



TRUST TOPICS

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An Edwardian photograph of the top of Albion Place taken some time after no. 4, far right, had been re-modelled

The Making of Albion Place

The varied and interesting history
of its 14 properties

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Member of



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Nostell Priory

John Hoare

Thursday 15 March 2012



Members enjoyed a very well (digitally) illustrated talk by John Hoare as he took us on a journey around this wonderful house, its history, contents and setting.

The magnificent Palladian house known as Nostell Priory has stood on the site since its construction began in 1733. Sir Rowland Winn, 4th Baronet, commissioned the 19 year old architect James Paine to design the first house in the North of England to be directly influenced by the work of Italian architect Andrea Palladio. Hence the building's "Palladian" style.

The Priory which gave its name to the house had been established in the twelfth century and continued until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, when it was confiscated. It was bought in 1654 by Roland Winn, whose family are still the occupiers.

Although Paine lived locally for eight years while work was in progress, his designs were never fully completed. When the 5th Baronet succeeded in 1765, he called in Robert Adam who was to work at Nostell for over ten years. Adam planned to extend the house to the north and south with three-storey wings each with a tall pedimented portico, to balance the main east elevation. In the event, only the grand north wing was built, far more impressive than Paine's pavilions to the south. Adam did see his designs for the stable block implemented. These buildings have been repaired and converted into the Courtyard Café and Shop which opened this year.

Nostell is celebrated for the quality of its interiors. The decoration is mostly the work of the renowned Robert Adam and the house has some of his most inspired work, particularly in the decorative plasterwork. The finest craftsmen of the day were brought in, the best known being the successful cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale, who made most of the specially-designed furniture. There are a number of significant pieces of furniture designed by Adam in the neo-classical style, a striking innovation at the time. Robert Adam is credited with its introduction in this country.

The famous Dolls' House dates from 1735, making it contemporary with the building of the house for the 4th Baronet. It was furnished and decorated by his wife Lady Susanna Henshaw, and is possibly the work of the young Thomas Chippendale.



Far left: Stable Block & Courtyard

Near left: Dolls' House

Right: Obelisk Lodge in the Park



Members' News

Winter Programme 2012 - 2013

All events will take place at St Peter's RC Church Hall, Chequer Road.

All on Thursdays at 7.30 pm

18 October Christopher Margrave on "Clumber Park's Walled Garden"

15 November **Annual General Meeting**
and Colin Bycroft on "The Development of St Sepulchre Gate"

Note the New Date for the Buffet, now Thursday 13th December

13 December **Christmas Buffet Supper**
and Archie Sinclair on "Planning for Barnsley's Dickie Bird statue"

2013

24 January Peter Young on "The History of an Antiques Auctioneer"

21 February Malcolm Barnsdale on more "Images of Old Doncaster"

21 March Keith Thomas on "Houses and Gardens of Derbyshire"

18 April **Members' Forum**

South Yorkshire Archaeology Day **Saturday 24 November 2012**

This annual event will take place at the Showroom Cinema, Sheffield, directly opposite the Railway Station, and run from 10am until 4.30pm. There will be eight 30 minute talks about archaeology in South Yorkshire, including two sites in the Doncaster area. The cost is £10, or £5 for concessions, which includes tea or coffee, and biscuits, in the morning and afternoon breaks, but not lunch.

We have a limited number of programmes/booking forms, which will be available at our October meeting. Alternatively, you could get more information, including the option of ordering lunches, by calling 0114 273 4223 or make a telephone booking and card payment on 0114 273 4791.

Talking Newspapers for the Blind

The Trust recently participated in an audio magazine for the 'Talking Newspapers for the Blind'. In addition to the fortnightly 'newspaper', the audio magazine is sent out several times a year to local blind and partially-sighted people. It covers a variety of subjects. Trust member Peter Coote was interviewed for around 20 minutes on the history of buildings in Hall Gate and High Street. Amongst those discussed were Pronuptia, the Subscription Rooms, the Mansion House, and, just beyond High Street, the Trust's logo building, Clock Corner.

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The Story of Albion Place

Albion Place consists of 14 properties located between Regent Terrace and Bennetthorpe, facing Hall Cross Hill. Their history is varied and interesting.



