerably to the impression of authenticity. This and other imaginative ideas means that Poundbury is at no stage simply repetitive, empty, Neo-Georgian. The same applies to the use of Victorian terrace houses and vernacular coursed rubble clad cottages, all newly built. A mix of housing types is presented, as is seen in most provincial cities and towns, never predictable, always interesting. At St John’s Way there is an impressive row of white Arts and Crafts Style villas looking across the Great Field towards the school complex.

Vernacular cottages: these are seen in all sectors of the development, probably based on Fordington examples. They have coursed rubble walling, slate roofs and excellently judged solid looking rustic proportions. The vernacular component of most country towns is represented, however it tends to be at the earliest, Victorian. Medieval vernacular is probably too expensive to reproduce using modern steel frame and masonry block with faux cladding building techniques.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Many traditional styles are in use, over twenty architects have contributed; thus, in parts it resembles a built outdoor museum of architectural styles. This is interesting, engaging, and diverse, but any possibility of overall style coherence through the development has been lost. Parts of the development are way too classically emphatic, neo-Georgian windows appear to be too large, and columns too visually bulky. Simon said they were done in the earlier days when architects felt more defensive against what was, at that time, vocal modernist criticism. Antagonism from modernist architects has calmed down greatly and these days Poundbury seems to be largely accepted on its own terms. It is *sui generis,* a type of sufficient originality to make direct comparisons extremely difficult.

The recently built architecture seems quiet, well thought out, it has excellent detail with appropriate hierarchical constraints, it looks balanced, pleasing and correct. There is a sense of order and decorum, the later designs appear fitting for their locations and places in the scheme. Unlike most housing estates where the volume builder’s offers of ‘heritage’ architecture does not include properly researched detailing and proportions, Poundbury seems to offer informed design. The vision includes the possibility of the full realization of a community through enlightened master-planning. Houses on most estates in Britain are easy and cheap to construct, and are designed first and foremost to comply with local government planning regulations which set an uninformed version of neo Georgian or neo-Tudor detailing. [[24]](#footnote-24)

STYLE LIST AS SEEN ON VISIT   
Styles and style references include: Art Deco, Baroque, Carolina colonial, Edwardian, Chateau, Neo-Georgian, Gothic, Greek Doric, Mackintosh, Mannerist, Post Modern, Regency, Roman Doric Vernacular Dorset, Victorian, Charleston Colonial, Edwardian-Victorian Warehouse.

THE TYPICAL NEW POUNDBURY RESIDENT  
 Poundbury is similar in many ways to an expatriate community, made up of recent arrivals. 90% of buyers are English, they are not a polyglot selection as you find in every part of London. The typical buyer is around 60, recently retired, married, normally with another house in say, Spain. Probably ex-London with the proceeds of a house sale to fund the proposed Poundbury purchase, with a lot left over. I asked SC what these people did during the day. He said they must join clubs and groups, then he admitted he didn’t really know. The Poundbury local magazines describe the many associations and interest groups available; they appear to be ready to welcome new members.   
 However, when you are there moving around there is a real sense that the streets feel empty, unoccupied. To the often heard observation that “there don’t seem to be many people walking around,” I would reply that compared to crowded central London the lack of people would always be striking, especially where the period frontage at Poundbury is normally seen in an inner urban location. Also from personal experience, in Goulburn in rural NSW, which has a similar rural location and population, there is also a noticeable lack of people walking in the secondary streets.[[25]](#footnote-25)

MORE ABOUT OWNER-OPERATOR ARTISAN RETAILERS   
600-800 sq. ft. shops in residential areas. Simon Conibear made much of the locally based artisan retailers, very few high street chains are seen, and the rents are very affordable. ‘Little Waitrose’ the supermarket has a small footprint (800 sqm) to make it less of a threat to individual enterprises located in quadrants. Architect and planner Hugh Petter talked about the single mother who started a curtain business and now has 8 people working for her. Simon talked about a similar story with a florist and an ex-banker who is running an electric bicycle business. At least 60% of small business people are women. Some 1500 new jobs have been created so far.

NEW URBANISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE  
The New Urban Village theorists believe that it is possible to achieve a psychologically acceptable setting by using form-based rules. This will create an urban fabric with the same combination of individuality and general consistency that we find in traditional cities and towns. Consistency is important to provide stability and reassurance, individuality can create zones of particular interest to counter blandness and uniformity. However, adding individuality or “quirkiness” to a planned development requires flair, imagination and unique skills. According to Simon, Leon Krier set the ratios at 80/20 per cent. That is, 80 per cent should be consistent, 20 per cent unusual and, in some cases, quirky or surprising. A good example of this is the use of very swollen, but correctly detailed Greek Doric columns in the undercroft to Brownsword Hall on Pummery Square. They are hard to overlook and appear fat and too close together, creating a disturbing claustrophobic effect.

