



TRUST TOPICS

Doncaster Civic Trust Newsletter ©

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YSP



Summer visits : 3 fine houses



**The changing face of Bennetthorpe
– Right style, wrong scale?**

Doncaster Civic Trust : Registered Charity No. 508674 : Founded in 1946
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Tickhill Parish Room – Progress Report

Your former editor, Philip Mottram, was kind enough to send us a progress report on the project to renovate and improve the facilities in this historic building. It had become almost unused, because of its poor state and amenities. The works are planned to bring the building back into beneficial use, by making it more attractive to local community groups.



With the work well under way, the charming old building revealed some of its secrets. Some parts are over 500 years old, and most of the rest at least 150, dating from Victorian times.

Little wonder then that foundations, drainage and structural walls failed to measure up to today's standards, set out in the Building Regulations.

Walls and foundations have had to be strengthened, and drainage problems corrected.

Not only did these contingencies extend both the time and cost of the contract, but the situation was not helped by the incredibly wet weather, which, at its worst, often restricted outside working.

The bad weather has had a wider effect. The sub-contractor based in Hull, who was making the new roof structure for the platform lift, was badly affected by the floods there so that section of the structure was delayed. Other work inside is progressing with the new walls for the accessible toilet and storeroom now in place.

The frontage railings have been removed to make way for new ones. As I write this, the kitchen fitters should be on site, and the building works have had to be re-arranged around the time they were programmed to do their work.

While the building is being renovated, the Parish Room Group has been busy with further decisions about fittings and equipment. Curtains and chairs have been selected, colours chosen and orders placed.

Looking forward to the completion of a fully-operational building, a sub-committee has been looking at an updated business plan, to ensure that they have a sustainable project, financially. Others have been considering various policies and safety measures which will need to be in place when the building opens.

Work continues, and it's a good sign that the finishing touches are being planned.

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Winter Programme

All events **except Buffet** to take place at Hall Cross Upper School, Thorne Road

2007

Thursday 11 October 2007 at 7.30 pm

Don Davidson on "Wentworth Castle Gardens" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 8 November 2007 at 7.15 pm Annual General Meeting

Jeff Prior on "Doncaster's Future - Design and Planning" at Hall Cross School

Wednesday 12 December 2007 at 7.15 for 7.30 pm Buffet Supper

David Adgar of the Churches Conservation Trust on "Sacred Spaces, Creative Places"
At St Peter's Church Hall, Chequer Road

2008

Thursday 17 January 2008 at 7.30 pm

Richard Bell on "The Sand House" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 21 February 2008 at 7.30 pm

Malcolm Barnsdale on "Old Doncaster" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 13 March 2008 at 7.30 pm

Mrs Susan Cunliffe-Lister on "Burton Agnes Hall" at Hall Cross School
(to be confirmed in next Trust Topics)

New members needed to save a Civic Society

A recent newsletter from the national Civic Trust had a dramatic headline about the possible demise of the Rochdale Civic Society. Their society was on the verge of collapse. An emergency committee meeting had resolved to break up the society due to falling numbers. The former chairman had retired, two members had died, and several others had become elderly, and as a result the committee was down to just two, the chairman, Mrs Greaves, and one other.

The chairman said that only a surge of new active members would save the society from being wound up. She had been a member for 30 years, and the society had been going since 1963. It was founded by motivated locals who wanted to protect the town's heritage, and was well-regarded by the Civic Trust.

Mrs Greaves said, "We all work jolly hard and I was very upset. I am very fond of Rochdale. It means an enormous amount to me". Then she really hit the nail on the head, "Without having people who really want to help, the society is a dead dog". (*we would say duck*)

The lesson to be learned from Rochdale is that, as well as members who support it and attend its events, every society needs a good number of core members who are active in its work, and will run its events. You could have hundreds of members, but without new people joining its committees, taking a stake in the affairs of the organisation, however small to begin with, and "learning the ropes", the core of the society would wither, and it could not continue.

