



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 115 November 2013



Christmas greetings to all our members!



The Big Society in Lancaster?

As reported within this Newsletter, the lecture at Lancaster Town Hall on the Silverdale Hoard, given by Dr Gareth Williams of the British Museum on 25 October, attracted a large audience. About 250 strong, it filled the Banqueting Suite. We understand there was also a big audience for the lecture given by Dr Williams in Silverdale the previous day. Clearly there is a high level of interest in the Hoard locally.

In a few weeks the Hoard will be moved from its present display in Lancaster's City Museum to Preston, and from then on, if you want to see it you will have to go to the Harris Museum. As the Hoard was found within Lancaster District, we suspect many Lancastrians would have preferred to see it on permanent display at the City Museum in Lancaster, rather than in Preston.

In more prosperous times the City Council would have ensured the Hoard remained here, but in recent years their resources have been much reduced, and there are other urgent calls on their funds.

For the moment, if we want things to happen, we citizens will have to make most of the running ourselves. This happens already in a number of fields, such as Community Rail Partnerships (see the report below of the October meeting). We believe that, given the opportunity, local people would have made a considerable effort to raise the money needed to keep the Hoard on display in Lancaster. An energetic fund-raising campaign could well have provided what was needed. It is a great pity that this opportunity has been missed.

Martin Widden

Forthcoming events:

Christmas Social, 11th December, 7.30 pm

Our annual social, with mulled wine, mince pies, musical entertainment (provided by John and Judy Surridge) and a quiz will take place on Wednesday 11th December. We will also be auctioning a first edition of "Time Honoured Lancaster" published in 1891 by "Cross Fleury". This history of Lancaster, full of fascinating facts and other snippets, has been kindly donated to the Society by a member. Roger Frankland will be our auctioneer on the night. Please do join us if you can for what promises to be a memorable evening - starting 7.30 pm in Lancaster Town Hall.

Incidentally, if you can't make the social but would be interested in placing a bid for the book, get in touch with any Committee member.

Ugly Walk, Sunday 5th January 2014

With the current emphasis on the Castle and its surrounds, the 2014 Ugly Walk will repeat the 1994 Ugly Walk which was based on John Champness's "A Walk Around Historic Lancaster". Meet outside the Castle Gates at 10 am on Sunday 5th January 2014. Please wear clothing and footwear suited to the weather. We aim to finish by 12 noon.

The walk will be led by Roger Frankland and will look for both positives and negatives along the route.

It will be interesting to compare the results of this year's survey with those of twenty years ago.

[more events overleaf.....]

Forthcoming lectures (all 7.30 pm at the Town Hall):

8th January: Susannah Bleakley on the Morecambe Bay Partnership

12th February: Sally Pidd on the History of the Moor Hospital

Report on October meeting [Community Rail Partnerships, by Jim Trotman]

The finances of our remaining rural railways have been difficult since buses and cars took away the passengers and lorries the freight. The traditional solution was public subsidy for the 'social railway'. In times of austerity this is problematic.

In his talk to the Civic Society on 9 October Jim Trotman described the role of the 40 Community Rail Partnerships in supporting loss-making railways. They vigorously promote lines like those to Barrow, Windermere and Skipton, using leaflets and websites. They harness community spirit and volunteers to look after stations. They seek grants and sponsorship to improve stations' appearance, facilities and access at low cost. The main indicator of the Partnerships' success is more passengers, and most Partnerships have achieved this spectacularly. An important target market is leisure travellers, filling trains outside commuting times when overcrowding can now be a problem. With shoestring funding the Partnerships have achieved a great deal.

Challenges ahead include changes to railway funding, improving the trains and new franchisees. Larger, costlier projects at stations are still to be tackled. But the economic and environmental advantages for communities and travellers of thriving rural railways are obvious.

Gordon Clark

Report on November meeting [Westfield War Memorial Village, by Martin Purdy]

At the meeting on 13 November Martin Purdy (Lancaster University) explained why and how Westfield War Memorial Village began after 1918 - housing for Lancaster ex-servicemen with disabilities. Thomas Mawson's vision (partly garden city, partly model village) became reality on the Storey family estate. Despite Government scepticism (they preferred integration to a separate community), local donations and the King's Own Regiment got it started. Mawson's son

in the King's Own was killed at Ypres. Interwar, the Storey family (with its long military pedigree) kept the Village afloat financially. More servicemen and women have needed support since the Second World War and the many other conflicts after 1945. Today the Village remains a close-knit community of ex-service people, one of very few left in Britain. Despite enforced house sales in the 1980s and higher rents, the Village Committee and a housing association still maintain the caring ethos and the community's many facilities. The village's survival for nearly a century is as remarkable as Mawson's original idea. Resonant of battles and the fallen, the immaculately kept Village is a haven we shall remember in the coming centenary years.