View of the top of Albion Place taken before no. 4 was remodelled.

Origins

The area where the houses now stand was once a field known as White Close. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the land was purchased by Thomas Elston, a tinsmith who traded from Goose Hill in the Market Place. He also owned other properties including two houses on Hall Gate which now form The Goose public house. By 1812 Thomas Elston was leasing White Close to a John Wright who used it as a paddock. Part of its limestone boundary wall still remains at the back of the first few houses of Albion Place. Thomas Elston died in 1818 leaving White Close to his eldest son, also called Thomas who began to sell the paddock as building lots. The moment was opportune. Houses at the smart southern entrance to the town were in demand at this time. South Parade was nearly complete whilst, nearby, the building of Regent Terrace had just commenced. Elston's land was the next available open space to the south and was also pleasantly situated for new houses. It adjoined the Town Field with uninterrupted views. In front was the main road to London and beyond the road was Hall Cross Hill which had been made into a public walk. Adjoining the Hill on the far side was Elmfield House, a mansion standing in its own grounds.

The First Houses



1 & 2 Albion Place, Springfield House, and 3, Hall Cross Chambers

It is likely that the first four houses at the top of the Hill were completed by 1819. The purchaser of some of the land was Edward Merryweather who may have built one or more of the houses. Their addresses were 'near' or 'opposite Hall Cross Hill' as the name Albion Place did not come into use until around 1829. We will now look at each one of these buildings in turn:

Nos. 1 and 2 The first property at the top of the hill, now no. 1 Albion Place, was originally built as two three-storey town houses which were probably once similar in appearance to no. 3 next door.

One of the earliest occupiers of what became no. 2 Albion Place was John Collinson, a partner in Mason and Collinson, a firm of solicitors who acted as agents for the sale of the land for development. Some time during the mid 1880s both nos. 1 and 2 Albion Place were acquired by Richard Hepworth, co-founder of the grocery firm, Hodgson and Hepworth. He knocked the two houses into one, completely re-modelling the interiors and creating a new frontage. He named the newly created 15-roomed house 'Springfield'. The Population Census of 1891 reveals why Richard Hepworth needed such a large house. His wife had died by this time but the house accommodated his seven children, a housekeeper and two servants.

Today the house still looks very convincingly Victorian. Both the front doorway and the bay windows are elaborately carved in stone and the front boundary walls with gate-piers are still in place. It is an impressive and successful composition. However, the origins of the house may still be seen in the earlier brickwork at the side and back of the building. A Georgian window also remains.

During Hepworth's time here Hodgson and Hepworth developed rapidly. A new store on St. Sepulchre Gate was built around the time of his purchase of Albion Place. In 1889 the company introduced a horse-drawn bus service which ran every 30 minutes to various locations in the vicinity, including Bennetthorpe and Hexthorpe. By the end of the century they had seven local branches and employed 200 people. Disaster struck in 1901 when the St Sepulchre Gate store burnt down but new and up-to-date premises were soon built on a nearby site. The firm became one of the most popular and well-known in Doncaster. Throughout, Richard Hepworth remained at Springfield House, eventually moving to Thorne Road in around 1921.

It would never be used as a private house again. It was firstly occupied by an asphalt company and then by the Royal Infirmary for their ophthalmic department. By 1932 it had become a hotel, a role it fulfilled for many years and being known eventually as The Springfield Hotel. It was probably during this time that dormer windows were added and it was re-roofed. It was run latterly by William and Barbara Bond. In modern times it has returned to office use, occupied since 1973 by accountancy firms, initially by Tansley Witt and Co. and currently by A. Wigglesworth and Co. Ltd.