Planning Matters

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee has met a number of times since the last newsletter. A few of the decisions we made are listed below



Vacant Queen's Hotel, Sunny Bar

In April we commented on an application for the former Queens in Sunny Bar. This was for listed building consent for alterations to the ground floor openings. We asked that the new ground floor windows should match the existing double-hung sash windows.

This application has since been approved.

In April too we had some concerns about the details of an application to build a pavilion on the Town Fields close to Thorne Road. We were certainly pleased that this was far more attractive in appearance than an earlier proposal, but we were concerned about possible damage to the clay tile roof in an area subject to vandalism. Nevertheless this application was subsequently approved by the Planning Authority.

One application we liked was a proposal to convert some redundant farm buildings into 5 dwellings at Marr Hall Farm. Traditional agricultural buildings often become redundant as newer and larger buildings are required for modern farming methods and machinery. As a result older buildings can become derelict, and new uses have to be found. However, this can be controversial because character is lost unless the conversions are handled sensitively. Fortunately, in this case, the proposals seemed sound.

In May we looked at a mix of applications including alterations to Roland Bridge House in Tickhill, a proposal to extend 8/9 Hallgate and a number of others. In all cases we decided to make no comment. We were pleased that some thought had gone into plans to erect wrought iron railings at a house on Christ Church Terrace on the front and side elevations.

In June we looked at a couple of revised plans which had been submitted. The first was a proposal from J D Wetherspoon to erect a pub and shop at 10-14 Hallgate. We reiterated our earlier comments requesting that the windows should be double-hung sashes. We also looked at revised plans to build on the Bombardier site at Hexthorpe, part of the former Plant Works. This mixed use application covered a large area including 700 dwellings, office buildings and a retail store, amongst other things. We decided not to comment. Perhaps the smallest application in scale was a proposal for a porch extension to the Woodlands Park Working Men's Club. We were disappointed with this design which was out of keeping with the listed Georgian building, once a country house called 'The Woodlands'. We felt a better solution could be found.

We objected and the application was refused.

Over-development of gardens continued to be a theme in June as we objected to proposals for developments in Bessacarr and Wheatley. The revised application for a large mixed use development at Kirk Sandall, close to the church, has been controversial and attracted press publicity. We still felt that it would not be appropriate to build large apartment blocks on the edge of open countryside and maintained our objection.

In July we commented on an application to change the use of 12a South Parade to a bridal shop. We did not object to the change of use but felt that it was important that no changes be made to the fabric of the building. South Parade used to have some shops but in the past their character was not sympathetic to the buildings. Today the buildings have better legal protection, and we need to ensure that this is respected.



12A South Parade, Doncaster



23 Bennetthorpe, centre, where a first floor bay was proposed

We objected to an application to add another bay window to the first floor of a house in Bennetthorpe as it would destroy the symmetry of the property, together with an objection to convert it into offices. We felt that this was an unnecessary intrusion into a residential area.

We have been particularly concerned about Bennetthorpe's character recently and this has prompted an article on the road, elsewhere in this magazine.

The most recent application perused was a proposal to build two-storey apartments and houses between Stonegate and Southfield Road, Thorne, next to the former vicarage. We raised no objections to the application although felt that some details could be improved upon.

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee

Annual Subscriptions : Reminder

Subscriptions for the year 2007-2008 were due on 1 September and may be paid at the AGM, but it would be much easier if members could send their dues beforehand to our Membership Secretary: Mrs J M Smith at 43 Norborough Road, Wheatley, Doncaster DN2 4AT. Thank you.

Bennetthorpe and the Earl of Doncaster Hotel

It is pleasing to realise that in Doncaster we have retained something that large cities have lost - a feeling of domestic scale. In many streets of the town Georgian houses have survived and later Victorian and 20th century properties have often respected that sense of scale too. Only in a few places in the town do you feel that the height or size of newer buildings is overwhelming or intrusive. However we are in danger of losing that quality. Recent planning applications for hotels mean that changes are occurring, and not for the better. The new hotel on Church Way for example, will be seen clearly from the Market Place Conservation Area. Recently, specialist consultants, brought in by the Council to study the character of the two conservation areas centred on the Market Place and High Street, highlighted this issue. But the hotel development is still going ahead. Another recent application was for a five-storey extension to the Earl of Doncaster on Bennetthorpe which although not yet complete is already making a serious impact on the conservation area.

