



# TRUST TOPICS

Doncaster Civic Trust Newsletter ©

Issue No. 31

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Clay model for new sculptures at St George, Bloomsbury



The real thing - finished works in place – See the Back Page

## Lion and Unicorn Sighted in London

Doncaster Civic Trust : Registered Charity No. 508674 : Founded in 1946  
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## Society Insight

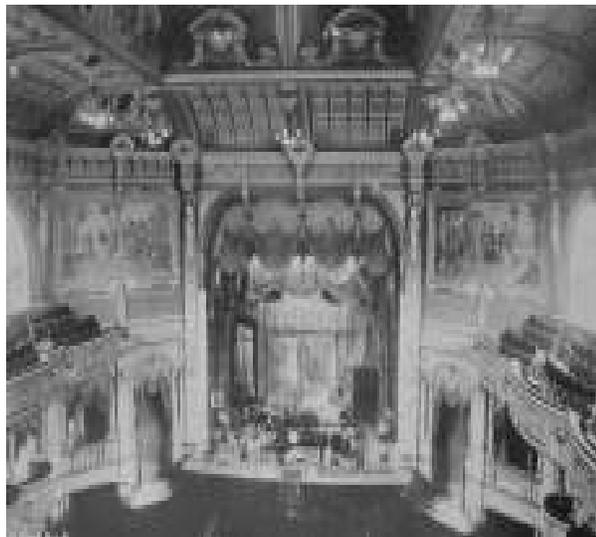
Readers may be interested to know that the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies publishes a magazine, Society Insight. In this year's spring edition there are a number of interesting articles.

The front page has an item on 'The Barcelona of the North?' which really turns out to be an article on Barnsley Civic Trust which was launched on the 15th March. This is the newest of 800 civic societies nationally, and in its first year its plans include a 'best shop front award' and a photographic project. This new society is most welcome, and it follows the launch of a new Civic Trust in Sheffield last year. Whilst Doncaster Civic Trust has been well established for over 60 years, it is very pleasing that now each of the four urban conurbations of South Yorkshire is served by an amenity society.

A new feature looks at the work in more detail of one society, this month featuring Beverley Civic Society, founded in 1961. Beverley is, to those who don't know, an atmospheric market town - regarded by some as a sort of York in miniature. Various projects are detailed and photographs shown in the magazine including the creation of an excellent sensory garden.

I particularly enjoyed an article on the project to restore Harrogate's Royal Hall. This was built as a 'kursaal' but in the aftermath of the First World War its name was changed to something more English.

Designed by the important theatre architect, Frank Matcham, it opened in 1903 and was once described as a 'glittering palace of gold'. Its original use was very much multi-purpose - everything from tea dances to music hall. Sadly it has seen better days and it also suffered damage in the 2nd World War, losing most of its stained glass at that time.



The Kursaal, later The Royal Hall, Harrogate c.1906

The Royal Hall Restoration Trust is chaired by Lilian Mina who is also chair of Harrogate Civic Society. So far the Trust has raised £2 million and they hope to retain the Hall's seating capacity of 1150. However, more money is still needed for curtains, carpets and restoring the stained glass. The photograph above, which I found in an old family collection, shows the Kursaal in its heyday. It is a post-card, date-marked 1912. Disappointingly the message on the reverse does not mention the picture.

**Peter Coote**

## **Doncaster Civic Trust – Summer Visits 2007**

### **Wednesday 13th June 2007: Aldby Park, York**

Half day outing leaving Waterdale at 12.30 pm and travelling direct to Aldby Park, to be welcomed by Mr & Mrs Mark Winn.

This fine early Georgian house of 1726 has been compared with Beningbrough Hall. The garden front, more decorated than others of the period makes Aldby Park outstanding amongst the houses of Yorkshire.

We shall see a sensitively restored interior, and delightful gardens. Tea will be provided in the house.

Cost, including afternoon tea: £18 per person

### **Wednesday 11th July 2007: Newby Hall, Ripon**

Full day outing leaving Waterdale at 9.30 am and travelling direct to Newby Hall.



Built in the 1690's by Sir Christopher Wren's senior assistant, John Eddy, Newby has superb interiors by Robert Adam, fine furniture and sculpture. It was the setting for TV's latest version of Mansfield Park by Jane Austen, starring Billie Piper as Fanny Price.

The gardens are justly famous and will be sublime at this time of year. Because there is much to see and enjoy, no arrangements have been made for coffee or lunch, but there is a good restaurant available.

