



TRUST TOPICS

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Contents

Page 2

Aldby Park
A Visitor's View

Page 3

Forthcoming Events 2008
Members' Page

Page 4

Planning Matters

Page 5

Local History Fair

Pages 6 & 7

Finale for the Gaumont?

Pages 8 & 9

Annual General Meeting
Doncaster's Future

Pages 10 & 11

Wentworth Castle
Gardens

Page 12

Wothorpe House

Finale for the Gaumont?



Decorative Thirties



Plain Ugly Naughties

Doncaster Civic Trust : Registered Charity No. 508674 : Founded in 1946
Hon. Sec : E L Braim, 2 Lawn Road, Doncaster DN1 2JF Tel : 01302 367512

Aldby Park – a visitor’s view

The first outing of the season was on June 14 to Aldby Park, which is just north of York at Buttercrambe. With it being a short journey, we made it just an afternoon trip. We needed to arrive later than planned so our coach driver went on a “mystery tour” circuit, tantalizing us with the entrance to the Shopping Outlet, which I feel would have been a far better way to waste our time.



We eventually arrived in drizzle to find that Mr and Mrs Winn were hosting a lunch party which was still at the desert stage so we were asked if we could amuse ourselves first in the garden.



So, with mac’s on, and umbrellas up, Paul Andrews, the sole gardener, showed us round. He clearly has a big job on his hands with 15 acres to look after. We saw first the Mounds and the dry moat now covered in shrubs where King Edwin and Queen Ethelburga built their castle around 600 AD. There are river walks and terraces but I found the planting unexciting, being an herbaceous lover, and the wet grass did not help.

It was with some relief that we arrived back at the front of the house. Early Georgian, it was built in 1726 by John Brewster Darley, no relation to our (brewer) Darley benefactor.

With lunch cleared away, Mrs Winn welcomed us in the lovely entrance hall. In 1939 the family had to move out for the army and after the war had bursting pipes and dry rot, standing empty for over 20 years. However, in 1964, Mr Winn and his first wife moved in and began the restoration of the house and garden. Tragedy struck a few years ago when a fire broke out in the hall chimney and did a lot of damage to the East Wing. Many of the contents were saved, including a famous painting of the racehorse Darley Arabian. The fire had the effect of there being a “doing up” of many main rooms and bedrooms.

Mrs Winn said we could go anywhere. So we had a good nose round bedrooms full of everyday things. We went up to the top floor which was in the course of re-decoration and will be lovely. This is a real family home, not open to the public, so all the more interesting.

Tea was served in the hall, the cakes being snapped up, so luckily Mrs Winn had a reserve plate of scones for those who had been exploring the attics.

We found an interesting book showing the former family seat in Ireland, Lyons House. It was sold in 1961 for £100,000 to the man who owns Ryanair. How much is it worth now?

So 38 of us enjoyed the afternoon. A pity about the rain, but little did we know that worse was to come!

Sue Burley

Photos: Philip Mottram, Peter Coote

Forthcoming Events

All these events will take place at Hall Cross Upper School, Thorne Road

Thursday 17 January 2008 at 7.30 pm

Richard Bell on "The Sand House"

Thursday 21 February 2008 at 7.30 pm

Malcolm Barnsdale on "Old Doncaster"

Thursday 13 March 2008 at 7.30 pm

Mrs Susan Cunliffe-Lister on "Burton Agnes Hall"

Members' Page

Thank you to the members who braved the cold, both outside and inside to attend the buffet evening on 12 December. Fortunately, the things that were within our control: the food, drink and the p.a. system were excellent. Well done Tina, Sue, John, Malc, Mairad and all who helped.

You will notice that Aldby Park appears again in this issue. This time members get the intended full story of the visit from Sue Burley, not just descriptions of the architecture lifted by the editor from a book. Sue was on one of her many travels when the last newsletter deadline loomed.

John Hoare has sent us an "extra" from the Burghley House visit for this issue. It seems he had gone "off-piste" from the tour and discovered something very interesting - a ruined house on the western edge of the park. My thanks to all our contributors.