Gordon Clark

Lecture on The Silverdale Hoard

(n.b. this lecture was organised by the City Museum and was not a Civic Society lecture)

Members of the Society may recall the talk on the Silverdale Hoard in October 2012 (see Newsletter No. 111). On 25 October Dr Gareth Williams, a curator at the British Museum, updated us on the Hoard at a packed public meeting in Lancaster Town Hall. The Hoard is now known to comprise 201 items in silver found in 2011 near Silverdale. There are 12 arm or finger rings, many of intricate design; 6 brooch fragments and a fine wire chain; and 14 ingots, 141 bits of 'hack' silver and 27 coins. The jewellery items were, at least originally, status items. The hack silver, ingots and coins were more directly stores of wealth for commerce. The coins are a mixture of Anglo-Viking, Anglo-Saxon, Frankish and Islamic, which reflects the wide trading reach of Viking communities from Ireland to Russia, North Africa and the Middle East. The Silverdale Hoard is the third largest found in England and, from the coins, can be dated to 900-910 AD, making it one of the earliest of England's Viking hoards. We can only speculate on why it was buried, nowhere near a Viking settlement. Was it a careful store of wealth or a hurried cache never reclaimed? The Hoard has been bought by the County Council and for most of 2014 it will be on display in the Museum of Lancashire in Preston. However, until 21 December it is on display in Lancaster City Museum. A visit to see the Silverdale Hoard is highly recommended.

Gordon Clark

Lancaster Vision (but not 2020)

Lancaster Vision 2020 was founded almost exactly twelve months ago, in December 2012, as a group attached to Lancaster Civic Society. Its aims were to bring together people and groups to secure the best outcome for Lancaster District with the opening of the Castle, and to promote strategies towards achieving this.

Recently, titles including the words *20:20 Vision* or *Vision 2020* have become popular for all sorts of organisations. Locally, the Lancaster Arts Partnership decided a few weeks ago to call itself *Lancaster 20:20 Vision*. To reduce the risk of confusion, we therefore decided in October to drop the 2020 from the name of our group. It is now just *Lancaster Vision*.

Aims of the group

The initial impetus came from the prospect of the Castle opening fully, and the opportunity this presented to Lancaster to bring in many more visitors. But since then, we have become aware that Lancaster's enormous potential independent of the Castle is incompletely tapped; so the aims of Lancaster Vision have been widened. Briefly stated, the central aim is now 'to make the most of Lancaster's potential'.

Proposed seminar

In line with our aim of bringing people together, Lancaster Vision is arranging a one-day seminar in early February, to which we are inviting all the main players (the City Council, the County Council, the Chamber of Commerce and so on). We hope the Duchy of Lancaster will also be represented. In line with our objectives the title is to be *The Big Opportunity - Unlocking Lancaster's Potential*, and the aim of the day is to explore these opportunities and look at how they might be realised in a time of economic shortages.

Martin Widden

Report on Civic Voice convention, Liverpool, 27-28 October 2013

About 100 delegates from all over the UK attended the Civic Voice AGM, with a good representation from the North & North West. Merseyside were the hosts and there were some excellent tours of the City. I did three tours: one of the Bluecoat school building which had been

heavily bombed in WW2. It is now a thriving arts centre with a new performance block.

In the afternoon, led by two young architects and with part of the tour on a heritage bus, I joined a party looking at the two cathedrals joined by Hope Street (Hope was a bloke, not an aspiration). I have visited both cathedrals before but not in such detail and so interestingly. We were also shown the new University buildings that filled in the bomb damage - some more appealing than others. The roof of Paddy's Wigwam has been repaired and majestic steps put in front.