BELONGING: A DEEP NEED  
 According to eminent philosopher Roger Scruton our need for belonging is part of what we are, and it is the true foundation of aesthetic judgment. If we lose sight of this we risk building an environment in which function triumphs over all other values. Style is less important than of the need to find a community feeling. Architectural style wars, as seen in the late 20th century, are steadily abating. To Scruton, the important issue is no longer style, but about a growing recognition of the deep truth that as we build we attempt to satisfy the need to belong. At Poundbury my sense was that the architectural forms do send questions about belonging and ask us subliminally whether and how we relate to each particular building. This, to me, this effect made the visit a most engaging experience. Standard UK housing estates have none of this ability to connect with and engage the visitor by presenting the architecturally literate and the unexpected.[[26]](#footnote-26)

MIXED HOUSING, AFFORDABLE and OWNED SIDE BY SIDE   
 In Poundbury, private and affordable housing are interspersed and indistinguishable from each other. As a result, the community is more cohesive. Current guidelines require 35% of housing in Poundbury to be affordable and The Duchy continues to explore innovative ways in which the local housing need can be met. Title to properties can be arranged as "shared equity" between a lending authority (i.e. the Guinness Trust) and a resident. This means that when the property (or leasehold) is sold the proceeds, including any capital gain, are shared between the two parties. One of the more innovative ideas suggested by The Prince of Wales in *A Vision of Britain* in 1989, was to build private and social housing alongside one another rather than continuing to build huge ghettoised housing estates. According to The Guinness Partnership – which provides much of the affordable housing – Poundbury is its most successful site with residents reporting a high level of satisfaction. The partnership has used principles learnt in Poundbury across the UK. In 2015 the partnership completed its 250th home in Poundbury. Their aim was to provide housing of this quality to people’s lives and open up a lot of opportunities that would otherwise not be available.[[27]](#footnote-27)

DISCOUNT TO OPEN MARKET SCHEME  
 For example The Duchy has been pioneering a Discount to Open Market Scheme. It allows first time buyers to purchase properties with a 25-30% discount. The buyer retains 100% ownership of the property but must sell the home on to the next owners with the same discount. The difference between this and other Government schemes is that the homes will remain discounted in perpetuity. To be eligible for the scheme applicants must be on West Dorset District Council’s Housing List and have a combined income below £60,000.

CONCLUSION  
 Leon Krier observes: “Traditional urban design and architecture allow us to articulate and order contrasting social activities into finite, meaningful, and ecological organisms.” Poundbury today is much more than a ‘glorified council estate.’ Having conceived Poundbury as a carefully planned recreation of a traditional organically developed village, the planners followed their carefully articulated principles. Poundbury was and still is seen as a community of mixed housing, catering for all ages and income groups. Examination of the Leon Krier interviews makes quite clear the continual need for compromise and accommodation during the evolution of the development. Each change provided a learning experience so that the eventual outcome is now refined, better and within reach.   
 Within say three years from March 2019, the north east quadrant (or sector) will be complete. Poundbury will have around 2000 new households, 200 businesses, and Greater Dorchester will have a population of around 26,000 residents and business people. The Dorset region as a whole will be enjoying substantially increased revenues due to the initiatives enacted at Poundbury and the arrival of four thousand new residents. On the architectural side there have been adjustments: the architectural design in the north-east sector and in later Duchy master-planned communities (Eg. Nansledan, Cornwall) shows signs of being more coherent, less quirky.   
 The key question must be: how important was the decision to use traditional architectural forms? While sustainable community formation was the objective, this must have been far easier in a setting with which the residents felt comfortable. Traditional forms when combined with appropriate pricing seems to have been a winning formula. At Poundbury, and now at many other locations in Britain, Europe and America, Traditionalism has gained acceptance. It is now a credible proposition that a townscape of Neo-traditional architecture could provide the most optimized setting for community formation. To most people in the west a traditional setting provides reassurance and a reminder of historical links linked to personal memories. These are easily forgotten in such a fast moving, fractured, unstable political era. Thus the need for Neo-traditional ‘places’ like Poundbury, and for more investigations into the best way to make a viable, safe and, harmonious community.

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*Max Herford, April 2019*

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