Cost, including House and Gardens: £20 per person

### **Wednesday 8th August 2007: Stamford & Burghley House**

Full day outing leaving Waterdale at 9.00 am for Stamford where you will make your own lunch arrangements, then leaving at 1.40 pm for Burghley House.

It was completed in 1587 for Sir William Cecil, Lord Treasurer to Queen Elizabeth I - the Gordon Brown of his day!



Burghley House has a fantastic interior, recently fully restored, and interesting gardens. There is a tea room for those who wish to partake.

Cost, including House & Gardens: £21.00 per person

## Mr Straw's House at Worksop

In recent years it is noticeable that the National Trust has spent time and money acquiring properties far less grand than the traditional country house.

One of these acquisitions was Mr. Straw's House in Worksop, an Edwardian semi-detached house.

But, as our excellent speaker, Amanda Neilson, revealed when she spoke to Doncaster Civic Trust in February, Mr. Straw's house is in fact no ordinary semi.



No 7, Blyth Grove, Worksop was built between 1905 and 1907, but in 1920 it was acquired by William Straw, a grocer and seed merchant. Initially it was rented out but in 1923 he had the property completely redecorated and then moved in together with his wife Florence and their two sons, William and Walter. William Straw the elder died in 1932 and from then onwards the family allowed nothing to be changed in the house. For example the father's hats and coats were left on their pegs in the hall. They are still there today. Florence died in 1939 and the two sons continued to live in the house. They had no television, radio, telephone or central heating. They did not have to live such a frugal existence for they were quite well off - they just chose to do so. Nevertheless they were not recluses. Indeed Walter continued to run the family business whilst William gave up teaching to look after the house.



In 1990 William, the last of the family, died at the age of 92 and left the contents of the house to the National Trust. The bequest was unexpected and William had never been a member. Fortunately the NT was able to acquire the house and the property next door and open Number 7 to the public rather than disperse the contents.

The house has not been decorated since the Straw family bought it in 1923. Carpets from that time were still down in the 1990s but some have been taken up and copied. Of particular interest was a staircase carpet with an Egyptian-type pattern which would have been the height of fashion at that time. We know that this cost £7:9s:6d because every receipt and every bill was kept by the family, so a great deal is known about them.

Other work has taken place in the house - the conserving of the wallpaper and the moving of some fragile leather exhibits, but the intention has been to show, as far as possible, a house as the NT found it.

We were shown photographs of most of the rooms - including the sitting room, the functional kitchen and bathroom and the bedrooms, one of which contained a display showing seed and tea measures brought from the shop. One particularly fascinating display was a store cupboard packed with provisions both old and new. It was fun to spot the names of the various brands.

Outside, the National Trust has replaced the original dilapidated greenhouse. It has also replaced the railings from the front wall. These were removed in the war, but fortunately a member of the family had sketched them and the National Trust was able to replicate them.



You don't expect to be entertained by a talk on an Edwardian semi, but this was fascinating. Indeed it is difficult, without photographs, to do it justice in this short article. However I am sure many Civic Trust members will be visiting in the months to come.

Remember you do need to book ahead.

## Peter Coote

### Tapestries Grace Pacey



Grace Pacey from Dodworth, Barnsley spoke to us in March about tapestries through the ages, their design, materials and fabrication. She had brought some samples showing the different quality or density of the woven material.

None of the members who attended will ever forget that tapestries are made from back-to-front, and side-to-side: the first so the ends of the threads will not show, and the second to allow a wide tapestry to be woven on a narrow loom, carried on rollers top and bottom. We enjoyed an instructive and entertaining talk as she showed slides of examples from Europe, particularly Belgium, together with the well-known examples at Hardwick Hall and Coventry Cathedral.



## Planning Matters - Recent Planning Applications

In this article we will keep you up to date with some of the applications that have been considered by the Trust's Planning and Conservation sub-committee in recent months.

In February we objected to an application for an extension to the Earl of Doncaster Hotel, on Bennetthorpe. Earlier, we had commented on a planned extension to the Rockingham Arms as well as the proposed new hotels at the Racecourse and Fishergate. Whilst all this activity would appear to reflect an increase in demand for accommodation, it is still important that we get buildings of good quality. Tourism and prosperity should go hand-in-hand with good design but sadly this is not happening.

The proposals to extend the Earl were particularly disappointing. We made a strong objection stating that its height of 5 storeys would make it completely out of character in the Bennetthorpe Conservation area.