Bennetthorpe once had a number of tiny cottages of two storeys. According to the Victorian historian, C W Hatfield, these were built by a Mr Joseph Bennett in 1778, hence the name Bennetthorpe. The area was once quite rural but as the town expanded to the south new buildings were constructed, including Brunswick Terrace built around 1829. These three-storey properties which still survive today are of a domestic scale, built as private houses. In the Victorian and Edwardian periods more new houses were constructed such as Victoria Cottage, opposite Elmfield Park. Most of these were 2 storeys. Over the years there has also been some re-building. The Rockingham Inn, for example, was originally built in 1778 but was completely rebuilt in 1923 on a grander scale. This is an attractive building designed by Allen and Hickson. Nevertheless we can see from early 20th century postcards that the overall scale of the street remained unaffected.



Interesting detail of doors on Brunswick Terrace. The architect of this Terrace is unknown but it seems likely that it was William Hurst, architect of Christ Church, who owned two of the houses.



Victoria Cottage. Much altered but it retains its name and date, 1862, over the central first floor window.

The original Rockingham Inn together with some of the cottages. Note the different spelling of Bennetthorpe. The façade of the inn was originally much simpler. It was given a grander look, with the pediments which can be seen over the first floor windows, probably in the early 20th century.



The 'new' Rockingham. It is pleasing and adds quality to the street. Some of the cottages can still be seen beyond. On the right hand side the gable of the Earl of Doncaster Arms may be seen. It was built originally as the Doncaster Arms in 1816 but extensively altered in 1904. It was demolished in the 1930's when the present hotel was built.



This interesting and previously unpublished picture shows people on the way to the races in around 1913. The houses on the right, which included the Lion House, were pulled down for a garage in the 1960s. Note the access was by steps cut through one of the old limestone walls, one of the old field boundaries. The cottages beyond have also gone. All the properties on the left have been demolished and replaced by the Earl and offices.



Nevertheless, despite these changes many of the older properties still do survive in Bennetthorpe as the next picture shows.

A tree-lined Bennetthorpe photographed by ELS--Edgar Scrivens. The building on the extreme right is the Comrades Club, but was formerly known as Elmfield Cottage. Within a few years the scene had changed with the building of the Cenotaph after the First World War at the bottom of Hall Cross Hill.



The 1930s brought the construction of much new housing. On Bennetthorpe the remaining fields were built over, up to the Racecourse. Commercial pressures began to change the appearance of the street too. Road travel was popular again and new hotels appeared along ring roads and in towns. For Bennetthorpe this meant a re-building of the Earl of Doncaster, once one of the town's racing inns. The inn had originally been built in 1816 as the Doncaster Arms but it had been altered and partly re-built over the years. The new building which rose in its place was, and still is, large, but its impact was modified partly by the interest of the architecture, and partly because the building's maximum height was confined to one part of the building - the ballroom which was built at a wide part of the road.

The 1960s were not particularly kind to Bennetthorpe and some of its character was eroded. The remaining old cottages were demolished, flats were built next to the Rockingham, Charlesworth's showroom became a dominant feature, Victorian houses were demolished near the Earl and three Edwardian villas were demolished to make way for a petrol station.

Later development has repaired some of this damage. The petrol station has gone, replaced by a nursery. An office block has replaced the garage. It is large but respects the scale of the street, abutting Brunswick Terrace.

With higher quality buildings, gaps filled and the ravages of the 60s made good it looked as if Bennetthorpe's character was restored.

Then along came the Earl of Doncaster hotel, originally applying for a 4 storey extension and then increasing it to 5.

This extension completely fills the gap up to the office block - it is now continuous wall, but more importantly it pays no heed to the scale of the street. It just looms over everything - even the earlier part of the Earl. It can be viewed as far away as the far side of the Town Fields.



