



TRUST TOPICS

Doncaster Civic Trust Newsletter ©

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Christ Church Graveyard

That's what Friends are for

Doncaster Civic Trust : Registered Charity No. 508674 : Founded in 1946
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Looking to the Future – That’s one small step.....

Because we are a long-established society, with an experienced Executive Committee and a stable membership that appreciates a traditional mix of events, you might say we’re in a bit of a rut. And you’d be right. Based on the well-tested maxim “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, changes have been rare and less than radical. So we’ve trundled along, and I like to think that we’ve done OK. Some things have been good, very good even, and others not so good, but if we do enough things, everyone will like something.

We’ve realised, however, that we are starting to become invisible – a bit of a secret society. People learn about us by word of mouth, or accident (sorry, good fortune). So, at our last Executive Committee meeting, in order to become a bit more accessible, we agreed to pay to have our own website created on the internet.

At this point, I apologise to those of you who know all about the world-wide-web, but I’m sure many members don’t know, and some won’t want to know. We think it is vital that our society has a “presence” on the web. When this is in place, people with their computers “on line” connected to the internet can go straight to our site, if they know about it, or otherwise can get to it using a search engine like Google. They will connect to Google and enter “Doncaster civic society” or “historic Doncaster” and they will be given a choice of websites to go to which will include Doncaster Civic Trust’s site. We think its address will be doncastercivitrust.org.uk, but we’re not quite there yet.

The website will have a home page, which sets out broadly who we are and what we do, and this will have tabs to click on, entitled: how to join, how to contact us, latest newsletter, our constitution, our publications etc. We aim to put all the old (but digital) Trust Topics into an archive on the website, and add to it as we go. I imagine we will have Doncaster people looking for information, and former Doncastrians looking to see what’s going on in their old home town.

We are not thinking of doing anything any differently from the way we do it now. It’s just that our information will be available on line world-wide, and no longer only in Doncaster Reference Library.

This brings me to a question about members’ sensitivities: photos in the newsletter often include images of members, although usually without any names. We need to know if this can continue. Similarly, I always like to credit contributors to the newsletter, but some people may prefer to remain anonymous. I would be interested to hear any members’ views.

Local History Fair 22 November – Always a Good Show

You are recommended to visit this year’s one-day event, on Saturday 22 November, from 10am to 4pm, at the College and School for the Deaf, Leger Way. We will be having a stand and display, and ask (please) any members who would be willing to hold the fort for an hour or two to contact Peter Coote, tel no 532202.

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Winter Programme 2008 - 2009

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

2008

Thursday 16 October 2008 at 7.30 pm

Hugh Parkin talks on "A Nostalgic Walk from Hexthorpe to Conisbrough" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 20 November 2008 at 7.15 pm Annual General Meeting, followed by

Professor Clyde Binfield on "Art Deco – Putting Fun into Function" at Hall Cross School

Wednesday 10 December 2008 at 7.30 pm Christmas Buffet Supper

A presentation of slides of Doncaster's lost buildings from members' own archives

At St Peter's Church Hall, Chequer Road (with heating !)

2009

Thursday 15 January 2009 at 7.30 pm

Malcolm Dolby on "The Contents of the English House 1500 – 1750" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 19 February 2009 at 7.30 pm

Andrew Firth on "Signs of the Times" at Hall Cross School

Thursday 19 March 2009 at 7.30 pm

Julian Brandram on "Gardens Great and Small – Looking at Gardens Open to the Public"

At Hall Cross School

Members' News : Anno Domini

Philip Mottram has told us that he thinks the time has now come for him to review his various commitments. He feels that he can no longer continue to make the significant contribution he has made to the running of the Trust and is standing down from the Executive Committee.

Philip has been on the Trust's Executive since 1975, 33 years, and skilfully chaired the meetings of the Planning and Conservation Sub-committee for most of that time. He has been a real driving force in the Trust's campaigning, particularly on our work to prevent the demolition of Christ Church. He initiated the new-style newsletter Trust Topics, not only dragging the society into the computer age, but also producing much of the ideas for articles, writing their content and taking the photographs.