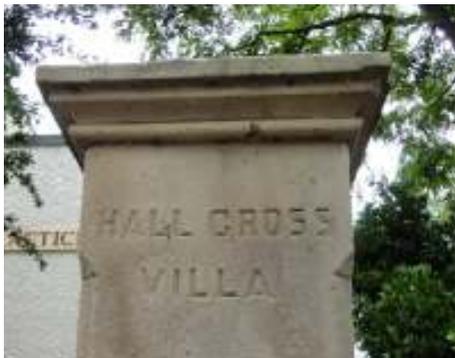
No 3 Albion Place was probably added to the first two houses shortly after their construction. It is listed Grade 2 as it largely retains its early nineteenth century appearance as a three-storey town house. Throughout much of the Victorian period and up to 1923 this house was owned by Ann Earnshaw, described as a property owner, and then later by her daughter. Commercial use, initially by Durnford and Tomlinson, mining engineers, commenced in the 1920s and has continued to this day. It is known as Hall Cross Chambers, a name it acquired in about 1932 when various firms had offices there. In post-war years occupiers included Merryweather, Corbett and Dawson. The current owner is Brian Merritt.

No. 4 Albion Place, which has been occupied by the Burns Medical Practice for many years, was once a Regency villa, but its appearance has been much altered. It was probably built in 1819 by which time it had been acquired by George Hall, a corn merchant. In February 1820 further land adjoining the house was advertised for sale as building ground. Instead, it was added to the grounds of the villa, thus making a much larger garden. Today this land now serves as access to the surgery.



Hall Cross Villa 4 Albion Place

In 1851 the house was purchased by William Henry Palmer, a solicitor, who lived there until 1899. It was probably Mr Palmer who called the house 'Hall Cross Villa', a name which can still be seen carved into one of the gate piers (below left).



The Villa's name carved on the gate pier



The Villa's original Regency façade

In 1899 the villa was sold to Frederick Brightmore, a local councillor who as Mayor four years previously had presided over the opening of a new road, Town Moor Avenue, on the other side of the Town Field. He died in 1904 but his widow continued to live there and in 1906 she embarked on a re-modelling of the property, giving it the appearance of a modern house of the time.

Unfortunately its original Regency façade (lower left) with its bow windows was destroyed in the process. The new frontage had canted bays on two floors and was perhaps meant to copy the style of Richard Hepworth's house. Surprisingly, the front door was blocked up and the entrance moved to the side. The frontage was then rendered. It was designed by Harold Arnold & Son, Doncaster's largest building contractor.

Today the house looks Edwardian but a study of the roofline reveals its origins. In 1924 it was converted into a surgery for Drs. Goode and Marron, a use which has continued to this day, although residential use for a doctor also continued for most of the century.

Hall Cross Cottage, 5 Albion Place

In June 1819 Thomas Elston leased 500 square yards of land to John Gilson, who had just retired as landlord of the Black Boy, a coaching inn on Frenchgate. Gilson built what is now no. 5 Albion Place on the site, but sadly he did not live long enough to enjoy his retirement home. In March 1820 it was advertised for sale as 'a very desirable and compact dwelling house'.

In 1852 the house was rented by Henry Tilbury, an artist. In January 1854 he was advertising himself as a drawing tutor and stating that he was 'a member of the Academy of Painters, Antwerp, and Professor of Drawing and Painting, London and Edinburgh etc, etc'. The lessons were given in Hallgate but he gave his address as Hall Cross Cottage, the first record we have of its name being used. We know something of Tilbury's work because two of his paintings are in Rotherham Art Gallery.

Hall Cross Cottage 5 Albion Place



In 1855 Hall Cross Cottage was sold to the Hunter family who owned it until 1907. The cottage was probably altered during their ownership. Canted bay windows were installed and it received a new façade in yellow brick.

The fanlight over the front door, which is recessed, is, I believe, original. Today the house has a late Georgian appearance again as glazing bars have been introduced into the Victorian windows on the ground floor.

In May 1907 the Hunters sold the cottage to Samuel Balmforth who had jointly bought Parkinson's the confectioners and butterscotch manufacturers from the Parkinson family in 1893. During his time at the cottage the business expanded rapidly. It was Balmforth who introduced the famous café/restaurant at the shop, and built a new factory at Wheatley in 1913. By 1921 he was living in a much grander house, Axholme House on Thorne Road, and he sold Hall Cross Cottage.

In around 1923 the cottage was purchased by William Plant, a draper. His father had owned a drapery business and had also lived at Albion Place in the 1860s and 70s. The son joined his father's business and by 1923 they had three branches in the town. He died in 1955 although the firm continued with the last branch being in Scot Lane.

