



LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 118 September 2014

The Society's programme for 2014

The members' programme card, included with this newsletter, lists the events planned for the coming year. We hope you will agree it is a varied and attractive programme, dealing with some highly topical subjects.

The first of these is a talk on 8 October, by John Byron of United Utilities, on *Lancaster's Current Sewer Improvements*. We are all aware of the prodigies of digging that have been going on recently in the centre of Lancaster: this talk will help us to appreciate what it's all about.

Following this, on 12 November there will be a lecture by Admiral Sir John Kerr on the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, of which he was Vice-Chairman from 1998-2001. As we all know, this year marks the centenary of the start of the First World War - and 12 November is almost exactly 96 years after the end of that war (96 years and one day, to be exact).

In December we will meet on the 10th for our regular Christmas Social Evening. This year we will be treated to an illustrated talk by Andy Hornby, on the Winders of Wyresdale. The Winders were regular members of a village band in Wyresdale throughout the 19th century. Many of the songs and dances performed by these bands in England have been lost, but the Winder family preserved their tune books. Some of the tunes from these books will be played or sung by Andy Hornby on 10 December, and the tune books will be on sale, should you wish to play or sing their music. The talk and music will be followed by a short quiz, and there will be the traditional mince pies, mulled wine and soft drinks.

[Note that the meetings in Jan and Feb 2015 will be held at The Storey, not the Town Hall]

Eastern approaches to the City

On 7 July a small group of members, led by Peter Wiltshire, followed the routes likely to be taken by visitors who arrive in Lancaster from the east, either by car through junction 34 of the M6, or by coach to the coach park on St Leonardgate and thence to the city centre on foot.

Anyone who has followed either of these routes recently will be well aware that they are disfigured by pockets of dereliction and neglect, giving a very poor first impression of Lancaster.

Back Caton Road is flanked by a series of eyesores - and as the traffic on this road often moves slowly, visitors arriving by car on this route have plenty of opportunity to observe them.



The photo above shows, as one example, the rear of the Indian restaurant, which presents a fine frontage to Parliament Street, but at the rear is providing a fertile site for vigorous buddleia growth. This will cause serious damage to the building if not arrested.

On the other side of Back Caton Road is the failed LPN development site. The fencing along

the road side, which is bent and in poor condition, gives a very negative impression of the city.

Visitors who arrive by coach (especially at this time of year) and then walk from St Leonardgate will see copious growths of weeds around and in car parks; buddleias growing in the walls of buildings; and neglected frontages, which suggest even more neglect behind.

This short article is extracted from the report written by Peter Wiltshire on the findings of the 7 July walk he led along the eastern approaches. His report, including numerous photographs, can be seen on the Society's web site, www.lancastercivicsociety.org

Peter concludes his report as follows:

My intention in arranging this walk was not to depress people, but to stimulate them to think of ways to improve some of these eyesores. There may be low-cost options involving artwork, planting and cosmetic work to derelict and unoccupied buildings. There may be opportunities for community activity and for volunteer work. Could, for instance, offenders serving community service orders pull up the weeds in our streets? There may be opportunities for community orchards on some of the derelict land.

By whatever means, I feel that the eastern approach to the city needs to be visually improved as a matter of urgency, if we do not do this, visitors will continue to take away an impression of a failing city, lacking in investment and imagination. We know that this is not really the Lancaster we know, but we are biased. Wasn't it Dorothy Parker who said "Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes right to the bone" ?

If you have suggestions for actions to be taken on all this, please send them to Peter, or to any member of the Society's committee.

Annual subscriptions

Subscriptions fall due on 1 October, and we have included the renewal notice with this newsletter. The subscription levels are unchanged from last year.

Annual General Meeting 2014

This was held at St John's Church, North Road, Lancaster, at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 11th June 2014, chaired by Roger Frankland, Vice-Chairman.

The minutes of the 2013 AGM were approved. The annual report was presented by Winnie Clark (Hon Secretary) and included an update of the work of the Lancaster Vision by Martin Widden. The Treasurer Rodney Ward presented his report and accounts, and the Committee for 2014-15 session was elected. Roger Frankland and Martin Widden will serve as Joint Chairmen and Winnie Clark as Hon Treasurer. Will Gale, Michael Greenhalgh and Gillian Sheath have been elected to the Committee to replace retiring members. The post of Hon Secretary is currently vacant but the membership has authorised the Committee to appoint or co-opt a Secretary and the result will be reported in the newsletter and the website in due course.

After the formal business, Mark Cassidy, Planning Manager, Lancaster City Council gave a presentation on *The Housing Revolution*, after which light refreshments were served.

The annual report, Treasurer's report and the draft minutes of the meeting are all available to read on the Society's website: www.lancastercivicsociety.org

Rodney Ward, who retired from the post of Hon Treasurer at this year's AGM, had served the Civic Society in that capacity for four years. Many thanks to him for his wise counsel over that period.

Guides to Lancaster

The Civic Society has produced a set of guides to Lancaster. They can be found on our website, www.lancastercivicsociety.org by clicking on the link "Guides to Lancaster". The guides are short, informative and illustrated, to help visitors and residents discover more about the rich heritage of the city and district. Comments on the current guides and suggestions for others should be sent to the Guides Editor at clark4be@btinternet.com.

