



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 116 March 2014

Forthcoming events: for your diary

Thursday, March 27th 4.30 pm The Storey Auditorium

Lancaster Digital City - Place-making and way-finding for locals and visitors.

Highwire Doctoral Training Centre at Lancaster University, Beyond the Castle project and Lancaster Vision invite you to 'Lancaster Digital City'.

In four presentations followed by discussions, Highwire PhD students will explore the potential for digital innovation to enhance how locals and visitors experience the city and its culture, heritage and public spaces.

For further details contact Jenny Eaden, jennyeaden@btinternet.com

9th April 7.30 pm, Lancaster Town Hall **Civic Society evening lecture:**

Martin Stockley, chair of Places Matter! Design Review panel, on **The Importance of the Public Realm**

11 January-26 April Lancaster City Museum **Open Monday - Saturday 10.00 - 5.00 pm** **Beloved - Photographic Exhibition** by Darren Andrews

Shot in cemeteries around Lancashire, **Beloved** takes death as its central theme. The images capture how we commemorate loved ones. They show headstones, statues and personal memorials and also the way time has affected them.

Thursday 10th April, 7.30 pm in the Museum:
"Ask the Artist" event with photographer Darren Andrews and Roger Frankland, who will speak about Victorian cemeteries, the symbolism of memorial art and the Quernmore Road or "Top" cemetery.



Ugly Walk

The 2014 Ugly Walk, held on a cold but dry Sunday in early January, re-traced the 1994 Ugly Walk, following part of John Champness's "Walk around Historic Lancaster." The starting point was the John O' Gaunt Gateway at the Castle (the photo above shows the group ready to set off), now open to the public, which of course it wasn't 20 years ago.

We walked past the Priory, down Vicarage Fields to the site of the Roman Bath House then back into the town centre, touching on Church Street, Sun Street and Market Street. Apart from the area at the rear of Sun Street, we were impressed at the lack of litter throughout the walk.

The area around the Bath House and the poor interpretation of such an important part of Lancaster's heritage was disappointing, but apart from this, the overall impression was positive.

We are grateful, as always, to Roger Frankland, who led the walk, as he has done for the past 20 years!

MEETING REPORTS

Christmas Social

Members enjoyed a very convivial evening at the Christmas Social in December. In addition to the traditional mince pies and mulled wine we were entertained by musicians John and Judy Surrige and challenged by another excellent quiz from Gillian Sheath. Roger Frankland was in splendid form auctioning two copies of "Time Honoured Lancaster" by Cross Fleury, donated by members - a first edition of 1891 and a modern reprint - raising £90 for Society funds. We are very grateful to the generosity of the members who donated these copies, to Roger, Gillian and also to Anne Stelfox and her team, who organised the evening and made everything run so smoothly.

January meeting: Morecambe Bay Partnership

On January 8 Lancaster Civic Society was pleased to welcome Susannah Bleakley of the Morecambe Bay Partnership, to talk about the organisation's recent initiatives and future plans.

Susannah has led the partnership for 15 years and the idea is to concentrate less on visitor volume than on an increase in higher-spending visitors by what is presented as available in the area and how the offer is presented. An exhibition of photographs that formed part of the Vision 2020 Exhibition of the Southbank of the Thames is to come to the Morecambe Arena in May and June.

Sheila Jones

February meeting: Lancaster's Moor Hospital - then and now

This was the topic of Dr Sally Pidd's talk to members of the Civic Society on 12th February. Dr Pidd worked as a consultant psychiatrist at the Moor Hospital from 1980 until its closure in 2000. When she started, locked wards were just being phased out, there were only three long-stay wards and rehabilitation was becoming all-important as patients, many of whom had been resident at

the Moor for much of their lives, were being prepared to live in the community.

The move away from asylums towards community-based care was advocated by Enoch Powell in 1961, when, as Minister of Health he gave his "Water Tower" speech. Referring to the large, 19th century institutions he said '*There they stand, isolated, majestic, imperious, brooded over by the gigantic water-tower and chimney combined, rising unmistakable and daunting out of the countryside--the asylums which our forefathers built with such immense solidity to express the notions of their day!*'

Dr Pidd outlined the development of mental health provision from 1809 when the first institution for the care of the mentally ill opened (in Nottingham), until the present. Lancaster's first asylum (now Standen Park) opened in 1816 and served all Lancashire until the 1860s. By 1841 it housed 560 inmates and in 1883 it was full, so the northern annexe was built to provide a further 825 beds. Wards were locked and large, (60 beds with little space between them) and inmates had no personal possessions.

Lancaster's long association with the Moor and Royal Albert Hospitals, both of which were big employers in the area, gave the population an understanding and tolerance of mental illness, perhaps assisting the transition to care in the community. With the closure of both institutions, many former staff bought up boarding houses in Morecambe and cared for patients under the "Boarding Out" scheme.

