



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 114 September 2013

....and suddenly it's autumn again...

....which means the start of the Civic Society's season of meetings and talks, all at 7.30 pm at Lancaster Town Hall.

The first talk is to be given on Wednesday 9 October, when Jim Trotman will speak on Local Community Rail Partnerships. These have been appearing all over the country, particularly where there are railway lines that serve local communities and where the situation can be made more secure by the injection of some local effort. A local example is the line from Leeds to Morecambe and Lancaster, via Bentham.

On Wednesday 13 November, there is to be a talk about Westfield War Memorial Village, built on the Marsh (opposite the Giant Axe football ground) after the end of the First World War, to the designs of the Lancaster firm of Thomas Mawson. This talk is to be given by Martin Purdy, who has been doing a study of the village for his Lancaster University PhD.

Then the December event will be the Christmas Social, to be held on Wednesday 11 December.

All of these are listed in the programme card, which is included with this newsletter, along with the rest of the year's programme. Do put them in your diary right away!

Annual Subscriptions due

Another thing that happens in autumn is that the Society's subscriptions fall due. You will remember that the last newsletter carried a notice from the Treasurer that a proposal would be put to the Society's AGM on 12 June to increase subscriptions to the Civic Society. The subscriptions have been at a constant level for a number of years, but as the AGM recognised, they need to be increased to keep the Society on a sound financial basis.

Annual subscriptions are due on 1 October. The rates are:

| | Individual | Family |
|--|------------|--------|
| Standard rate | £12 | £18 |
| Concessionary rate (over 65 or student) | £10 | £15 |

This information is repeated in the renewal notice that is included with this newsletter. If you pay by cheque, please send the correct amount for the category in which you fall. Even more important, if you pay by standing order, please contact your bank, if you haven't already done so, to ensure they pay the correct amount.

Report on 2013 AGM

The Society's 47th Annual General Meeting was held on 12th June in St John's Church, chaired by Jenny Greenhalgh. The meeting included a proposal to increase membership subscriptions which was accepted.

After the formal business, the guest speaker, Mark Cassidy (Assistant Head Regeneration and Planning, Lancaster City Council) gave a presentation on "Low expectations for the future of the High Street?" He outlined the many challenges facing the High Street both nationally and locally. Many familiar names have disappeared and technology, especially internet access via mobile phones, has transformed shopping habits, allowing instant price comparisons. High street shops needed to find innovative ways to add value to their offers and to build on their locational advantage.

Mark gave examples of the work of the BID (Business Improvement District) initiatives in the

UK which augur well for the Lancaster scheme, and Morecambe should benefit from its "Port of Call" status. He concluded his talk by updating members on recent planning developments in Lancaster District.

Summer Outing

The Society's 2013 summer outing was to Auckland and Raby Castles in County Durham.

Auckland Castle, also known as the Bishop's Palace, is one of the grandest Bishop's palaces in the UK. It was the seat of the former Prince Bishops, who wielded civic as well as religious power over the area. Dating from the 12th century, it was re-styled in the 18th and 19th centuries. Between 1832-2012 it was the official residence of the Bishops of Durham after which ownership was transferred to the Auckland Castle Trust, a charitable foundation. The building houses one of the largest private chapels in Europe (it was originally the Castle's banqueting hall) and some

very fine paintings, including the thirteen paintings of Jacob and his sons by Francisco de Zurbarán. In 2011 the Church Commissioners wanted to sell these but they were saved by a local benefactor, Jonathan Ruffer.

Raby Castle, set in a 200-acre deer park was built between 1367-1390 for John Nevill, the Earl of Westmorland. After the failed "Rising of the North" in support of Mary Queen of Scots, the Castle was held the Crown and in 1626 it was purchased by Sir Henry Vane whose descendants were created Baron Barnard. Various restorations and alterations were carried out in the 18th and 19th centuries by John Carr and William Burn respectively. The Castle has a magnificent Barons Hall and a mediaeval kitchen as well as important collections of paintings, porcelain and furnishings.

It was a most enjoyable and interesting day out and we are grateful to Roger Frankland for organising the trip.



Civic Society members at Auckland Castle

Chancery Lane

We were concerned to learn of a proposal to gate Chancery Lane as part of the upgrade of Market Square under the Square Routes programme. Chancery Lane is the narrow ginnell which links

Church Street with Market Square, running alongside TKMaxx and parallel to Anchor Lane. It is neglected, but it is part of Lancaster's heritage and has been a pedestrian thoroughfare for centuries. A letter of objection was sent to the City Council and we understand that the matter is to be investigated further.

Schools' Essay competition

The Society recently sponsored an essay competition for Lancaster primary schools on the theme of "Why I love Lancaster".



The Mayor of Lancaster (Councillor June Ashworth) presented the prizes to the winning candidates on 19th June at Dallas Road C. P. School (see the photo above).