We received news in February that JD Wetherspoon's application to rebuild 10-14 Hallgate had been refused. We had not objected to the application, but we had asked for timber sash windows to be installed.

Many non-members think the Trust objects to every application, but that just isn't so. We often decide not to comment; for example, when we studied an application in February for a detached house next to the Pinfold in Bentley, which is a listed building. Similarly, we made no comment on some new housing planned for 80 Doncaster Road, Hatfield. However, in most of these cases we just decide to 'let go' and it is regrettable that there are so few applications that we positively and readily welcome.

Sometimes we see applications that are a bit out of the ordinary. This was the case when there was an application in February to change 6 Bass Terrace into an art gallery. The property has been run-down so a renovation was welcomed, but we asked for permission to be granted only to the named applicant.

We have considered a number of applications for apartments. These buildings are often large and few seem to contribute positively to the environment.



In March we were appalled to see an application for 14 flats at 173 Thorne Rd, opposite the Infirmary, following demolition of the house. We objected to this application for many reasons: over-development of the site, out of scale, projecting in front of the existing building line, and over-dominant especially from Wentworth Road. There was also a lack of amenity space and likely disturbance to existing neighbouring residents.

In April we also commented that a four storey block of flats on Coopers Terrace (near Nether Hall Road) would be too high and suggested it should be reduced. However, also in April we raised no objections to 11 proposed apartments at 53-55 High Road Balby, where some attempt at integration had been made. These will be seen from the adjoining conservation area at Warmsworth.

There is still plenty of pressure on the two Bessacarr conservation areas. Indeed in the last three months we have perused five applications for new houses off or near Bawtry Road and expressed concerns about some of them. In some cases the applications were to build behind existing properties whilst others were new buildings, following demolition. However some of the planned houses were quite large, being too close to boundaries. The northernmost Bessacarr conservation area around St Wilfrid's Road and Bawtry Road is noted for its sylvan landscapes with houses often being unobtrusive. This quality is in serious danger of being lost, as all too often the newer bulkier properties arrive with high walls, large gates and extensive paved areas replacing trees and lawns.

The difficulty is that gardens are regarded by the Government as brownfield sites, and their development avoids building on open or green belt land. However, a national campaign now seeks to redefine these gardens to avoid what is known as 'garden-grabbing'. Each application could then be considered on its merits - something that we try to do in the Trust locally anyway. We welcome such legal changes.



Threats to conservation areas don't just come from demolition. In March we objected to a planned extension and an additional new house at 23 Town Moor Avenue. This attractive street remains largely unspoilt but the extension would have made the property look lop-sided. We suggested improvements including setting back the extension several feet from the frontage. Since then this latter application has been refused and the application for the house withdrawn.

Closer to town, in April we objected to an application for a change of use from financial services to shop at the rear of 83 Thorne Rd. This is not a shopping area and we felt that this kind of change would be inappropriate for that area.

## **The Planning and Conservation sub-committee**

## Conservation Areas Consultation Event

In February we viewed the results of an appraisal of the High Street and Market Place Conservation Areas by consultants John Thompson and Partners of Hatton Gardens, London. Displays of the work took place mainly in the Corn Exchange and shortly afterwards in the Design Centre in the Blue Building on High Street. This was a very thoughtful and comprehensive review which we welcomed. Of particular interest were the suggestions that the conservation areas be extended in five areas, to include some specific buildings in Silver Street, St Sepulchre Gate, Printing Office Street, Cleveland Street and Waterdale. We welcomed all these proposals as they included a number of buildings which certainly merit inclusion, including some rounded corner buildings, a particular town feature. We were asked for our comments on the report.

The consultants suggested that a number of unlisted buildings make a major contribution to the character of the conservation areas, for example the Scottish Bank, the Old George and the Free Press Chambers, amongst others. We agreed with their views and at their request sent a list of others worthy of inclusion. Our list included the Girls' High School, the Prudential Building at the Hall Gate/Silver Street junction, the Public Benefit building at the St Sepulchre Gate/Printing Office Street junction and the Central Hall, Printing Office Street.



The Central Hall, Printing Office Street with Art Nouveau detailing. It is also notable because it became the town's first cinema in 1906.



This handsome building was built in 1897 by the Public Benefit Boot Co. It stands on the corner of St. Sepulchre Gate and Printing Office Street.