Here former patients lived in small communities, often looked after by the same people but with a degree of freedom and personal choice previously undreamt of.

Re-use of such large-scale institutional buildings has proved challenging throughout the country and Lancaster has been fortunate that both the Moor and the Royal Albert have found new uses - the Royal Albert as a Muslim boarding school, Standen Park converted to housing, and the Moor Annexe and Campbell House currently under conversion into apartments and town houses.

Winnie Clark

Seminar: The Big Opportunity - Unlocking Lancaster's Potential

This seminar, held at The Storey on 6 February, was organised by Lancaster Vision, a group closely associated with Lancaster Civic Society. The aim of the seminar was to encourage a sense of shared ambition among groups and agencies that have an interest in the development of Lancaster. Chaired by the High Sheriff of Lancashire, it was attended by over 70 people, drawn from local businesses, major developers, transport firms, English Heritage, the City Council and County Council, local cultural organisations and educational institutions.



Seminar delegates in The Storey lecture theatre at a break in proceedings

The seminar agreed that Lancaster has huge potential, both as a place to live and work, and as a destination for tourists, shoppers, businesses and students. This potential is a result of the City's diversity of assets - its history and heritage (including the Castle), its natural environment, its cultural and educational institutions and its independent and interesting shops.

It was recognised that there are significant challenges that need to be overcome before Lancaster will achieve this potential. The first and most important need is to generate a *vision* of the future of the City - a vision shared by all those with a stake in the city, including businesses, employers and employees, Council leaders, schools and

colleges, and all citizens of Lancaster of any age.

After what was a successful event, we inevitably face the question 'how do we take this forward?'

Lancaster Vision intends to build on the networks arising from the seminar, and to work with the City and County Councils, with local business and with other local groups to help to develop the shared vision that we all felt was needed.

We would of course be very pleased to welcome new members to Lancaster Vision (many existing members also belong to Lancaster Civic Society) and to have your views on the way forward. If you would like to join us, please contact me at

martin.widden@gmail.com

Martin Widden

Planning Representations

Below are representations that have been sent to the City Council recently.

13/O1172/FUL : Alterations (including demolition) and extension to former Market Hall and existing retail units to create a 2-storey retail unit, including associated realignment of existing pedestrian mall and creation of a new pedestrian mall into Marketgate, Market Hall, Common Garden Street, Lancaster, LA1 1JB

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the return to active use of this central and prominent retail site.

We have no objection in general terms to the proposals but we have some serious concerns, mainly relating to the mall links, both of which are narrow and contain dog-legs and so no direct line of sight for pedestrians. It is important that all the access routes around the old market hall site are designed to a high standard, with as much daylight as possible, well-lit shop windows and good sightlines. They must not resemble the dark, tunnel-like appearance of the Anchor Lane ginnel beside the Vue Cinema, which is forbidding rather than inviting. Good design of the access routes

will clearly have commercial as well as aesthetic benefits.

1. Re-aligned Gillison Lane (south): the Sheep Dog Run.

We appreciate the constraints of the entrance, but this re-alignment creates a restricted passageway with a dog-leg at the entrance to the Cornmarket. This passageway is already a heavily used access point between Common Garden Street and the Marketgate complex (because of the bus stops) and will become more so with an improved retail offer. If a little more retail space was sacrificed, it might be possible to create an enlarged passageway which could curve round, echoing the semi-circular line of the Market Hall's Common Garden Street frontage.

We are also unsure about the fate of the sheep-dog mural and fear that at least two panels may be lost in the re-alignment. This would be most regrettable as this mural is a much-loved feature of this passageway.

2 New link from Sir Simons Arcade to Marketgate

Whilst we welcome this replacement link from Sir Simon's Arcade into Marketgate we object to its narrow width and especially the dog-leg in the centre. This link will provide the most direct route into the complex for those using the car park above, but it will appear as a tunnel with no sight-lines for pedestrians. Again, by sacrificing a little more retail space this mall could be widened and straightened, making it a more obvious and attractive link, and providing better and easier access for pedestrians and users of mobility scooters and wheelchairs

3. Common Garden Street entrance to new store

It is regrettable that the imposing, semi-circular entrance onto Common Garden Street will be used only as an emergency exit. This is the most obvious entry point to the new retail unit from Common Garden Street and is a prominent feature for those entering the city centre from the south. If it is impossible (in retail terms) to utilise this as an entrance, then we trust that it will be maintained to a high and attractive standard and incorporate good signposting to the store's main entrance in the Cornmarket.

4. Access

We trust that there is no intention to gate any of the pedestrian links into the Marketgate complex. Permanent pedestrian permeability is a long-standing characteristic of the Lancaster streetscape.

N.B. This application was approved by the City Council's January 2014 Planning Committee. The identity of the tenant of the retail unit has not yet been announced.

