



# LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 110 September 2012

## 2012-13 Session

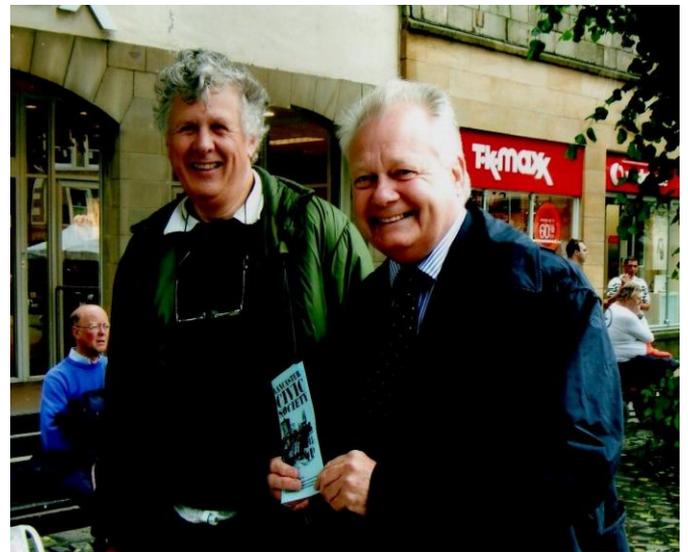
Welcome to the 2012-13 session which begins on 10<sup>th</sup> October with a talk by Dot Boughton on the Silverdale Hoard. A programme card with details of this year's lectures and activities is enclosed with this newsletter, as is a renewal subscription form (subscriptions are due 1<sup>st</sup> October). If you pay by standing order the payment will be taken in October and there is no need to return the form unless any of your details have changed.

This coming year promises to be eventful. We await the futures of the Indoor Market building and the troubled Storey. The developer agreement with Centros for the Canal Corridor North site has been renewed by the Council and when detailed plans become available we will hold a meeting for all members to ascertain views before submitting comments.

The Council's Land Allocations document (which specifies which sites may be used for what purpose) should shortly be out for consultation. Housing is proposed for 3 greenfield sites to the south and east of the City at Bailrigg, Whinney Carr and Grab Lane - more than 2000 new homes could be built on these sites. With several brownfield sites available this seems regrettable.

We are also concerned at the high number of planning applications for student accommodation, and at the quality of some of the proposals. Some applications have resulted in vacant or derelict buildings being brought back into beneficial use, but others have been less encouraging and some have been potentially damaging to the cityscape. In July we sent a letter outlining our concerns to the Lancaster Guardian. We understand that the Council's forthcoming Development Management Policy Document (part of the Local Framework) will have a specific policy regarding standards for student accommodation.

## Civic Day 2012



*Roger Frankland (Vice-Chairman) & Eric Ollerenshaw MP*

The Society marked National Civic Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> June with an information stand in Market Square (visited by local MP Eric Ollerenshaw) and guided tours of the city centre were led by Roger Frankland and Gordon Clark. These walks sought to raise awareness of the built environment and highlight architectural features which may previously have gone unnoticed.

Entries to the Society's photographic competition on "Civic Pride: Civic Shame" were also on display in Lancaster Library.

### Committee Membership

Details of the current Committee members are provided on the back of the programme card and on the Society's website

([www.lancastercivicsociety.org](http://www.lancastercivicsociety.org)).

Membership and office holders are largely unchanged from last session but we are pleased to welcome two new members, Rosemary Anderson who was elected at the AGM and Stephen Langtree MBE who has been co-opted. Stephen was Chair and is currently Vice-President of Chester Civic Trust and brings with him much valuable experience.

## 2012 Summer Walk

This took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June in the valleys of the Rivers Wenning and Hindburn. 21 members met at the church of St James the Less, Lower Tatham and were greeted by Mrs Phyllis Holt and Mike Winstanley who outlined the history and special features of the building.

The church was on the main route from Hornby to Settle, close to the crossing of the River Wenning. The building features in the Domesday Book and has some 12<sup>th</sup> Century remains, namely supporting pillars and parts of the tower. The church is largely 15<sup>th</sup> century but was extensively restored in 1886-87 by the Fosters of Hornby Castle to designs by Paley and Austin. Historically the church has been the seat of worship for the families of Hornby Castle who made their money in the Bradford mills.