Annual Subscriptions : Reminder

Subscriptions for the year 2007-2008 were due on 1 September 2007. Set out below are the current membership subscriptions.

Please pay any outstanding subs. to the Membership Secretary:
Mrs J M Smith at 43 Norborough Road, Wheatley, Doncaster DN2 4AT.

Thank you.

The annual subscription for membership of the Trust is £2.00 per person.

The joint annual membership for two members at the same address is £3.00

Life membership of the Trust is £18.00 per person, or £27.00 for lifetime partners.

Trust Topics is edited by:

Archie Sinclair, 43 Ellers Avenue, Bessacarr, Doncaster DN4 7DY

e-mail: sinclairs@e-malin.freemove.co.uk

tel: 01302 538225

Planning Matters

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee meets every month to consider expressing our views on planning applications, mainly those in the conservation areas. Here are a few of our recent decisions:

We objected to an application to tip builder's waste on Doncaster Common, inside the race course at the north-east end. Such an operation is unacceptable on a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We also requested that some already dumped material be removed.



We found the application to erect boundary railings to the low stone boundary wall at Christ Church to be welcome and its design satisfactory.

It is considered important that the setting of this restored historic building is better protected against anti-social and criminal behaviour.



The work has already begun on the repair of the iron railings and their ashlar stone base around the west end of the churchyard.

The Friends' group is to be congratulated on initiating these works and winning the funding to carry them out.

We objected to a proposal to build two additional storeys to 1-3 Earls Court, Roman Road. This would mean two additional two bedroom apartments on a 3rd and 4th floor. The existing modern flats integrate well with the scale of the adjoining properties, yet this would be lost under this proposal. In the last edition of Trust Topics we were critical of the height of the extension to the Earl of Doncaster. It is essential that matters are not made worse in this important Conservation area.



One of our concerns is the loss of trees that may result from new building proposals. This has been an issue in Bessacarr in recent times where we see applications for additional houses as well as replacements to a higher density. Such was the case in a recent application for a new house on Bawtry Road where we expressed concern about loss of trees and the need for new planting.

We considered a listed building consent application to form openings in the party wall at 7 South Parade, to enable access to No 8. Both are important late eighteenth-century buildings, shown left, even with the alterations to the right-hand unit. However, we have raised no objections in this case. The application should hopefully secure a continued use for both properties.

We raised no objections to an application to convert a former cinema in Thorne to 17 apartments. Finding new uses for buildings like this can be problematical, and such buildings are significant landmarks in our outlying towns and villages.

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee

Local History Fair – Saturday 10 November 2007



This year's Fair was held at The College for the Deaf on Leger Way. Previously these events have been held at the Museum and Art Gallery on Chequer Road over two days. We were apprehensive about whether this new venue would attract many people, but we needn't have worried. We had a very good day with a number of publications sold as well as gaining several new members.

Once again our photographic display stand proved to be very popular. The 'In Style' series on doors and windows in the town attracted the most attention as well as displays on Victorian decorative brickwork and Edwardian Doncaster. Over the years it is really pleasing that we have been able to build up a large collection of high quality displays, mostly featuring the photographs and research of our secretary, Eric Braim.

The event was very enjoyable from the Trust's point of view as it is always interesting to hear people's views on the town and conservation in general. Although none of our helpers were free to listen to the talks, we heard good reports about all of them, including Richard Bell's Sand House. Richard will be speaking to the Trust in the New Year. Another speaker was Julie Harrup who spoke on Cusworth Hall, a talk which we heard at the Trust's Buffet Evening a couple of years ago.

One of the enjoyable parts of the day is meeting friends old and new on the other stands. There were a number of local village groups present including the Barnburgh and Harlington Local History Group who had some interesting photographs on the area as well as leaflets such as the Cat and Man legend. Among the other stands were the Doncaster Minster, Friends of the Grand Theatre, and the Doncaster and District Family History Society, as well as an excellent bookstall courtesy of Brian Elliott.