Do we need it? Is it justified?

Well, we don't want to stop commercial expansion, and hotels bring in money and trade. Also we recognise that land is valuable so building on this spot comes as no surprise. But we don't need a building such as this. It should have been reduced to 4 storeys, with the top floor set back. This would have allowed expansion with integration. As it stands now it is to say the least disappointing and the town will come to regret that it has failed to protect the character and quality of one of its conservation areas.

The Planning and Conservation Committee

Summer Visits Aldby Park - Wednesday 14 June



Aldby Park, Buttercrambe
North Yorkshire
Dated 1726
Garden front

Aldby Park is a typical early Georgian North Riding house, comparable to Beningbrough and generally in the style of Vanbrugh. It carries the date of 1726 on the garden side. It is a brick building of three storeys, nine bays long, and with a basement.

The entrance side has stone quoins not just at the corners, but also at the edges of the central seven bays. The three central bays are stone-faced, with a deep porch with columns, an elaborate Venetian feature with pediment above, at first floor, and an attic storey with pilasters. The way the pediment sits below the attic storey is reminiscent of Hampton Court.

The garden front (top photo) has a similar arrangement in its centre, but was considered by Nikolaus Pevsner to be much too ornate to be considered fully Vanbrughian. He regarded the decoration of the ground and first floor friezes, the first floor pediment and even the bust in the attic just a little fussy and busy.



Inside the house, the entrance hall has a mighty chimney-piece, much favoured by Vanbrugh, but the monumental staircase at the back of the hall is mid-nineteenth century.

Photos Peter Coote : Text based on Pevsner's Yorkshire, North Riding

Newby Hall - Wednesday 11 July



Newby Hall
Near Ripon
North Yorks.

Twenty-one members left Doncaster at 9.30 am for a visit to the home of Mr and Mrs Richard Compton. It was a warm sunny day and we arrived there at 10.30 am up a driveway with the largest block of white, black and Jacob sheep greeting us!

After freshly-baked scones and coffee in the restaurant overlooking a very pleasant lawned and rose-bed area we set off for the exhibition of Zimbabwean sculptures and sculpting demonstrations. This is held every Year during the summer months and is a selection of interesting sculptures all for sale. We were very tempted but couldn't carry them! We were also fascinated by a group of 8 year old schoolchildren who were absolutely absorbed in drawing and writing about their favourite sculpture. Some were washing and helping to smooth a new work being created by the two artists there.



Passing back by the restaurant again we saw a lovely sculpture in bronze entitled "Owl of Few Words" (an owl perched on several books priced at £3,700). This led us into the White Garden en route to the largest double herbaceous border in England (and contending for Europe), a wonderful array of height and colour – tall delphiniums of the deepest blue, sea hollies, roses etc. This was set against a backdrop of various coloured trees including genus cornus for which Newby Hall has the National Collection.

This border stretched from the house at the top down to the River Ure at the bottom. Off the sides were different compartmental gardens: rose garden, Sylvia's garden, Victorian rock garden and water garden, all with fountains. A miniature railway by the river took several of us round the lower part of the gardens. We passed through woods, orchards, wild flower banks leading to a tunnel, over little bridges by the water lily and rock gardens.

We then walked back up to the house. This was built in the 1690s by Sir Christopher Wren's contemporary, the leading craftsman-architect John Eddy. In the 1760s William Weddell, an ancestor of the Compton family, acquired a wonderful collection of Roman sculptures, now housed in what was the Orangery. Gobelin tapestries adorned the walls of one of the rooms.

Later, Robert Adam decorated and Thomas Chippendale furnished the house, creating an interior of exceptionally high quality. In fact, a priceless table was stolen the week before our visit and the guides said it made them very wary of visitors in the house now, as the thieves must have "cased the joint" while visiting.

The recent television production of Mansfield Park was filmed here and some of the costumes were on show.

On leaving the Hall we were very impressed by an elegant statue in the centre of the lily pond. Yes – it was the Wood Nymph by David Williams-Ellis, already seen by members on a visit to Rode Hall in 2005.