The church contains some delightful stained glass, including work by Shrigley and Hunt. There is also an ancient tombstone by the altar which originally formed a door step for an older door way. It is possible this may have been a crusader's tombstone given the depiction of a knight and crossed sword which is still visible.

The weather turned into a soft, slightly misty evening and as we emerged from the church we were able to fully appreciate the very fine views south over the valley to the fells beyond.



*Church of St James the Less, Lower Tatham*

We proceeded to Wray, once an industrial/farming village, home to hatters, nail makers, mill workers (cotton, silk and bobbins) and coal miners. It had a reputation for being quite a rough place with plenty of pubs and beer houses. However, it was also a village which exported some successful people: Bryan Holme, founder of the Law Society, attended the endowed school and the Wildman family of Barking Gate (Roeburndale) built a cottage next to the thriving village shop and also had three sons who made fortunes from the West Indies.

The village is also known for the devastating flash flood of 1967 which swept away 10 houses. This is commemorated in a mosaic by Maggie Howarth. A flood water line has been etched on the side of the bus shelter - well above head height. Wray is also well known for its annual scarecrow festival. Today the village has a strong community spirit and, in the words of Clare Hartwell in her revision of Pevsner's guide, it is 'a pretty village [which] has exceptionally many dated lintels. The whole is much greater than the sum of its parts.' For those who were not able to come on the walk, or even those who did, there is a guide to the village posted outside the village institute and other walks are described at the Bridge House tea rooms in the village.

Our thanks go to Mr and Mrs Holt for opening the church for our visit and to Mike Winstanley for his informative and entertaining commentary.

*Anne Stelfox*

## 2012 Summer Outing



On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May, a cool but dry day, 20 members enjoyed a trip to Lytham. We were warmly welcomed by members of the Lytham Civic Society and given a tour of the charming, genteel seaside town. In the afternoon we toured Lytham Hall, the jewel in Lytham's crown. Lytham Hall, a Grade I listed 18<sup>th</sup> century manor house in the Palladian style, was the home of the Clifton family until the 1960s. It is largely the work of John Carr of York (who also designed Cannon Hall near Barnsley which we visited last year) and was described by the late John Champness as "the finest Georgian house in the north west". John also played a major role in securing Heritage Lottery funding for a programme of restoration work on the Hall which will commence next year. We are grateful as always to Roger Frankland for organising the trip.

## 2012 AGM

The Society's 46<sup>th</sup> AGM was held on 13<sup>th</sup> June in St John's Church. The evening was chaired by Jenny Greenhalgh and began with presentations to the prize winners of the Society's recent photographic exhibition "Civic Pride: Civic Shame". After the formal business of the evening, guest speaker Mark Cassidy, Assistant Head of Regeneration and Policy and Head of Development Management, Lancaster City Council, outlined the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework in a talk entitled "Simplification - or Complication? What the NPPF really means" and concluded his talk by updating members on developments in the Lancaster District.

## Photographic Competition



*l-r Jenny Greenhalgh with winners Pam Heynes, Rosana Braga, and Sheenagh Crumley at the AGM in St John's Church  
Photo by Mandy Holten*

The winners of the Society's Photographic Competition were presented with their prizes at the start of the Society's 46<sup>th</sup> AGM on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Sheenagh Crumley took first prize in both the Civic Pride and Civic Shame categories with her photographs of Cable Street student accommodation and Brewery Lane. Pam Heynes was runner up in the Civic Pride category with her "Just a city street" and Rosana Braga's "Mistreating the Lancaster Canal" was runner up in the Civic Shame category. The prizes had been donated anonymously by a Society member and we are most grateful for the generosity which made the competition possible. The winning entries were on view at the AGM and all 37 competition entries were later displayed in Lancaster Library. The winning entries can still be viewed on the Society's website, [www.lancastercivicsociety.org](http://www.lancastercivicsociety.org).

## Can You Help?

We have recently received two requests for information.

### 1. Pythagoras De Nictheroy

Bob Letsche is seeking information about his ancestors Pythagoras De Nictheroy and Richard & Ann Breaks whose gravestones are in the "Top", Quernmore Road cemetery. Please contact Bob ([bob.letsche@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:bob.letsche@blueyonder.co.uk)) if you can help.