Adjoining our stand was the Doncaster Archaeological Society who had an excellent PowerPoint display on aspects of the town's history. We might be able to put some of our photographs into a similar format.

On a final note it was pleasing that we had so many volunteers this year to help on the stand. We would like to thank everyone who helped, as well as the 'reserves' who stood by to help if needed.



Peter Coote

Finale for the Gaumont?

Members may have seen a piece in the Doncaster Free Press about the possible closure and sale of this building, which has been known as the Odeon Cinema since 1987.

In 1920, the site was re-developed with a new building called the South Parade Cinema. Its entrance was through a white, columned portico in a classical style on a semi-circular plan. The rest of the building was brickwork, and included some tall neo-Georgian sliding sash windows. In 1922, this building was re-named the Majestic and later in the 1920's it became part of the Gaumont circuit.



c.1921: The roof line of the previous building still visible

The 1920 building was demolished in 1933, and its larger, more modern replacement, the Gaumont Palace Theatre, was opened on 3rd September 1934. It had 2,020 seats and a full stage and fly tower. The new building was designed in the moderne or art deco style. The bulk of the building was brick, with a frontage in artificial stone, probably "Empire Stone", a material used at the time for Marks and Spencer's new stores. Some walls were faced in contrasting black ceramic.

The first floor had a tall curved window which lit a large restaurant. On either side were dramatic projecting fins, about three storeys high, which carried the Gaumont name. Against these strong verticals were the elegant horizontal lines of the large curved entrance canopy, a full-width balcony at high level and a canopy down the side to shelter the queuing customers.



1950's: "Gaumont Palace" above the doors. All men in hats!

In 1968, its owners decided to refurbish the building and modernise the façade. The fins were removed, the large bow window covered over with profiled metal sheets and the canopy replaced by a crude illuminated box fascia to display the current attractions. All traces of style and distinctiveness were obliterated. Think Owen Owen, later Binns, Baxter Gate, for a similar treatment.

Today December 2007





In 1973, it was converted to a three-screen cinema. It had a change of name to Odeon in 1987. The pale frontage sheeting was painted dark brown, with go-faster stripes, and then re-painted blue. The latest lettering stands above the canopy, with its old position high on the cladding badly painted over.

We know that the building has lost many of its architectural features along the side, and it would be very optimistic to think that much can now remain of its original front elevation. Whenever a "covered" building is revealed, it is often found to have suffered terrible damage to its fabric in the process of fixing the cladding and rails.



Fly tower, stage door, dressing rooms and large load-in door at stage level



Decorative brickwork
Greek key string course



Staircase window provides strong vertical feature in horizontal design

A campaign has been suggested to try and get the building listed. Because of the high number of damaging alterations, we think it would be unlikely to be "spot-listed". There are very few "deco"(rative) features left. It would be great to see the frontage uncovered and restored, but a listing wouldn't secure its restoration, only prevent its demolition or further harmful changes. It is already protected from unauthorized demolition by being situated in a Conservation Area.

Archie Sinclair

Annual General Meeting 8 November 2007



Members supported the event well



Jeff Prior- Doncaster's Renaissance Man

The evening's business was completed successfully, even though the Hon. Secretary Eric Braim was not well enough to attend. Fortunately, his immaculate minute book allowed the Chairman to deliver the minutes of last year's AGM.

Treasurer Lyn Cowles explained how we had been obliged to change our auditors at very short notice, and had returned to Allotts. This action by Chairman and Treasurer was ratified by the meeting and Allotts were appointed the Trust's auditors for the coming year, subject to market-testing some comparable local firms.

The Trust's officers and committee members were elected unchanged.

It was suggested by the Chairman and Treasurer that the Trust needed to ensure that member records were accurate and up to date. It was proposed that information be gathered via a future newsletter to allow a digital database to be compiled. Members agreed.

A member raised the issue that membership subscriptions were unrealistically low, and had not been increased for many years. In a straw poll a substantial majority of members agreed that a modest increase would be acceptable. The Chairman said that members' costs like newsletters and their postage should be funded by subscriptions and not from the investment income. This should more properly be spent on educational and charitable activities.