We are very grateful for his energetic and magnificent voluntary contribution to our work over the years. The Trust is but one of his interests; a resident of Tickhill, he is involved with local groups, notably the Music Society, and had also led the project to restore and renovate the Mill Dam. Members will also be aware of Philip's major involvement in the recently-completed refurbishment of the Parish Room, which has been featured in the newsletter.

Thank you, Philip, and our best wishes in future ventures. Not retirement, surely?

Christ Church, Doncaster

Friends of Christ Church Graveyard



In July 2004 at a barbecue in Anni and John Arthur's garden, a few local residents decided to form a group, the Friends of Christ Church Graveyard.

We were hot with the success of the Friends of Townfields Group which had managed to have the Fields registered legally as Public Open Space and thus make it inalienable and remove it from the depredations of the local authority.

The new group hoped to attract funding and work with the Council to improve the safety and appearance of the churchyard.

The Council was already committed to cutting grass, tidying litter and removing up to 300 needles, or syringes, per monthly sweep. So we resolved to concentrate upon the repair of the existing railings, gates and stone gate pillars, and to erect new railings on top of the stone boundary wall, in order to exclude undesirables from the churchyard. We also hoped to include a multi-faith peace garden at the eastern end of the churchyard.



Before – the stone walls offered little protection



After – the new railings provide security

Undaunted by the size of the project, we had plans drawn up by a firm of architects and entered into discussions with the Church of England's Sheffield Diocese, the Reachout Christian Fellowship, the new owners of the church, and the local authority's planning department.



Mayor Martin Winter had been most supportive of the scheme and last autumn made £100,000 available for the work. Council officers were authorised to obtain quotations and to implement the work, which was supervised by John Holmes.

Left:

On the north side, the works include a new gate, stone piers and finials
This coming autumn it is hoped to clear damaged and unsuitable

trees and undergrowth, and to plant new trees. Money has been made available for this work from this Civic Trust's Tree Fund.

Right: a pen and ink sketch by Frederick James Glass, 1882-1930, who was Head Master of Doncaster School of Arts and Crafts. It shows a Gothic gate pier in the foreground with Christ Church beyond, *sans spire*. The spire was reinstated in 1938.



Below: the gates and piers at the south-west corner of the churchyard now fully restored



It is also hoped to secure further funding for the repair of the eighty most seriously damaged gravestones. A survey has been undertaken and estimates received.

Doncaster Natural History Society has kindly undertaken a survey which has emphasised that the churchyard is an important area for wildlife. Several schools have expressed an interest in visits once the area has been made safe.



Right: the original tall iron railings and stone plinth around the western end of the churchyard have been renovated. Damaged stones and missing railings have been replaced, greatly improving the setting of Christ Church.

John Holmes

Leger Way Landmarks – History Repeating Itself

Two of Doncaster’s best-known buildings, close together in both date and location, have been handed very different outcomes by their owners in recent years.

Doncaster Fire Station was built in 1936, a robust building in red rustic brick, with some architectural detailing in artificial stone, and a plain clay tile hipped roof with parapets. It has steel casement windows, typical of its time and style.



Its owners, the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, decided that a modern station was needed, and this was completed on the adjacent site and commissioned on 27 July 2004. Although a prominent and familiar local landmark, the old station’s architectural and historic interest was unlikely to be considered special enough for the building to become listed.



The design of the new £1.96 million building, by Doncaster firm Hawley & Partners (later becoming LHL Group Ltd) is wholly contemporary, with brick, painted render, glass blocks and timber cladding as facing materials, under a slate roof. The sale of the site of the old fire station for development was planned to help fund the new building. An outline planning application was submitted in 2007 to erect a 3 storey block of apartments following the demolition of the former fire station.