### 2. Footpath between Aldcliffe and Ashton Roads

Does anyone know when this footpath came into existence - and was there a specific reason? Please send any information to Winnie Clark (01524 33411 or [clark4be@btinternet.com](mailto:clark4be@btinternet.com)) who will forward it to the enquirer.

## Summer Outing 2013

As you will note from the programme, the summer outing in 2013 will take place on a Sunday (instead of the traditional Saturday) and in June. We hope that this switch will allow a wider choice of destination - and, hopefully, better weather!

## Lancaster District Design Awards 2012

This scheme, which recognises good design in the built environment, was held this year, organised by the Society in association with the Lancaster District Chamber of Commerce, LICA (Lancaster University's Institute for Contemporary Arts) and the Lancaster Guardian. Some 48 nominations were received and presentations to the winners will be made by Sir Christopher Frayling on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. We are grateful to all the sponsors and special thanks are due to Martin Widden who was instrumental in reviving the scheme and to Sue Dawson of LAWSA who chaired the panel.

## Newsletters via email and volunteer Posties

We are most grateful to those members who have opted to receive their newsletters via email to help the Society's finances. Could anyone else willing to switch to email please contact Winnie Clark ([clark4be@btinternet.com](mailto:clark4be@btinternet.com))

Thanks too to those who have volunteered to assist with deliveries. Your help is much appreciated.

## Planning Matters

One of the Society's remits is to comment on planning applications of interest or concern. A Planning Group meets to consider relevant applications and formulate a response on behalf of the Society. Given the size of the Society's membership there will often be differing views and we are conscious that sometimes the Society's response may be at variance with the opinions of some members. Given the time constraints (for most applications comments need to be made within 3 weeks) extensive consultation is not usually feasible. We therefore encourage members to submit personal responses to applications of interest and copy them to us (email Anne Stelfox at rjw.stelfox@virgin.net). These will be considered if the Group also debates the application.

If you are interested in planning issues please consider joining the Planning Group - new members are always welcome (contact Anne Stelfox as above or on 01524 823299).

The following representations have recently been submitted to the City Council:

### **Application No. 12/00373/FUL STUDENT HOUSING LAND TO REAR OF 50-62 CHURCH ST., LANCASTER**

There are many reasons why the Civic Society opposes this scheme. The following are some of these reasons:

1. The scale and mass of the development alongside Damside Street is wholly inappropriate. Development should 'step down' from Church Street towards the Bus Station but in fact increases. There would be five-storey development along the whole frontage of the site to Damside Street. This is two storeys too many - see section through site. The scale of development on the north side of Cable Street along the quayside should not be taken to be a precedent for a similar scale of development on the application site. The quayside development reflects the historic scale of warehouses along the river and development 'inland' has a lesser scale.

2. The design of the scheme is dull and uninteresting. A comparison of the existing elevation to Church Street with the elevations of the proposed development to the rear is instructive. The Church Street elevation is elegant and cohesive and has visual depth. The proposed elevations are dull, flat and lifeless. Whereas the Church Street elevation maximises the potential of

one material, stone, the proposed elevations seek interest through the use of multiple materials. This is a typical example of poor modern architecture that attempts credibility through the use of more than one material. A prominent development with flat elevations of stone, coloured smooth render and brown rain-screen cladding with a bit of ashlar at ground level would be a poor addition to the urban landscape.

3. Where is there, in the scheme, an appreciation of local context? This is a scheme that could be in any town or city in the country and would be similarly out of context anywhere else. Have the architects ever walked up and down Church Street? One of them actually drew, albeit on a computer, the Church Street elevation. Did he not appreciate its elegance and proportions? He then drew the proposed elevations alongside the existing elevation. A simple comparison of existing and proposed elevations suggests that the proposed development would be a poor addition to the city.

4. Imagine standing on the north side of Cable Street looking south across the taxi rank with the bus station on the left. The scheme would probably, given its height, obscure a significant section of traditional development along Church Street (but probably not the highest part of the cinema complex -unfortunately!). The varying heights and form of this traditional development is the local context. In this view would be the flat and monopitch roofs, and the flat and lifeless elevations, of the proposed scheme. At least it would show the Bus Station in a good light.

