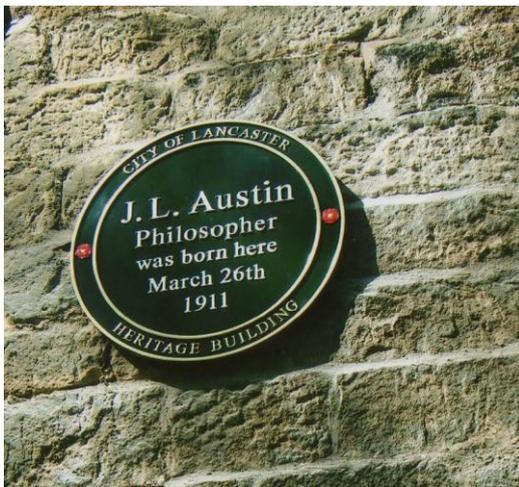




LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 105 April/May 2011

Heritage plaque to J.L. Austin



2011 is the centenary year of the birth, in Lancaster, of the philosopher John Langshaw Austin. To mark this event, Lancaster University hosted a conference on Austin's work and, with the support of the Lancaster Civic Society, placed a commemorative plaque on 4 Hillside, the house where J.L. Austin was born.

J.L. Austin was a son of Geoffrey Austin and a grandson of Hubert Austin, both of the noted architectural firm Paley and Austin, who designed many of the landmark buildings in Lancaster. He had a stellar career at Shrewsbury School and Balliol College, Oxford, and during World War II he served in British intelligence. It was said by Geoffrey Warnock in his 'biographical sketch' of Austin, that "he more than anyone else was responsible for the life-saving accuracy of the D-day intelligence". Austin's philosophical work focussed on two main areas: language and sensory perception. In all his work, he stressed the subtle differences between the meanings of different words, and the need to be aware what people are ***doing***, not just what they are saying, when they use language. He championed the ordinary everyday uses of words over what he saw as the often highly artificial ways in which they are twisted and oversimplified by philosophers. His work remains highly

influential today, having been applied to such areas as linguistics, legal theory and discussions of free speech. His writings are celebrated for their sparkling, witty style - the very opposite of a dry, academic style.

Brian Garvey, Lancaster University



Roger Frankland and Stephen Gardner at the J.L. Austin plaque unveiling ceremony.

April/May newsletter

Publication of the April newsletter has been delayed this month. Because of this and in the interests of economy, it has been decided to roll the April and May newsletters into one issue. The AGM notification and nomination call are therefore included with this newsletter.

The statement of accounts for the financial year ending 31 March is normally sent with the agenda notification in May. However, the accounts have yet to be finalised, inspected and approved by the Committee.

The accounts will be available at the AGM on 8th June. However if anyone wishes to see the accounts in advance of the meeting please contact Winnie Clark (tel. 01524 33411 or email clark4be@btinternet.com). A copy will be posted to you as soon as they become available.

Reports on March & April Meetings

At the March meeting, **Heather Davies**, Conservation Manager at the Lancashire Conservation Studios, gave a fascinating account of the work of the Studios and the restoration of the **Roman cavalry tombstone** which was discovered in November 2005 during construction work in Aldcliffe Road. Heather began by describing the conversion of St Mary's Church in Preston, a Grade II-listed Victorian Church located near the Museum of Lancashire, to provide state-of-the-art facilities for the conservators. In addition to the modern facilities for objects, paper, painting, textile and natural history conservation, the Studios also provide training rooms, conference facilities and viewing windows, allowing work in progress to be seen by the public.

Conversion work on the church was completed in the summer of 2006 and the first object to be conserved there was the Roman cavalry tombstone. The tombstone came in three main pieces and two smaller ones. It had to be left for about 12 months to dry out gradually before the painstaking work of removing the mud and dirt could begin. This revealed the intricate detail carved into the limestone. The pieces then had to be joined together. Epoxy resin was used on the smaller pieces but the problem of uniting the top section (weighing some 230 lbs), to the large lower section remained. After much consultation it was decided the only safe way to accomplish this (to allow the stone to be displayed upright) was to drill two holes in the base and top, insert stainless steel bars into the lower section and then lower the top piece onto the bottom. This was a risky procedure because of the possibility of damage and an unusual one for conservators, as there is a general principle in conservation work that all procedures must be reversible, which drilling obviously is not. Fortunately the precise and delicate operation was successful. The areas of loss were then filled in and painted with acrylic and watercolour to blend with the rest of the stone with the result you see today. The restoration work took about 12 months and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which had also paid the developer for the stone to ensure it remained in the country. With the restoration complete the next challenge was the transfer of the tombstone, nearly 6 feet high and weighing 1500 lbs, to the City Museum and the display space on the first floor. The only way

to get the stone onto the first floor was to take out one of the large Georgian windows on the north side and then winch the stone, encased in a specially designed crate, in through the space. This was achieved with less than an inch to spare. All the efforts proved very worthwhile and the tombstone is now back in Lancaster as the centrepiece of the redeveloped Roman display.