We agreed with the consultants about these topics:

- Disappointing quality of shop signs which were often very poor.
- More control over windows and doors replacements was needed.
- Great deal of concern regarding high rise proposals for Church Way which will impact on the Market Place.
- Smarter market stalls needed, their design to be more in keeping with the market buildings.
- The quality of paving in High Street should be extended throughout the Conservation Areas.

**Peter Coote**

## **Members' News**

### **Roy Price**

We were saddened to receive news of Roy Price's death in early February. Roy had been an active member for over five years, and Membership Secretary for the last two. He brought the Trust into the twenty-first century, computerising the records and threatening to send us all e-mails. Born in Mexborough, he re-located to Canada, where he ran a business. On his return, he lived on Bennetthorpe, and had only recently moved to Wong Lane, Tickhill when he became ill last year. Roy and his wife Shirley had become a popular and regular part of the Trust scene. We send our condolences and best wishes to Shirley and his family.

### **Reporters Needed**

Members like to read a report of our talks, either because they couldn't make it, or as a reminder of a good speaker they particularly enjoyed. So that we can continue to run features in the newsletter, we need people who are prepared to write talks up to volunteer themselves. Please don't be afraid to come forward – we don't need a comprehensive review, just an impression of what you found most interesting, or amusing, or that the pictures were good. We take it for granted that Tina's cakes were good. So, how about it? We need more members to get involved. I can promise you our thanks and your name in the newsletter, but no pay I'm afraid.

### **Tickhill Parish Rooms**

In March we were pleased to see a progress report on the restoration of the Parish Rooms at Tickhill. The previous Chairman of our Planning and Conservation Team, Philip Mottram, is heavily involved in this project. This is a delightful building which is having improvements to the essential elements of any community building: access, kitchen and toilets. It will no doubt be worth all the effort once completed, when the building can return to more regular beneficial community use.

### **Ideas for Speakers**

Our speakers are selected and the talks arranged by Tina Anderson, with occasional help from other members of Committee. It is a big responsibility to have to please people all of the time, and members' own input would be helpful. If you have heard an interesting or new speaker talking on a Trust-related subject, please let Tina know; and if there's something that you think we should be hearing about, please tell us.

**Trust Topics is edited by:**

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## Who Lived There? (No. 4) : Briarcliffe, Thorne Road



In 1885 Brundell, Simmons and Brundell prepared plans for the development of St. Mary's Road for Alexander Henry Browne who owned much land in the Wheatley area. Alderman Joseph Firth Clark purchased the plot at the corner of Thorne Road and by 1887 was living in his new house, which he called Briarcliffe. He was related to Richard Ecroyd Clark, one of the town's leading public figures.

In 1876 R E Clark had built an imposing residence called Rutland house which faced the Town Field and had attractive views over the Field and the countryside to the south. J F Clark may have hoped to obtain similar views from his new house. Whereas R E Clark's house fronted directly on to the Town Field, J F Clark's site was separated from the Town Field by Thorne Road. However, by raising the floor level of his house several feet above footpath level and building a brick retaining wall at the back of the footpath, the impact of traffic on the highway was reduced.

Briarcliffe was a more modest house than Rutland House. It was probably designed by Brundell, Simmons and Brundell. The house on the west side of Briarcliffe was John Simmon's own house and was known as Wheatley House. The three houses next beyond Briarcliffe, on Thorne Road, were also designed by Brundell, Simmons and Brundell.

J F Clark was born in 1838, in a house in Frenchgate. He was 10 years younger than R E Clark. His grandfather had established a tannery in Low Fisher gate in 1776. He attended a school in St George Gate kept by a Mr Robinson; he moved to Ackworth School for four years and then to York Friends' School. J F Clark was sent to Nantwich to learn the drapery trade and six years later went to Kendal as a traveller and warehouseman for a firm of woollen manufacturers.

On the death of his father in 1867, when J F Clark was 29, he formed a partnership with his brothers and carried on the tannery in Fisher Gate. In 1870 J F Clark was elected Hon. Secretary to the Infirmary and Dispensary. In 1878 he was elected a Doncaster councillor for the West Ward and he became Chairman of the Sanitary Committee. In 1890 J F Clark was Mayor.

**Town Moor Avenue and Town Field from a postcard posted in 1926, but showing an earlier view, probably before 1914**





The land in the Town Field had originally been owned in strips. As they came on the market Alexander Henry Browne had been buying them up but the Corporation still held a number. J F Clark held discussions with A H Browne to see if an agreement could be reached to preserve the major part of the field as open space. No agreement was reached because of legal difficulties.