Planning Application 13/01301/CU Moorlands Hotel, Quarry Road, Lancaster LA1 3BY 19 study-bedrooms plus 4 studio apartments.

This is a prominent site in a heavily built-up residential area of the city. The number of student units proposed would appear excessive for the floor area available. Floor plans show very cramped space in the study-bedrooms, some having only a quarter of a metre between bed-end and window.

Documents relating to this application do not appear to include any mention of the main elevation on to Quarry Road which, architecturally, is of considerable significance on this prominent corner site. If no alterations are proposed to the historic fabric of this elevation, that should be clearly stated.

Interior plans at ground floor level would seem to indicate that the windows at the front would be incorporated into the design of two large units. However, at first floor level, in order to accommodate new bedroom space, it would appear that mullions will be used as part of the dividing walls between units. No mention is made of whether or not the original stained glass is to be restored.

The elevation on to Dumbarton Road shows that the attempt to squeeze in so many rooms will affect the appearance of the windows and mullions. The main arch is symmetrical but changing an existing external door into a window breaks up the symmetry.

We believe that the external appearance of this substantial property is in danger of being compromised as a result of the developer

seeking to incorporate an excessive number of units within the existing structure.

**Application no. 13/01221/LB
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 one storey too high and the overall design is not sympathetic to the adjacent buildings. The windows will be out of alignment with the Georgian terrace to which it is attached. The ground floor window sill height will be very low from the pavement resulting in loss of privacy.

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.

**13/01200/REM| Reserved matters
application for the erection of 170 dwellings
with associated landscaping and car parking.
Luneside East, St Georges Quay, Lancaster**

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the development of the derelict site which is such a prominent feature on St George's Quay and is situated on the edge of the Lancaster Conservation Area, within sight of two grade I listed buildings.

We do however have a number of concerns about the proposed development.

Materials: Samples of the proposed materials are needed. The re-constituted stone needs to be of a colour which will harmonise with existing stone - the houses fronting on to St

George's Quay will be very visible in views across the river and to passengers travelling over Carlisle Bridge. When brick is used, the brick should match the brick of existing buildings on the site (i.e. a dark blue/red colour).

Architectural Details: The addition of small details to the windows and porches would give the houses a more "local" feel e.g. instead of gables over porches, use instead a flat lintel with the scroll-like corbels of the type so often found in Lancaster. Similarly, windows could have a strong rectangular reconstituted stone frame, with traditional lintels, sills and jambs. The inclusion of such modest decorative features would help to make the houses more distinctive.

Possibly add a condition "Details of reconstituted stone lintels, corbels, sills and jambs to be submitted to the planning authority and agreed before work starts on site".

More landscaping, especially round the car-parking areas and the embankment would help soften the area as well as being environmentally friendly. We also note the lack of much public open space and a children's play area, within what is a very dense development of family houses.

Perimeter boundaries: We would have liked more information about the proposed boundary with Long Marsh Lane (a prominent boundary) and also with Scaleford Care Home, which closely abuts the site.

A streetscape view of St George's Quay would have been welcome. The new buildings need to harmonise with the existing St George's Mill building as this will be a prominent view across the river and for passers-by along the Quay. We hope that these concerns can be addressed to enhance the re-development of this site.

(Planning Representations continue on the next page)

**Submitted 4th March 2014:
14/00129/FUL Erection of 128 residential dwellings with associated access and landscaping following the demolition of existing buildings. Nightingale Hall, Quernmore Road , Lancaster**

Lancaster Civic Society welcomes the development of this brownfield site. The overall impression is of a reasonably well-spaced development (albeit the internal room size does seem a little cramped) with effective landscaping and boundary treatment. Landscaping will be especially important in the buffer area between the site and Christ Church School and the Cemetery boundaries. We would like to have seen samples of the re-constituted stone it is proposed to use. It is important that the colour should blend with the natural and re-constituted stone used elsewhere in this area which borders the Williamson Park Conservation Area. The inclusion of architectural details to porches and windows, such as corbels, lintels, and sills would help make the designs appear more local and distinctive. Altering one window per block is a mean attempt at achieving a local blend to the design. If not all windows

can be treated, then amend at least all but minor ones. To obtain good standards of details, consider adding a condition "Details of reconstituted stone lintels, corbels and sills to be submitted to the planning authority and agreed before work starts on site".

**Submitted 4 March 2014
13/01108/CU The Zone, Dalton Square, Lancaster LA1 1PL**

Lancaster Civic Society has no objection to the creation of a new retail unit with new shopfront.

13/01129/CU, 4-6 Cheapside, Lancaster LA1 1LZ

The Lancaster Civic Society supports the application and welcomes the proposed renovation of this prominent property on a main thoroughfare in the City Centre.

13/01167/LB 129-131 St Leonardgate, Lancaster, LA1 1NL

Lancaster Civic Society warmly welcomes the restoration and return into active use of these historic buildings.



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