After tea and in light showers, the history & delights of the L1 shopping centre and the Albert Dock were very professionally explained to us. We were also given the inside story, or rather saga, of Peel Holdings' fight to develop/exploit the Middle docks. As a result a reasonable scheme will at some point begin to gentrify the old bonded warehouses. We then walked the length of Dale Street to look at the wonderful new library opened last month behind St George's Hall.

On Saturday was the AGM. It was all very passive until there was a proposal to alter the Constitution, whereupon there was a lot of huffing and puffing from an ex member of NWACTS. The undercurrents were palpable but the insurrection was crushed by inertia as we all wanted to get on and hear Griff Rhys-Jones. He as usual was excellent, because he believes in Civic Voice and he urged us to go out and spread the word of what we do and how we do it

After an excellent lunch in the "wedding cake" ballroom of the town hall we all settled down in the council chamber for a pep talk by the new Chair of Civic Voice - Freddy Gick from Birmingham.

The results of the 2013 Survey were discussed. All white, all grey, all over 55 so we need to get out and get new members. We were asked to vote for possible campaigns. One was "My Place Award" to replace the Civic Trust Awards because some sharp person bought the name so we can't use that. And lastly "Civic Watch" which is basically asking the public questions on Civic Day about what they think of the town and hopefully recruiting a few new members.

Lots of opportunity for networking and a useful two days.

Roger Frankland.

Planning representations recently submitted to the City Council:

Application number 13/00692/LB, the restoration of 75 Church Street , Lancaster (formerly The Black Bull Hotel)

We welcome the repair and restoration of this building to allow its return into active use with its fine features retained. Although currently in a poor state of repair, it is a fine building on a prominent corner site, close to the Judges' Lodgings and on an approach to the Castle and Priory.

We would prefer the restored sash windows to be painted off-white (their original colour), rather than grey. We also hope that any remaining stained glass will be retained.

The moss-green colour proposed for the rendered areas does not seem appropriate for this building. A neutral colour would seem more fitting and blend more harmoniously with nearby properties.

If these concerns can be addressed we would strongly support the application.

13/01008/CU and 13/01009/LB Change of Use and Listed Building Application to facilitate the change of use of ground floor restaurant (use class C3) into student living accommodation (use class C4) including installation of new timber windows, insertion of new wall and gate to front at 23 Castle Hill Lancaster LA1 1YN

We welcome the conservation gain of the refurbishment of the ground floor and the currently derelict outbuilding (a scheduled monument). However we have strong reservations about the change of use of the ground floor of this historic, listed building to student accommodation.

We believe an active, public use of the ground floor would be more appropriate and in keeping with the building's prime location on the approach to the Castle, for which plans are emerging.

We are glad to see there is no proposal to alter the historic ground floor windows (as in the earlier application 12/010931/CU)) and suggest that consideration be given to protecting the stained glass against internal damage. This building, formerly the premises of Shrigley and Hunt, also includes other fine examples of stained glass and we hope that all such glazing (internal and external) is protected from the

potential damage associated with residential and other uses.

We also question the adequacy of natural light to rooms 2,3,4 and 5 and also the adequacy of the bin and bicycle storage area.

13/00870/CU and 13/00871/LB Change of use and listed building consent for works to facilitate change of use of basement, first, second and third floors offices (B1) to combined offices (B1) and 5 residential flats (C3) | 80 Church Street Lancaster LA1 1ET

We welcome the return into active use of this very fine Grade II* listed building and the spacious residential accommodation provided on the lower ground, second and third floors. We also welcome the continued provision of office accommodation on the ground and part of the first floors.

We are concerned however that the internal alterations may involve the loss or damage to the ornate ceilings and trust they will remain in situ as stated and appropriately protected during the building period.

We also hope that the security cameras on the roof (which are visible on the roofline of the front elevation) will be removed.

Filter House, Scotforth Road: demolition of former car show room and erection of a foodstore (13/00321/OUT)

Earlier this year the Society objected to this outline application which we regarded as an inappropriate use of an important site at the southern entrance to the city. The application was refused planning permission at the July meeting of the Council's Planning Committee. The applicant subsequently went to appeal and the hearing is scheduled for December 2013. We recently received notice that the appellant has asked the Inspector to exclude access to the site from the issues to be considered as part of the appeal process. The Society has sent a note of objection to the Planning Inspectorate stating that we believe access to this very constrained site at a restricted part of the A6 is fundamental to the application. The appeal reference is **APP/A2335/A/13/2202799**



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