After an excellent lunch with a bottle of wine between some of us, we headed off to the woodland walk via the shop. This walk is a very contemporary sculpture park with all items for sale, prices ranging from £350 for a group of 5 masks to £53,000 for a bronze Dreaming Stone. We especially liked the “Bulrushes and Bamboo” priced at £16,500, right, and “Dragonfly” in glass mosaic at £6,200, but again we couldn’t carry them!



This was an excellent, sunny day out with so much to see. We couldn’t manage to see everything. After all this Georgian Age of Elegance House is set in 25 acres of land! We did however say we would definitely return again and perhaps we could carry a modern sculpture after all! Who knows?

G Audrey Gregory

Burghley House - Wednesday 8 August - A Perfect Day

We all boarded the coach at Waterdale for Stamford and Burghley House. The sun shone on us all the way and all the day. The paintings in the house were almost overwhelming and I wonder how much pain these artists must have suffered at the end of each day being laid on their backs painting these magnificent ceilings. There is great feeling and atmosphere throughout the house and one could almost feel Sir William Cecil looking down upon us. It is probably the only stately home I have ever been in where the whole of the floor area is covered in cream carpet – I asked myself how do they keep it so clean with all that foot traffic?

We entered through The Old Kitchen with its wonderful array of copper pans and the boot warmer. The skulls of turtles and the turtle-shaped soup tureen instantly gave one a feeling of stepping back in time. We passed through the Chapel into the North Wing and the Billiard Room, the great table being made from timbers recovered from HMS Royal George which sank at Spithead in 1782. The tapestries were in outstanding condition and eventually we reached the stone staircase – like the gateway to Hell.

We all made our way to the Orangery Tea Rooms, and then sat in the beautiful gardens for afternoon tea, surrounded by old English roses with the fountain in the centre, and the sun shining down.

Finally we enjoyed a walk round the Garden of Surprise and returned to the coach for home at the end of a Perfect Day.



Margaret Herbert

The Back Page - Yorkshire Sculpture Park : 30 Years On



The setting is 500 acres of C18 parkland

Bretton Hall itself was a country house, then a teacher-training college and most recently an outpost of Leeds University. The original house lies in magnificent landscaped grounds and parkland, which is the sculpture park. There is a large ornamental lake in the bottom of the valley, and also a nature reserve. It was the first permanent sculpture park in the country and the attraction originally consisted, not surprisingly, of little more than sculpture and a park. Today, it enjoys an international reputation

YSP, as it is known, is simply a wonderful place. Established in 1977, it's really a theme park for cultured grown-ups of all ages, and possibly the best free show anywhere this side of the British Museum. It is based at Bretton Park, south of Wakefield, and just off J38 of the M1.



Andy Goldsworthy's Striding Arches



The Underground Gallery and its grass roof

To the south of the lake, on the high ground at the other side of the valley is Longsides, modern farm buildings originally built to stable and exercise racehorses, but now the home of the Arts Council's sculpture collection, with a large indoor gallery. There is a free courtesy bus which runs from the visitor centre to Longsides along on the twisty lanes, but a rather more interesting alternative is to walk through the parkland with sculpture to see along the way.

Since the 1970s old buildings have been converted, modern temporary buildings erected and then in 2002, a stunning new modern stone and glass visitor centre with shop and restaurant was built, with access and car parking direct off the A637. Then in 2004 came the new Underground Gallery, built under the lawn of the semi-circular Bothy Garden. Both were designed by award-winning architects Fielden Clegg Bradley.

The big show from March this year until next February has been Andy Goldsworthy. It includes work from the beginning of his career in 1976 to the present day, and occupies all of the galleries and some outdoor sites. Most of the work relates to natural elements: stone, wood, earth and space, plus an abstract canvas made by the feet of feeding sheep.



Anthony Gormley

There is a permanent collection including work by Moore, Hepworth, Frink, Caro and Gormley. Some of the new pieces are unusual but striking, like James Turrell's Skyspace, a powerful perceptual experience where you sit and gaze up at the sky. You had to be there. Archie Sinclair