Rachel Newman and Jamie Quartermaine of Oxford Archaeology North gave an excellent presentation on "**Lancaster; a new outlook on an old city**" at the April meeting, concluding the 2010/11 series of evening lectures.

They outlined Lancaster's heritage from early Roman times to 1820, with particular reference to our Roman heritage, including the earthworks of Roman date to be found in Vicarage Fields. The "new outlook" of the title, was the demonstration of the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD). This new resource provides a wealth of fascinating detail on the centre of our city, drawing together information from a variety of sources - maps, paintings, photographs, archaeological surveys and historical documents, plus information from the latest light-sensing technology. All this information is superimposed on a base map, allowing us to see the developments in a particular locality over a period of time and in a way which is easy to understand. The images from Lidar (light detection and ranging), a form of laser scanning, were particularly interesting, revealing images of underlying structures (such as earthworks) with a remarkable degree of detail and accuracy.

The UAD is a national programme of surveys of various English historic towns and villages, developed by English Heritage in association with District and County Councils. The database was primarily developed as a tool for planners, allowing the underlying archaeology of an area to be revealed at an early stage of any planning applications and also assisting in the care and conservation of the fabric of our towns and cities. However, it has the potential to be of use in many other situations, especially within an educational context. Rachel and Jamie concluded their talk and demonstration by inviting suggestions for additional uses of this versatile and fascinating resource.

Indoor Market/Museum

The proposal to move the indoor market into the City Museum, continues to generate concern and incredulity and we are grateful to those members who have contacted us with comments and suggestions and to those who have written to the local press. We were pleased to note that our MP, Eric Ollerenshaw, shares our concerns that the proposal is inappropriate for both the Museum and the market traders. Having written to the City Council's Cabinet in February when this proposal was first aired, the Committee feels that further comment to the Council at this stage would be unproductive and that we should await the consultants' report. However, we hope that opposition will continue to be voiced in the local press. Malcolm Taylor is one member who has written against the proposal and his letter is reproduced below.

Is there a future for the Market Hall?

I am glad that the Civic Society has commented on this long-running saga of a City which continues to struggle with a hopeless case: the future of its market hall. It is a ridiculous proposition that the market traders can move into the ground floor of the museum - there isn't room for them and the current marvellous exhibition space would certainly be lost. But there is an irony in the fact that when the museum was built, its ground floor was open and comprised market stalls

Are we seeing a desperate last ditch stand forced on the City by a powerful trader lobby and the expensively appointed consultant the City hired? While this tragedy continues to go nowhere with hopeless ideas, we ratepayers continue, in a recession, to pay £500,000 every year, plus the consultant's mounting fees.

One must sympathise with the traders who face an uncertain future. But they will have been aware of an inevitability which has existed ever since the fire which destroyed the old market hall. They lost their fight for a simple replacement of their home and had to accept what we now see - an expensive double height space, whose economics and layout as a market hall, even then, were in doubt. To survive, the traditional closed market hall has to place itself between the open trading stalls (now successfully operating on market days in Market Street), and fully enclosed shops. It

was obvious to many of us at the time of the fire, that against a background of increasing prosperity, the end of the traditional market hall, so beloved a feature of northern England, was in sight, hastened by the advance of the out-of-town supermarket, offering free parking and one-stop shopping.

These are the truths which City Council and traders have to face - and face now, so that this £500,000 annual haemorrhage can be diverted to more pressing priorities.

All this should not mean the end of Marketgate. Architecturally, Lancaster needed a building of this quality in this key position, to replace the disgraceful Arndale shops, so one would hope that, whatever its fate, the Civic Society will press for a use worthy of our City. One is tempted to foresee that the revised scheme Centros is currently preparing for the Lancaster Canal Corridor North site, will again be defeated by the Luddites, so perhaps a major department store might be persuaded to occupy the market space? John Lewis, please.

Malcolm Taylor, February 2011

Summer Events: Dates for your Diary

In addition to the **AGM on 8th June**, we also have the **Summer Outing on 21st May** and the **Summer Walk on 22nd June** (please note the change of date from that given in the printed programme).

The Summer Outing on Saturday 21st May will be to Barnsley and Cannon Hall Museum Park and Gardens. A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter. The bottom portion should be returned, with your remittance, to Roger Frankland.