Doncaster College and School for the Deaf, in stark contrast, has recently undergone a great deal of refurbishment. The Leger Way frontage was built partly in 1935 and completed in 1940, as part of the new school for 160 pupils for the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf by architects Walker and Thompson.



Eric Braims' article on Edward Holsworth Walker in Trust Topics no.28, July 2006, tells of the work of the practice, and Walker's role in the founding of Doncaster Civic Trust.

This imposing two-storey building is well planned and proportioned, in a neo-classical style. It is in brick, with flat brick arches above wall openings, and both stone and artificial stone detailing. It has hipped roofs covered in Westmoreland slates, laid in diminishing courses (get smaller nearer the ridge). Its ground floor is faced in smooth engineering bricks in a mix of dark colours, while the first floor is faced in multi-red rustic bricks. All the façade has been cleaned and re-pointed recently, highlighting the contrast between the materials.



Perhaps the most significant renovation is the replacement of the 79 steel windows on the frontage with new ones in white powder-coated aluminium, in a matching Georgian style.

These are double-glazed and their installation has been assisted by an Energy Grant from the Learning and Skills Council.

What many members will remember is that the “Deaf School”, some years ago, did exactly what the Fire Station is doing now; that is, to build a new building behind the old one, and then demolish the old one, shown below on a postcard of 1913.



The Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was founded in 1829 in part of Eastfield House, opposite the Racecourse on Grandstand Road. After a hundred years use, it was agreed that a new school was required, and this was the building of 1940 which we now see. Eastfield House continued to stand until 1959 when it was demolished for road widening and the creation of Leger Way.

Archie Sinclair

Summer Outings 2008

Cottesbrooke Hall - Wednesday 18th June 2008

The first of this year's summer visits took place on a typically cool and dull day in June.



The lunch stop was Market Harborough, a cheerful, busy town with good shops and cafés. The rain did not help.

Our arrival at Cottesbrooke Hall (left) coincided with a lift in the gloom, and we admired the impressive red brick and stone house of 1702 by Francis Smith of Warwick, for Sir John Longham.

The house has remained largely unaltered and was purchased between the 1st and 2nd World Wars by Lord Woolavington, whose descendants, the Macdonald-Buchanan family still live here.

Upon entering the house for a guided tour by friendly and very knowledgeable guides, we were truly amazed at the richness of the furnishings in each succeeding room.



The Cur, by John Fernley Snr. from The Woolavington Collection

However, the chief distinction of the house is the superb collection of sporting paintings formed at the beginning of the 20th century by Sir James Buchanan, later Lord Woolavington. This is probably the finest collection of its type in Europe, and is greatly enhanced by superb porcelain and furniture.

After a fortifying cup of tea, the impressive gardens were tackled; dodging light showers did not help our enjoyment of good layouts in “garden rooms” and most innovative planting schemes.



A good visit to an important house and garden – but oh, what rotten weather!

John Holmes Images from www.cottesbrookehall.co.uk

Thrumpton Hall - 16 July 2008

It was a select gathering of twenty-three members and guests that met in Waterdale for the second of this year's summer visits. After a short run down the motorway, we were squeezing through the gates of Thrumpton Hall in Nottinghamshire.

We were met on the doorstep of this ancient house by the mother of the present owner, Mrs Rosemary Seymour. She made us most welcome to her home and led us into the hall where she gave us a brief history of Thrumpton Hall and the families who lived here.



The first family known to have lived in the house was called Puterell (later corrupted to Powdrill) and were in possession during the 12th century. They lost the house due to their involvement with the Gunpowder Plot and it was conveyed by the Crown in 1607 to Gervase Pigot.

The Pigots virtually rebuilt the house but incorporated much of the Powdrills' house into the new building. Possession of the house passed to John Emerton in 1696 when he foreclosed on the mortgage taken out by Pigot's mother when she was left in reduced circumstances after her son's death. John Emerton's great-nephew William Wescomb inherited Thrumpton next and ownership of the house passed to several Wescombs during the late 19th and early 20th century, one of whom was the 10th Lord Byron (not the poet). He married Anne Fitzroy, aunt of Mrs Seymour's husband, and through this connection the Thrumpton Estate should have passed to him but the trustees were obliged by death duties to sell the estate. Fortunately, Mr Seymour was able to purchase the house from the trustees.