The cottage was then acquired by Ella Thrush. Her late husband had been a plumber, and the origins of his firm, Henry Thrush, could be traced back to the early nineteenth century. Mrs Thrush described her cottage in 1958 as 'one of the nicest residential properties in the area'. It continued in residential use until 1996 when it was advertised as 'a delightful four bedroomed house'. However it was given permission to be used as offices and is today occupied by the Women's Institute.

Next door to Hall Cross Cottage, a property called Albion Cottage was built in 1820. It was demolished in the nineteenth century but it probably gave its name to Albion Place.

The Later Houses and the Conservation Dispute

Beyond Albion Cottage the rest of the land remained unsold for a while but in about 1825 it was all purchased by John Burgin, a Hatfield builder. He proposed to build houses but he wanted to remove some trees which formed part of a boulevard. The Corporation was unhappy with the proposal as it was proud of all the trees which helped to make the southern entrance to the town so attractive. Thus began one of the town's earliest conservation disputes. Burgin was determined to remove the trees and told the Corporation that if they didn't agree to his request he would build 'paltry houses for poor people'. A petition from the townspeople was presented to the Corporation stating that the trees beautified the town and so it seemed that the matter was settled. Unfortunately Burgin kept his word and began to build the cottages. The Corporation felt that was unacceptable and had to reverse their decision. They were still clearly distrustful of Burgin as this order from the Courtiers of July 1828 makes clear:

'John Burgin having proceeded rapidly in the erection of houses as good as those occupied by Mrs. Earnshaw (*Number 1*) and Mr. Collinson (*Number 2*) it was resolved that the last order of the Corporation on the subject of the trees in front to be rescinded. Resolved 7 trees be taken down immediately Mr. Tyas pledging himself that the houses shall be as good as those occupied by Mrs. Earnshaw and Mr. Collinson and that the cottages building be taken down.'



The fine three storey town houses that were erected are now numbers 9 to 14 Albion Place

They are very elegant with ornamental cast iron balconies which match those on Regent Terrace. All are listed Grade 2. Some of the houses also retain their original front doors with cut-away panels (below left), a design which was used by architect William Hurst elsewhere, so it was he who almost certainly designed them. Hurst designed many buildings of the period including Christ Church and the Subscription Rooms.



The distinctive panelled doors



The cottages at 7 and 8 Albion Place

Adjoining these houses are two cottages (above right). These were also built by Burgin and may have been left from his original plans, although they are certainly not 'paltry'. They have fine doorcases in a design similar to the other houses, a feature probably added by Hurst to integrate them. No doubt they had simple Georgian windows but all these were replaced in the Victorian period. Since then the windows at number 8 have been replaced again.

All these houses changed hands rapidly throughout the Victorian period as the Population Census demonstrates. They were occupied by relatively well-to-do people, with most of them having live-in servants. It is interesting to note a few examples of the occupations and professions of the residents at this time. In 1851 there was a solicitor living at no. 9, whilst next door, no. 10, was the home of architect William Moffatt. He had entered into a partnership with William Hurst in 1838 and after 1844 continued the practice on his own. He was involved in the development of Regent Square. In 1861 the GNR Plant manager in charge of 1200 men lived at No 12. Ten years later a coffee planter's wife lived at the same house. Next door, no. 13 was the home of a retired East India Co official. By 1881 occupants included a retired fruit dealer at no. 9 and a Wesleyan minister at no. 10. By 1911 no. 13 was occupied by a Dr. Walker but it is not clear if this was also a surgery at that point. A surgery was built at the back in 1919.

Between the wars the first commercialisation took place with no. 9 becoming offices for mining engineers in 1932. After World War 2 more changes occurred including the conversion of nos. 10 and 11 into flats. No. 12 became the Ivy Mount College. The biggest change was to no. 14 which had its ground floor frontage replaced by a shop window for a watch repairer. No 13 had been altered in the Victorian period with the loss of its glazing bars. Since then restoration has taken place, with Georgian windows re-instated at no. 13 and the frontage restored at no. 14 which is, once again, a private house. The terrace is now a mix of offices and residential. The cottages have both remained as private houses since they were built.