The Society's **AGM** will be held at St John's Church, North Road on Wednesday 8th June, starting at 7.30pm. Mark Cassidy, Assistant Head, Regeneration and Policy at Lancaster City Council, will address us after the formal business of the evening.

The Summer Walk will be in Silverdale and Barry Aire will speak on "Victorian and Edwardian Silverdale". Please meet at 7pm on Wednesday 22nd June at the Silverdale Hotel, Shore Road in Silverdale. If you have any queries contact Anne Stelfox, tel. 01524 823299, or email: rjw.stelfox@virgin.net

Meeting with Eric Ollerenshaw, OBE, MP

Some Committee members recently met Eric Ollerenshaw to discuss the implications of the Localism Bill and other issues of concern.

Eric Ollerenshaw is a member of the Select Committee scrutinising the Localism Bill and he outlined the Bill's main provisions. Of particular interest is the concept of neighbourhood planning, whereby neighbourhoods, with advice from planning officers, will be able to draw up plans for their areas which would then be subject to a neighbourhood referendum. Establishing the boundaries of neighbourhoods, especially in urban areas would be crucial and cohesion between neighbourhoods would be important.

Other topics discussed were:

- the Canal Corridor North site : EO strongly supports the redevelopment of this site including a good quality department store.
- the Heysham/M6 link, which EO believes will be of great benefit to Heysham port.
- Lancaster Castle: discussions between the Duchy and Ministry of Justice will continue for at least two years. The Castle is a national asset but also one which will need to generate income
- the effect of the cuts in Arts Council funding on various local organisations. EO is to query with the Arts Council the disparity in regional funding between Lancashire and Cumbria.
- the museum/market proposal which we all agreed was inappropriate for both parties

It was an interesting and productive meeting and we hope there will be future meetings at which we can continue to discuss areas of concern.

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*Copy for inclusion in the Newsletter such as letters, items of local interest, book reviews or notices of forthcoming events are always welcomed from members. Please send any copy to Winnie Clark, 36 Hall Park, Lancaster LA1 4SH*

## Places Matter! Supermarket Forum: report

Last month (on 23 March) I attended a 'Supermarket Forum', organised by a group called Places Matter! which offers design advice for building projects in North-West England. In fact, the Forum was only partly about supermarkets: it also touched on Localism, CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, and the numerous regulations and Planning Policy Statements that govern design and planning of buildings.

The one speaker who had a story to tell about a supermarket development was Tom Miller, the recently-retired Head of Planning for Ellesmere Port and Neston. As he said, once a planning application has come in, it's too late to get it changed more than superficially. Rather than wait for an application and then react to it, his team therefore prepared a detailed development brief for a site that was available in Neston town centre. The site was sufficient to allow a new food store of 34000 sq ft, parking for 220 cars, a new market square, and some affordable housing.

He set up an architectural and technical team, and sent them on visits to sites in other parts of the country, and to meetings with other authorities. An architect was appointed to give design advice on the scheme. The design brief covered the scale and character of the new buildings, relationship to the existing High Street, materials, etc; it included a so-called envelope within which the new supermarket was expected to fit. (None of the proposals managed to do so, but some fitted into it much better than others.) All this shows what can be done, with preparation of a good brief.

Miller noted that local traders generally want their town to have good retail provision across the board. Although this means the traders face more competition, the crucial point is that it brings many more shoppers to the town, so that all the traders benefit.

*Martin Widden*

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This Newsletter is published by Lancaster Civic Society, 36 Hall Park, Lancaster LA1 4SH
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Lancaster Civic Society is registered with Civic Voice and is a Registered Charity No 258434
www.lancastercivicsociety.org

LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The forty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at
St John's Church, North Road, Lancaster at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 8th June 2011

The formal business, which will be kept as brief as possible, will comprise:

1. The minutes of the last AGM held 16th June 2010
2. Presentation of the Chairman's report
3. Presentation of the financial report and the accounts for the year 2010/11
4. Election of officers and committee for the forthcoming year
5. Any other business (advance notice of any items would be appreciated)

After the formal business we shall be pleased to welcome **Mr Mark Cassidy, Assistant Head, Regeneration and Policy, Lancaster City Council** who will update us on matters of interest.

Please feel free to bring any interested friends with you.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2011-12

Nominations are invited for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and six members of the Executive Committee. Nominations must be proposed and seconded by a member of the Society, and the consent of the nominee must have been obtained. Completed nomination forms should reach the Hon. Secretary at least seven days before the AGM (i.e. by 2nd June 2011).

POSITION	NAME OF NOMINEE	PROPOSED BY	SECONDED BY
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Please return nominations to: Winnie Clark, Hon. Secretary, 36 Hall Park, Lancaster LA1 4SH