Doncaster's Future: Design and Planning: Jeff Prior

Jeff Prior is a Principal Planning Officer with Doncaster Council and has been working on its renaissance since Doncaster was designated as one of the first six Renaissance Towns in 2001 by Yorkshire Forward, the regional development agency

We were taken through the progress that has been made both nationally and locally since the first important document, "Towards an Urban Renaissance", was produced in 1999 by the Urban Task Force led by architect (Lord) Richard Rogers. Since then Cabe, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, English Partnerships and the Government itself have produced a great deal of design guidance. This has not just concerned itself with architecture or buildings, but more with the art of place-making, proper urban design. Some call it urbanism.



In 2001 Doncaster underwent an unprecedented programme of workshops and public consultation with internationally-renowned urban design consultants led by Urban Initiatives. From the initial weekend a Town Team was formed, and further workshops took place. In 2002 the Town Team produced a Charter, with the consultants, and in 2003 Doncaster's Renaissance Masterplan was published. This was a serious, urban design based plan to guide the town's development for the next 25 years.

Doncaster Renaissance Masterplan showing new development to the north

The plan had a number of key objectives. Some were to address earlier planning mistakes, for instance by re-connecting the Station and St George's Minster better with the town and its activities, and by developing Church Way and Trafford Way as a great street, like a continental city, rather than a sterile urban by-pass just for traffic. New development was proposed to the north of the town centre, to make better use of the poorly-used land on both sides of the wide canal. The waterfront close to St George's, once the wharf for the canal barges and "Tom Puddings", would be a mixed use area under-pinned by educational uses, and including waterfront apartments.

From the Town Team, the Mayor's Design Panel was formed. This group assessed designs for new development before or after planning applications were made. The Design Panel advised on the selection of the design for the DEC, Doncaster Education City, or Hub. This was the first waterfront site to come forward, and its completion gave confidence in the Masterplan's proposals.



Doncaster Education City, from the Minster

The Great Street aim has resulted in the new Primark actually having display windows facing Church Way, and the approval of a new hotel on Low Fishergate, which has now started on site.



The Blue Building, High Street

The Town Team and Design Panel were given a new home for their meetings in the Blue Building, on High Street, which had the Doncaster Design Centre on the first floor. In addition, projects were carried out with local schools and universities who were able to use the venue both to work and display their schemes.

The next big projects will be planning for the Minster Quarter, an area from North Bridge to St George's Bridge, the Cultural and Civic Quarter at Waterdale and looking at the future of St Sepulchre Gate West.

Jeff illustrated how a failing public housing scheme at Wellgate, Conisbrough, with an inappropriate design close to the Castle and Conservation Area, had been cleared and replaced with a much more interesting, varied and attractive development for a housing association. He also showed how the new frontage of Primark, facing the Market, had been successfully changed through a process of suggestion and negotiation by the local authority planners.

Archie Sinclair

Wentworth Castle Gardens - Don Davidson 11 October 2007



The Palladian Front

Our first talk of this winter's programme was about the restoration of the gardens at Wentworth Castle. It soon became clear that the gardens were but a comparatively small part of a huge project to rescue the house and grounds of a very important, if comparatively unknown, site.

The works have cost over £15 million, of which £10.5 million has come from the Heritage Lottery Fund, often called HLF.

Don, a trustee and Barnsley resident, explained that many people are confused by the two Wentworth houses. The problem is that Wentworth Castle is neither a castle, nor at Wentworth. It's at Stainborough, near Barnsley, just west of the M1. Wentworth Woodhouse is actually at Wentworth, which is in Rotherham Borough.

Thomas Wentworth expected to inherit the grand house (Wentworth Woodhouse is said to have the longest façade in England) and, when he didn't, he set about acquiring an estate in the area with an existing house where he could develop a grand country house and grounds to rival the other branch of the family. The original house of 1670 gained first a baroque east wing in 1710 for Thomas, the 1st Earl of Strafford, then a Palladian south and west front in 1760 for his son William, the 2nd Earl. This huge house and its immediate area were sold by the Vernon-Wentworths to Barnsley Council in 1948 and became a teacher training college. It now houses Northern College, well known for its adult education. After that sale the surrounding parkland continued to be held by the estate.



