

# The Shady Garden

**A peaceful place at the heart of town.**

**Once the site of No. 49, Fore Street**

Since mediaeval times a building stood on what is now the Shady Garden site. It was probably once the home of a wealthy merchant. We know its history from the 1870's, as a homeopathic dispensary, then a milliner and draper's, a sweet shop, and finally an antiques shop (photo, right).



## Fire! Fire!

One winter's night in 1954 the ancient building caught fire, with flames leaping 50 feet above the roof. Totnes Fire Brigade turned out in just 3 minutes, and was helped by townsfolk and Torbay fire service. Luckily a strong wind had died down shortly before the fire started, and heroic firefighting prevented the blaze from spreading along Fore Street.

## From the ashes

The shell of No. 49 had to be demolished. The following year another fire destroyed the Totnes Pannier Market building. In 1990 the iconic East Gate was burnt down, (photo, left). Such events have been common in ancient towns, the Great Fire of London being a famous example.

Totnes responded creatively to these challenges, establishing much-needed public spaces in Shady Garden and the Market Place; restoring East Gate to its former glory. Take a look up the hill!



## Spaces that can be Places

The site became a public garden. It had various names, but was often called the shady garden because of the large tree growing there. Despite several renovations, it eventually became down-at-heel and little used.

In 2011 a Totnes community forum set out to turn such 'spaces' into enjoyable 'places' for townsfolk and visitors. A Shady Garden community project was formed, which eventually came under the umbrella of Totnes Trust. By 2015 a small yet inviting new piazza had been created for the town.

## Sweet and shady

The Honey Locust tree at the heart of this garden originates as a species from the USA. It is named for the sweet taste of its seed pods, which were eaten by native American peoples....and can be used to make a type of beer!



## Design Sketch



Before....

## Happenings

South Hams District Council owns the garden, and wants local people to enjoy it to the full.

**It can be hired for special events:  
please contact the Council on 01803 861234.**



The Shady Garden improvements were funded by Mrs Rebecca Muddeman, Totnes Trust and South Hams District Council, with additional financial support from Totnes Gardens, The Wakefield Trust and Sovereign Housing Association. Totnes Town Council supported the team and SCG Associates provided design services.

Interpretation project by Keith Rennells, with Sebastian Kelly, Louis Victory, Josie King and South Hams District Council Design Team.