After telling us this family history, Mrs Seymour took us through to the room where there was a priest's hole at the foot of a secret staircase hidden in the thickness of the chimney breast. It was here that the Powdrills concealed Father Garnett, one of the leading conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot.

From there we ascended the magnificent, carved Charles II staircase which, according to Mrs Seymour, was covered in many layers of paint when she and her husband arrived at the house. An inheritance enabled them to fund the stripping of the wood to return the staircase to its original rich honey colour. This mammoth task took three men a whole year to complete. A carved greyhound was pointed out to us as an emblem of the family.



We now entered the room at the top of the secret staircase which the priest could reach unseen, and for this reason it is thought that this room could have been a chapel. We continued on into the grand salon with its rich panelling designed for the house by Webb in 1660. The walls were covered with elegant portraits of family members and it was a most charming room. The dining room was likewise filled with magnificent paintings, some of which were on loan from Mrs Seymour's relations at Welbeck Abbey.

On our return to the entrance hall, tea had been set out for us and Mrs Seymour insisted that we take our tea, scones and cake into the library. This was a beautiful room flooded with light from the large windows, quite unlike other libraries we have visited. The room had formerly been the entrance hall but in the 19th century John Emerton Wescomb filled in the entrance colonnade to make this lovely room and lined it with more than four thousand books.



After tea we were drawn outside by the sunshine to walk in the grounds where the gardeners were busy, struggling to keep down the weeds. The grounds are notable for their interesting trees, including one of the first larches to be planted in England. There are also giant cedar and oak.

We then walked to the lake which was a tranquil place with ducks, and a heron so still we thought it was artificial. It was a lovely spot to end a most pleasant visit.

Sue Barnsdale

Photos: Peter and Sue Coote

Winkburn Hall – Wednesday 6th August 2008

The afternoon of the 6th of August saw a good turnout make a return visit to Winkburn Hall. We reckoned that it must be about thirteen years ago that we first went and I do remember that there was scaffolding in the entrance hall. That has all gone now but the work is still ongoing, as a result of previous years of neglect.

We were met on the front steps by Mr and Mrs Craven-Smith-Milnes, thirteen years older, as am I, but they still look as fit and enthusiastic as ever. The estate dates back to the Domesday Book, then in the mid-twelfth century the estate was given to the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem, to which the lovely simple church in the grounds is dedicated.



The estate descended through the lines until the present owner's father who, mainly because of death duties, had to sell in 1934. Then, many years ago, the owners at the time decided to demolish the house. Richard Craven-Smith-Milnes told us the wonderful story of how, the day before the demolition, the Duke of Portland (Welbeck) asked his father if he still had a key so they could all have a look around. There was no key, so they broke in – loved what they saw – and with the Duke pulling the strings, the demolition was stopped.

Richard and his father, afraid of criminal prosecution for breaking and entering, were assured by the Duke that there were not enough Peers of the Realm to stand as jury! So in 1980 Richard and his wife bought back the house – I was dying to ask how much for.

What they got was a real mess. Leaking down-pipes had caused a lot of damage. The family set to – re-roofing, re-plumbing, re-wiring and renewing the plasterwork and joinery damaged by dry rot. Mrs Craven-Smith-Milnes taught herself decorative plasterwork so as to repair the badly damaged ceiling of the staircase and other rooms. This work continues and one can only imagine the pain in her neck and arms.



Help was given by grants from English Heritage and the support of the Historic Buildings Council. Some of the furniture came from Richard's father, but quite a few of the paintings are on loan from elsewhere in the region.