Albion House, 6 Albion Place

Earlier I referred to Albion Cottage which has been demolished. In 1859 architects Brundell and Arnold designed a new house for the site which was called Albion House.

There is no other building quite like it in Doncaster. It is very heavily modelled, stuccoed and looks more like a bank than a private house. It dominates the earlier cottages on either side.

Its size is demonstrated by an advertisement of 1885: 'to let Albion House, opposite Hall Cross, containing receiving, dining and drawing rooms; kitchen, scullery, 8 bedrooms, 2 wc's and bathroom. Garden, stable and carriage house'. Despite this it doesn't have a front door, due to the narrowness of the site. The entrance is at the side. The house has a mystery: its nickname is Treacle Hall yet I have been unable to identify the origins of the name.

Its first occupant was George Boothman who was a grocer, tea-dealer and tallow chandler. A later owner was Thomas Hattersley, a stove manufacturer from Swinton, but by the 1920s it was no longer a private house and by 1932 it had become the Clifton Hotel.



Albion House, 6 Albion Place

The two bays at the front were used as the hotel lounge and dining room. It was sold in 1950 and later used as offices but it became increasingly dilapidated. Today though, it is much better cared for and used as offices by recruitment consultants, Edwards and Pearce.



Photo courtesy of Philip Langford

Hall Cross Hill, Albion Place and Bennetthorpe c.1905

Indeed, all of Albion Place, with all its variation, seems well cared for and pleasing to look at. The only jarring feature is the advertising banner across Number 9 blocking the balconies and spoiling its appearance.

Peter Coote

I would like to thank the following people who have kindly provided me with help and information for this article: Sue and Malcolm Barnsdale, Pat Degnan, Eric Braim, John Harrison, Margaret Herbert, Carol Hill, John Holmes, Philip Langford and Archie Sinclair. Thanks also to my wife Sue for her editorial role.

All photographs are by the author or from author's collection except as shown.

Planning Matters

Members of the Trust's Planning and Conservation sub-committee meet each month to decide whether objections or comments should be made on planning applications, mainly those relating to listed buildings or within conservation areas. We also consider other applications of interest.

Recently we were concerned about a very large and illuminated advertisement proposed for a gable-end in St. Sepulchre Gate West. This application was outside the conservation area but we objected because it was so out of scale with its surroundings. After a successful campaign to rid the town of hoardings, many years ago, we did not want to see them being re-established. Fortunately the application was refused.

We were dismayed to see that a new and inappropriate shopfront together with an obtrusive and garish sign had appeared on High Street, in a building once occupied by Wild and Sykes, ironmongers. Retrospective applications for planning, listed building and advertisement consent were made and we objected, saying that 'every aspect is unsatisfactory'. A listed building in such a prominent position in the conservation area and close to the Mansion House deserves far better.

Sometimes we are formally consulted by the Planning Authority, seeking our views on particular applications. One of these was a proposal to demolish the conspicuous visitor centre at Conisbrough Castle, and replace it with extensions to the Lodge. The present centre has always been controversial and many regard it as being at odds with its setting. After studying the plans we decided to raise no objections to the proposals, but we were pleased to have been consulted.

Members of the committee have recently been approached by members about a building in the Market Place once known as Dix's Dining Rooms. This small building has been empty for years but was demolished in September after its roof collapsed suddenly. It was of interest, having been described in an archaeological publication some years ago as half-timbered, but clad in brick in the eighteenth century. This has created a gap in the Market Place and it will be interesting to see any plans for a replacement building. It would be disappointing if it was just left. We have quite enough gaps, in Hallgate.



The Rockingham shortly after its completion in the 1920s

A proposal to convert the Rockingham Hotel in Bennetthorpe into apartments, whilst adding an additional upper storey, has caused some controversy in the town. The Trust was disappointed that no one had come forward to run this as a hotel as there has been an inn on the site since the eighteenth century. The present building dates from the 1920s and makes an important contribution to the conservation area.