The winning essay and those of the two runners-up are available on the Society's website. We were impressed with the high standard of the entries submitted and grateful to all those who took part. Our thanks also go to Sheila Jones for organising the event.

Summer Walk: Hidden Heysham

The Civic Society held their summer walk on a beautiful evening in June at Heysham Village under the leadership of Mr. Peter Wade.

The walk began from the bus turnaround in Heysham Village, a site overlooked by the woods of Heysham Head where you might once have wandered the tea gardens or been entertained by marionette shows starring Pinky and Perky.

The village's Main Street leads past the Jubilee Institute and its very public weighing scales, quaint cottages which once served as tea rooms or sold nettle beer, the modern Heritage Centre and the Royal Hotel which claims its origins in the 16th century.

A footpath cuts through to Bailey Lane and the site of the old village pump, close by the substantial house of Carr Garth. Bailey Lane leads

back to Main Street and the Old Rectory (also known as Greese Cottage), home, in the early 19th century, to the antiquarian and Rector of Heysham, Thomas Dunham Whitaker. Whitaker's unflattering account of the village speaks of its inhabitants as 'a race of pygmies' and of 'poor families earning a wretched subsistence by unskilful fishing'. In more recent times the Rectory was home to Hadden's Tea Gardens.

The churchyard of St Peter's (c 650AD) holds much of interest: the so-called Lazarus Stone (the stump of a Saxon cross) near the gateway, a sundial post, an open stone coffin and part of a cross shaft built into the church porch. The graveyard includes the resting place of the sisters Mabel and Harriet Agnes Wright who drowned in the bay below, the artist William Woodhouse and James Jones whose headstone is marked by the wistful inscription 'Poet, philosopher and failure'. An older memorial kept inside the church is the famous hog back stone carrying both Norse and Christian symbols.

Above St Peter's is the ruined chapel of St Patrick (c 750AD) - an oratory surrounded by an extensive burial area which includes rock-cut ossuaries as well as full-sized rock-cut graves dating from about 600AD.

On the cliffs below, names can be found carved from the time of the Great War. The folded rock layers above Half Moon Bay mark a carboniferous river delta, and the rock arches and stacks which stood here within living memory formed a fairy chapel popular with visitors. Low tide reveals the wreck of the Vanadis which ran aground in 1903.

The walk can be rounded off back in the Royal Hotel or else Heysham Old Hall.

This walk is regularly offered as part of a public programme set out in leaflets available from the Visitor Information Centres in both Lancaster and Morecambe. A more detailed account of Heysham is set out in Peter Wade's *Narrative guide to Morecambe and District*, one of a range of booklets available from Morecambe VIC.

Membership numbers

We are occasionally asked how many members we have. Currently, the answer is 264. During the 2012-13 session 20 new members joined and 8 resigned or did not renew their subscriptions.

Planning matters

The Society sent responses to planning applications as follows:

Application 12/01109/FUL

72 dwellings, Leisure Park, Wyresdale Road.

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the re-development of this brown-field site but does have some concerns about the application:

1. The proposed development seems over-intensive for the size of the site. The houses and garden spaces seem cramped and access to some of the parking areas (especially spaces P12-23) seem very restricted.

2. The colour of the bricks proposed for the houses & apartments (red and yellow) appear harsh and alien to the Lancaster scene. We have doubts about the use of two, such strong and contrasting colours, especially in a site which is so close to Williamson Park and the Ashton Memorial. We believe that a single colour of brick and one which fits more sensitively into the Lancaster environment would work better. Detailed information about the proposed render would have been welcome.

3. We question if there will be sufficient parking for Leisure Park activities once this site is occupied by housing. This may lead to road-side parking on nearby roads unsuited for this in terms of road safety.

4. We are concerned about the pressure of the additional traffic on Wyresdale Road especially at the junction at Golgotha.

Application number 13/00321/OUT.

Filter House, Scotforth Road Lancaster.

Demolition of former car show room and erection of a foodstore.

The Civic Society objects to this outline application.

It appears an inappropriate use of an important site at the southern entrance to the city.

We fully support the report and conclusions of the Forward Planning Team.

Application no. 13/00787/FUL

New build student accommodation between 98-108 St Leonard Gate, Lancaster

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the development of this gap site but we have serious concerns about the height and design of the proposed building.

The site is at the end of a fine terrace of listed Georgian buildings. The proposed building is too high and the overall design is not sympathetic to the adjacent buildings. The arrangement of the windows seems especially out of keeping with the Georgian terrace to which it will be attached.

St Leonard Gate is a historic thoroughfare in a conservation area and it will become a prominent boundary when the Canal Corridor North development goes ahead. The site is also opposite the historic and listed Tramway building. It is therefore critical that the design of the new building, especially the facade and gable end (which will be prominent in views from the east) be appropriate and sympathetic to the setting and the neighbouring buildings.

Because of our concerns over the height and overall design of the building we recommend that planning permission be refused.



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