This house is a real home, not too large and of faded splendour. The family all pile home for Christmas, sleeping in the bedrooms we were allowed to see. We were given tea and biscuits in the enormous family Aga-warmed kitchen with its dressers and scrubbed pine table.

For us Jane Austen fans, in 1748 a Mr D'Arcy Burnell inherited the estate and was responsible for much of the Rococo work, especially some remarkable carved friezes above doors.

The rescue of houses like Winkburn from almost total dereliction is down to the family's determination and hard physical effort. The present owner's father did the joinery on the turned balusters of the back stairs, while the children wielded paintbrushes and spades. Many such houses have ended up as offices, apartments or museums, but this one is as it should be, a real home with family history. We are very lucky that some families allow us to look round and share in their period of guardianship. Winkburn is a great success story but, in the present economic climate, how many more houses can be saved by English Heritage and the dedication of families burdened by taxation and high upkeep costs?



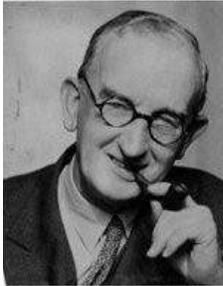
As usual I went home planning to get out the paintbrushes and re-arrange the family heirlooms. If you don't come on our summer visits to private houses you really miss a treat.

Sue Burley

Photos: Peter Coote

The Guthrie Connection and the Ambassador's Residence

When I met the designer who was working on a scheme to develop the buildings and site at Handley Cross, off Cantley Lane, he told me that it seemed a most interesting house with a fine and complete interior. He had seen its original plans, from the Doncaster Archives, by London architect Leonard Rome Guthrie. He asked me if I had heard of him, and my answer was no. With such a distinctive name you wouldn't forget.



So, I went to the internet to find out more. Guthrie was born in 1880 and raised in Glasgow. Aged 15, he was articled to the renowned Glasgow architect William Leiper for five years, studied at the Glasgow School of Art, and in 1899 won the "Greek" Thompson Scholarship, which enabled him to spend eight months travelling in mainland Europe the following year. In 1907 he set up in practice in London, becoming a chartered architect in 1910, and in 1925 he became a partner in the firm of Wimperis, Simpson & Guthrie. Looking at some of the firm's completed designs, it became evident that, like many architects, he could work in a number of contrasting architectural styles.

Handley Cross could be described as neo-vernacular, or arts and crafts-ish, but another of his buildings, also listed, is modernist in the extreme. This is a transmitting station built for the BBC in Somerset in 1933, with concrete walls, metal windows by Crittall and flat roofs. It is likely to have been listed for its innovation in terms of both its use and its design.



The London practice also designed the Cambridge Theatre in the West End, completed in 1930, and worked on extensions and alterations to existing city buildings. Also in 1930, Rome Guthrie was credited with "alterations and embellishments" to the Royal Institution, in Westminster.

But the real climax to Guthrie's work was securing the commission to design a new grand house in Regents Park for Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress. She was living in London with her husband Count Haugwitz-Reventlow and their son Lance, and wanted a more secure family home. She had inherited \$40 million from her grandfather Frank Winfield Woolworth, founder of the chain of stores. She was able to acquire St Dunstan's, a dilapidated and fire-damaged villa on the west side of the Park, and gained permission in 1936 for its demolition and replacement with a new red brick building in a neo-Georgian style, designed by Rome Guthrie.



Named Winfield House, this was completed in 1937, finished and decorated to the highest standards, and filled with valuable furniture, paintings and other art works. With its 12 acres, it remains the house in London with the largest garden after that of Buckingham Palace.

Unfortunately, her enjoyment of the property was short-lived.

The outbreak of war in 1939 and the break-up of her marriage took Barbara Hutton back to the United States. The house was left, to become occupied by a barrage balloon unit and an aircrew reception centre for the RAF during wartime. Barbara Hutton returned to the house after the war and, faced with its very poor state, which included some bomb damage, decided in 1945 to gift the property to the United States Government. It was to be repaired and its decoration restored for the use of the US Ambassador. And so in 1955 it became the official residence of the American Ambassador. President Harry Truman called it “a most generous and patriotic offer”.