There are some fine details of interest, notably the doors and window surrounds, together with a central balcony. The application was poor as it lacked plans for most of the floors, so we raised objections pointing out that it was incomplete without them. We were concerned about any loss of the most important decorative features so we requested, for example, that doors and windows should be retained in the conversion. We did not, however, object to the addition of an additional storey as it would be set back behind the parapet and, in any case, it had received permission previously when it was proposed to extend the accommodation at the hotel.

The committee has recently become concerned about the number of unauthorised signs which have begun to appear on listed buildings and in conservation areas. The authorities need to get a grip on this problem before the situation gets out of control.

The Trust was also interested to see proposals for the conversion of the former fire station on Leicester Avenue into a restaurant/takeaway. This seemed a good use for the building so we raised no objections.

Fortunately, the former fire station, opened in 1936, will continue to be a Doncaster landmark as it takes on a new use as a restaurant.



Planning and Conservation Sub Committee

Major General St Leger and Park Hill A Plaque Unveiling



The Trust was pleased to be invited to the unveiling of a blue plaque to Major General St. Leger by top champion jockey Frankie Dettori in Firbeck on Leger Day. In fact two plaques were unveiled on the same day; the other one was to honour botanist Hewett Cottrell Watson. Both Major General St. Leger and Mr Watson had been residents of Park Hill, Firbeck, a mansion that was demolished in the 1930s.

Frankie Dettori receives a gift of a framed picture of Park Hill, presented by The Friends of Firbeck Hall, after unveiling the plaque to Major General St. Leger

Major General St. Leger was, of course, the founder of Britain's oldest classic horse race which bears his name. He constructed a racecourse at Park Hill, the outline of which may still be seen to this day.

Frankie Dettori spoke about the importance of Major General St. Leger to the history of racing. He went on to tell us that he hoped to win that day's St. Leger in Doncaster in which he was due to participate. (In fact he came third).

This was a very enjoyable morning with many people attending the two unveiling ceremonies outside the Village Hall. The media were also present and news channels showed the event later in the day. Inside the Village Hall were refreshments, together with some interesting local history displays relating to the two men. The Trust had contributed to the display on St Leger's military career.

The plaques were financed by Rotherham Civic Society, and the event was organised by the Friends of Firbeck Hall, whom we thank for the invitation.

The Back Page : St. Edmund's Church



An advert tucked away in the back of the property pages of the Doncaster Free Press in August caught my eye.

**FOR SALE Residential Development Opportunity
St. Edmund's Church, Anchorage Lane, Sprotbrough.
Potential residential development sites, 0.44 acres with a stone church hall.**

This came as a shock. There had been no planning applications to redevelop the site. The building was not listed, nor in a conservation area, and it would seem that its days were numbered.



The stone barn before its conversion

But it has quite a notable history. The church was created from a stone barn, once part of Anchorage Farm, which stood on the site of a medieval hospital. The hospital was founded by Sir Thomas Fitzwilliam before 1363 and continued until the dissolution of the chantry chapels in 1547. It is thought that the barn was possibly built of stone from the hospital. The building is said to have been "confidently dated" as seventeenth century.

In the mid-twentieth century the eastern part of Sprotbrough parish was transferred to the parish of Doncaster. The aim was to develop a daughter church of St. George's to serve the new addition to the parish. The site of Anchorage Farm was bought by the Diocese of Sheffield in 1952 and the work began to prepare the site. There were three "drivers" of the project: Canon Herklots, the vicar of St. George's Parish Church; Major Farran, vice-chairman of the Parochial Church Council, and also chairman of the then relatively young Doncaster Civic Trust; and G G Pace, the York-based diocesan architect. With "the vision and energy" of these three men, the Bishop of the Diocese was able to dedicate the new church to St. Edmund on 27th February 1954.

Regular services ended in 2009 and a service of thanksgiving for the church was held at St. Edmund's on Sunday 3rd January 2010. It would be a pity to lose this distinctive and interesting building. Architect George Pace would have known that inserting new windows into a limestone rubble wall could be fraught with difficulty, so he installed a grid of 20 small windows in the original barn door opening. Similarly, a run of high-level windows set on top of the stone wall formed a clerestory. This skilful conversion successfully retained the character of the historic barn.

Information and old images from <http://www.stmarys-sprotbrough.co.uk/>

Archie Sinclair