The Ha-ha and the Earl's Seat

Despite winning two separate national Civic Trust Awards, the site was becoming very run down, with outbuildings now derelict, the gardens going wild and their structures deteriorating. It was decided that a trust should be formed. The estate became liable for death duties and gifted its land to the Trust in lieu of tax. Barnsley Council also transferred its land to the Trust's ownership. The Trust's status meant that it was eligible for HLF and other grants. A plan was devised to open the parkland, gardens and certain buildings to the public, full-time. Buildings would be restored and rebuilt, and the main house would be repaired and cleaned, with its roof re-covered in new lead. A new route through the parkland was made and the Strafford Gate, a listed building, was repaired and rebuilt in a slightly different place to allow the new road to go by.



Spectacular lime avenue, Lady Lucy's Walk



The recently replanted Union Jack Garden
The park and gardens are the only grade one scheduled garden in South Yorkshire; Wentworth Castle is a grade one listed building; and there are a total of 26 listed buildings, structures and monuments on the estate. All the proposals had to be scrutinised carefully by English Heritage.

The site was opened to the public earlier this year with the majority of the work complete. The 50 acre gardens were overgrown and some parts have been re-planted after ruthless clearance. Don said "it looked like the Somme", with just bare soil and a few tree trunks. The wet weather this year has helped the new planting to get away and a full complement of staff is now managing the gardens, together with volunteers.

The Long Barn now houses the visitor centre, with café, toilets and shop. The first floor can be used for weddings and functions, and is reached by a lift, which also gives access to the restored Chapel and the start of the route into the Gardens.



The Long Barn now the Visitor Centre



Stainborough Castle, shown left, a folly castle at the top of the hill known as Stainborough Lowe – more confusion – has been consolidated and a new steel spiral staircase leads to the a viewing platform at the top, 600 ft above sea level. There are panoramic views over the tree tops and there is the wonderful sight of 500 acres of historic parkland and unspoilt countryside for miles.

Don told us about the monuments and particularly the Sun Monument dedicated to Lady Mary Wortley-Montague who introduced inoculation against smallpox in 1720 from Turkey. It was very rare indeed in the early C18 to commemorate the achievements of a woman.



Good financial management has enabled the Trust to undertake the re-building of the triple archway called Archer's Hill Gate, which has been supported by a timber framework for years. The Conservatory, which was the unsuccessful finalist in the Restoration series on BBC TV, still remains to be brought back into use. The Trust is campaigning to raise funds for its repair.

The Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Trust is now raising the profile of this hidden gem of a site, a jewel in South Yorkshire's crown. Few people are aware of it, as access and facilities have been virtually non-existent until this year. The recent changes have been stunning, and it deserves to become a major historic visitor attraction.

Archie Sinclair

Wothorpe House



During the enjoyable visit to Stamford and Burghley house, I explored the western edge of Burghley Park to find the ruined house built soon after 1600 for Lord Burghley's son, Thomas Cecil, Earl of Exeter. It was delightfully described as for Cecil "to retire to while his great house of Burghley was a-sweeping". Such smaller properties on a great estate were not uncommon at the period as a private retreat for the grandee and no doubt had many uses. I think that the Hunting Lodge in the woods above Chatsworth must have served a similar purpose.

Wothorpe has been ruined since the 18th century. It is of a particularly compact design with four corner towers. The house was cross-shaped, originally projecting beyond the towers, with a centrally-placed entrance porch. Everything about it is quite unlike Burghley House. According to Nicolas Pevsner the nearest house in style is Barlborough Hall in north Derbyshire.

I find a curious reflection of the style of the towers in the turrets of some English Baroque buildings, like Nicholas Hawksmoor's St Georges-in-the-East in Limehouse, London, of 1729, pictured right. Is this just my imagination or do architects consciously or unconsciously develop motifs from earlier generations?



John Hoare