Summer walk

On the 18th June, 2014, Geoff Pegg led a Society group around the village of Holme and Holme Mills.



View of village and mill

Until the opening of Holme Mill as a flax spinning mill in 1790, the main industry in the village was agriculture. Much of the land at that time was owned by the Levens Estate and the Dallam Tower Estate. Flax spinning provided employment for more than 400 people in its heyday until a fire destroyed much of its capacity. This led to the conversion of the mill in 1864 to coconut matting production after the property was bought by a retired prison governor from Wakefield called Edward Shepherd. He put the mill under the management of his son, Francis Shepherd, and his nephew Frederick O'Dwyer, and they built a business which exported matting goods all over the world. In 1916 Goodacres, of Victoria Docks, London, took over the business and continued trading until the early 1970s when they were making mainly plastic matting at the site. The mill had a huge impact on the development of the village and during the walk the group heard stories about some of the individuals connected, in one way or another, with the mill.

Anne Stelfox & Geoff Pegg

Wayfinding

In the spring the Civic Society contributed ideas for a new system of 'wayfinding' (directional signage and information boards)

for central Lancaster, this being an offshoot of the City Council's Square Routes project. In July the Society attended a workshop with Placemarque, the wayfinding design company. The aim is to install a set of boards, finger posts and wall-mounted signs that will be modern and attractive, and will reflect Lancaster's character and help visitors and local people to appreciate the city more fully. The signs also need to be easily updateable and vandal proof and to make use of new communications media. The early designs we were shown were encouraging. The first new signs should be installed in the autumn.

Gordon Clark

Summer Outing: Nantwich & Beeston Castle

The 2014 summer outing took place on 7th June. We received a very warm welcome from the Nantwich Civic Society (which made up for the rain) and a guided tour of this historic market town. The sun came out for our afternoon tour of Beeston Castle and the picturesque village of Bunbury. Our thanks go to Roger Frankland for organising such an interesting day out.

Public consultations

A number of members joined the Society's Planning Group to compile the Society's responses to the City Council's public consultation on the District's future housing needs and the University of Cumbria's masterplan for its Lancaster campus at Bowerham. The text of both responses can be read on the Society's website.

It was very helpful to have the input of members and we hope to hold similar exercises for future consultations, such as when British Land unveils its proposals for the Canal Corridor North site. These consultations often happen at short notice, so if you are interested in being involved, please ensure we have your email address so we can contact you quickly. This can be included on the subscription renewal form, or contact Winnie Clark (tel 01524 33411) if you do not have email access but wish to be included in such discussions.

Letter to the Editor

I was grateful for the balanced article in the May Newsletter about the proposed increase of housing in the district, and particularly the way the Turley/Experian material was followed through, including the Government’s stated preference for local decision making.

The upper end increase - which is taken as the sole target in the local press - seems to have no solid justification for it. The fear must be that Lancaster is to be used as a dormitory for Preston, and that the south side of the city is therefore particularly under threat.

I think there needs to be a much more careful analysis of the quantum of need for the district, given the number of vacant houses on sale, and a renewed commitment not to put more pressure on the A6 north or south of the city until we understand the effects of the new bypass and the Galgate problem has been sorted out. The expected number of additional jobs and their categories has not been given, nor any suggestions about how district services, and particularly the schools, will manage. Local people should not be jumped into thinking about how to implement large numbers of additional houses before the questions of whether and how much have been satisfactorily answered, particularly in relation to the open green spaces that we currently treasure. With hindsight, it is fortunate that the M6 was built so tightly to the eastern edge of Lancaster, or the proposed sprawl would be still greater.

Marion McClintock

Responses to Planning Applications

Since publication of the last newsletter (May 2014), the Society has commented in detail on a number of planning applications. Space is

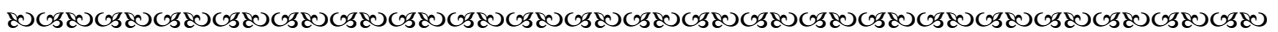
short, so we are unable to reproduce the Society’s responses in this newsletter, but a summary of one significant comment is included below.

Application 13/01200/FUL

149 dwellings with associated landscaping and car parking for Persimmon Homes, at Luneside East, St Georges Quay, Lancaster, Lancashire.

The lack of community consultation for this major application with those who will be close neighbours of the development, was most regrettable. However, it is pleasing that Persimmon has responded to the concerns of local residents by removing the 21 houses with direct access onto Long Marsh Lane and retaining the western half of the embankment. The other elements of the application remain unchanged, so the concerns we expressed in our earlier representation on the original application, 13/01200/REM (submitted 4 March), remain. These concerned the materials, architectural details, the need for more landscaping and a children’s play area and the need for streetscape view of St George’s Quay.

Luneside East, on the historic St George’s Quay, is a prominent site, in the shadow of two Grade I listed buildings - the Castle and Priory. We believe that the development lacks an identity and ask that the concerns raised by ourselves and the Urban Design Officer could be reserved matters.



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