A H Browne died in 1894 and agreement was reached with his heir for the formation of Town Moor Avenue and the preservation of the Field to the west of the road as open space.

**Plaque at the top of Town Moor Avenue recording its opening in 1895 and A H Browne's contribution**

A newspaper article in 1911 referred to Alderman J F Clark as the most powerful personality in Doncaster. He was the leader of the ruling caste – a party composed of radicalism, non-conformity and teetotalism. He had the gift of public speech but his style was heavy and formal. He rarely smiled. He seemed to have no outdoor recreations but could sometimes be seen on his tricycle going to work. He was a strong man, an able man, the leader, guide and ruler of the bigger part of the Council.

He was president of both the Liberal Association and the local Gospel Temperance Union. The British School was founded by his father, who was treasurer, a post taken over by J F Clark on his father's death. He was Hon. Secretary of the Ragged Schools for 20 years, on the committee of the School of Art since its establishment, a promoter of the Temperance & Coffee House Co. and its venture the Glyn Hotel and Treasurer of YMCA for nearly 20 years. In 1911 he was elected chairman of the committee of the Doncaster Royal Infirmary.

He was chairman of the North Bridge Committee, and a keen supporter of the project. The commemorative plaque from the original bridge has been re-erected at the back of Tesco's



**North Bridge (New Bridge) from a postcard posted in 1916**

J F Clark died in 1918, aged 79. His daughter Hannah was elected in 1920, becoming Doncaster's first woman councillor. In 1936 J F Clark's widow died at Briarcliffe, aged 85.

## **Eric Braim**

## The Back Page - Views from the Twelfth Floor

For a recent trip to London we had once again booked a room at the Covent Garden Travelodge at the north end of Drury Lane. This year it has opened an annex, having taken over a 14 storey former office block just to the north. This has been over-clad in silver-coloured panels and refurbished to the pleasant but minimal Travelodge standards (1 room, 1 chair, 1 towel and usually only 1 night).



We were given a room on the 12th floor, and immediately forgot any shortcomings in the luxury department. Our room overlooked a church by Hawksmoor, with a most distinctive gleaming white stone spire – or was it a tower? It had been featured in the architectural press in late 2006 when it was re-opened after a magnificent £7 million restoration. I had no idea whereabouts in London it was.

St George, Bloomsbury, was built between 1720-31 and designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor who had been assistant to both Wren and Vanbrugh, with whom he designed Castle Howard, completed in 1712. St George's is said to have the most handsome Georgian portico in London, based on the Temple of Baalbek in the Lebanon. However, its most distinctive feature is described as a “pyramidal spire”, but this hardly does it justice.

It is a stepped pyramid which stands on a tower topped by a miniature classical temple. This was based on a Roman description of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, in Turkey. It was originally decorated with lions and unicorns at its base but these were removed in the 1870's.

For many years the church languished forgotten and decaying in Central London, but, following a donation of \$5 million from an American benefactor's estate and a matching amount from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the building has been restored, and the gigantic lions and unicorns have been re-carved in Portland Stone and the missing sculptures reinstated.

One end of our hotel corridor looked north over the British Museum. Most people will have seen the stunning glazed roof over the Great Court, right, opened for the Millennium.



In the centre of the space stands the circular reading room, now re-clad in Portland Stone. The roof is a really impressive piece of architecture – or is it engineering?



The popular Great Court space is definitely architecture, but not many of its visitors will have had the chance to see it from above, where the new roof has a slightly inflated appearance, a bit like a doughnut.

Archie Sinclair

# Doncaster Civic Trust – Summer Visits 2007

## Booking Forms

Please enclose remittance and make cheques payable to “**Doncaster Civic Trust**”.  
Also, please add your telephone number in case we have to contact you.

-----  
Aldby Park, York: Wednesday 13th June 2007

Return to Mrs S Burley, 17 The Oval, Bessacarr, Doncaster DN4 5LJ by **6th June 2007**.

I enclose £..... for.....places at £18.00 each

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone no.....  
-----

Newby Hall, Ripon: Wednesday 11th July 2007

Return to John Holmes, 53 Thorne Road, Doncaster DN1 2EX by **4th July 2007**.

I enclose £.....for.....places at £20.00 each

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone no.....  
-----

Stamford & Burghley House: Wednesday 8th August 2007

Return to Mrs S Barnsdale, 16 Bawtry Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster DN4 5NR by **1st August 2007**.

I enclose £.....for.....places at £21.00 each

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone no.....