*Update: This application was on the agenda of the 20<sup>th</sup> August Planning Committee meeting with officer recommendation for refusal. The application was withdrawn before the meeting.*

### **Application No. 12/00058/CU Change of use of first and second floors from storage use to 17 bed student accommodation and external alterations to existing window/door openings 5-9 Sir Simons Arcade, Lancaster LA1 1JL**

The Civic Society has no objection to the proposed change of use or to the details of the proposed development.

The only issue, which could be covered by imposition of suitable conditions, is the detailed design and finish of new windows and infill timber boarding. Without consideration of these matters the development could adversely affect the appearance

of the Conservation Area within which the building is situated.

*Update: Plans were modified (including window design) and the application permitted, May 2012*

**Application No. 12/00169/FUL  
Erection of 8 three-storey town houses with associated landscaping  
St Georges Quay Development Site, St Georges Quay, Lancaster**

The Civic Society supports the proposed construction of this affordable housing scheme in a sustainable location in Lancaster.

*n.b. This application was approved at the June 2012 Planning Committee, subject to a legal agreement regarding the affordable housing requirement, and other conditions, including a contribution to the Square Roots City Park Fund for public open space.*

**Scotforth Supermarket Appeal**

The appeal by Commercial Estates Projects (CEP) against the refusal of planning permission by the City Council for a large (7250 sq metre) supermarket on fields to the south of Lawson's Bridge was dismissed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Eric Pickles) following a public local inquiry. He agreed with the findings of Inspector Michael Hurley that:

- i) Whilst there was unmet need for additional convenience shopping in south Lancaster, this could be eased by the proposed new Booths supermarket and another food retailer in its old Scotforth store. In the longer term, the foodstore (of approx 5000m<sup>2</sup>) proposed for the Canal Corridor North site on the edge of the city was "sequentially preferable" to the proposed site.
- ii) The proposed supermarket could adversely affect the planned investment in Lancaster's central shopping area and the CCN site
- iii) The proposed development could give rise to severe traffic congestion on Scotforth Road especially in view of other committed developments (especially the proposed Science Park).
- iv) The visual impact of a large building would have an adverse effect on the appearance of the rural area, a gateway site deserving sensitive treatment. CEP has until 27<sup>th</sup> September to appeal.

The Inspector's Report and the Secretary of State's letter are available on the Society's website ([www.lancastercivicsociety.org](http://www.lancastercivicsociety.org)).

**The Winter Gardens Morecambe**

*Peter Wiltshire writes in response to Mike Quinton's contribution to the Winter Gardens debate in the April/May newsletter:*

I was quite excited by the correspondence from Mike Quinton regarding the Winter Gardens. There are two words which I would like to add to his, they are **potential** and **opportunity**. Elaborate and costly buildings, from Britain's wealthy past are unlikely ever to be built again outside our capital city. I feel that our communities would be much poorer if they were lost forever. I also feel that someone with sufficient financial backing will eventually realise the opportunity which such an impressive building offers. Only ten years ago the Midland Hotel was in a much worse structural condition. Property professionals repeatedly stated that it could no longer be considered financially viable as a hotel, but look at it now.

I enclose an article which I wrote for the Friends of the Winter Gardens in 2005, and I still feel that the suggestions and recommendations are as valid today. We need someone with the marketing skills to sell the potential to some of the bigger leisure operators. If the Castle and the Winter Gardens were both developed as tourist attractions, this could only help our local economy which has been depressed since the decline of our traditional industries in the 1980s.

*Peter Wiltshire*

The article to which Peter Wiltshire refers is reprinted below

**Comedy Hall of Fame :  
a brief outline of how it might work**

We have a stunning building in the Winter Gardens Victoria Pavilion, which in itself could form the centrepiece of a tourist attraction. There is adequate car parking to the rear and a railway station nearby.

Attractions could include tours of the working parts of the restored theatre including the Fly Tower, scenery effects, plant rooms and lighting and sound effects. Restored Victorian dressing rooms could also house static exhibits, memorabilia or audio-visual displays.

The peripheral concourse of the auditorium ground floor could be partitioned off and the floor levelled to provide further exhibition space. The centre front of the ground floor could either retain a raked floor, or could be terraced to accommodate