Successive ambassadors and their wives, particularly the Annenbergs, 1969-74, have undertaken decorative schemes and it now has grand rooms befitting state occasions where a visiting American president might entertain British and other European royalty and heads of state.



*Images from
Winfield House
by Maria Tuttle
and Marcus Binney,
photographs by
James Mortimer
(Thames &
Hudson, £32)*

The present lady of the house, Mrs Maria Tuttle, has recently completed a book about the house with the architectural writer and conservation champion Marcus Binney, with photographs by James Mortimer.

Archie Sinclair



Eyesore Corner

In January's Trust Topics, the future of the Odeon (ex Gaumont) cinema was in doubt. Since then, it has been acquired by local developer Lazarus, the company behind the significant redevelopments at High Fishergate and at the junction of Prince's Street and East Laith Gate.



Until work begins on the Odeon site, the closed cinema is being used as a hoarding for large and obtrusive advertisements.



Planning Matters

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee meets every month to consider whether to object to or comment on planning applications relating to conservation areas, listed buildings and other major projects. Throughout, the Trust remains positive and does not make comments for the sake of it. However, we are also mindful of the quality of our conservation areas and the importance, in particular, of our stock of historic buildings.

One of our concerns earlier in the year related to part of a two storey property in Christ Church Terrace within the conservation area. Here there was an application for a change of use of three rooms from a dwelling house to office use. We objected as we felt that this property was unsuitable for office use.



Christ Church Terrace: 3 storey houses 1829 in foreground



Later 2 storey houses beyond

Also the terrace is entirely residential, with many owners having spent time and money restoring the character of their homes. Recently, and much to our astonishment, this application was allowed, despite the fact that objections had been received not just from ourselves, but also from nearly every resident. The planners have a difficult job to do and have to consider many issues before coming to a conclusion. In many cases, whereas the Trust may not agree, we understand many of the issues behind the decision. However, in this case it is difficult to understand the logic of the decision when, across the road, and indeed all across the town, offices now lie empty. In addition it has deprived someone of a perfectly satisfactory and manageable private home. The resulting row about this application has appeared in the pages of the local press.

In some cases, though, a change of use can be satisfactory. For example we made no objection to an application for a change of use from offices to a dental surgery on South Parade. It really all depends on the circumstances.

We also expressed concerns about a proposed change of use from a shop to a bar and restaurant at 19 East Laith Gate. We were concerned that the bar would be twice the size of the restaurant and that any pub development should be restricted to the other side of the street, away from residential properties. Nevertheless the application was approved and the work has started.

We have looked at a number of proposals to build in the Bessacarr Conservation Areas. These are often quite difficult because builders are encouraged to build on brownfield sites yet this often appear to be in conflict with the need to maintain the quality of the conservation areas.

Many applications are not commented on because of the large amounts of land locked in behind the houses. However, some proposed buildings are simply too large and intrusive or threaten trees, and in these cases we do lodge objections. Nevertheless since February we have objected to only one such application.

We are concerned if a proposal is likely to affect the appearance of a listed building or conservation area. For example we didn't like the proposals to insert Georgian-type glazing bars into PVC windows at 15 Market Place. Whilst we welcome good quality restoration, this proposal was sadly inappropriate and would have detracted from the building's appearance.

One trend we have noticed has been an increase in the proposed number of flats in the town centre. A number of years ago the Civic Trust at national level ran a campaign to make use of abandoned or under used areas over shops. In some smaller historic properties this remains a problem. However, some larger properties may lend themselves more readily to conversion. We raised no objections to the proposals to convert much of Exchange Buildings in the Market Place Conservation Area into apartments, which seemed to be making good use of the property. Nor did we comment on the proposals to make the 3rd and 4th floors at Cussins House in Wood St into apartments. The latter faces a conservation area.

Proposals affecting pubs seemed to be a theme of our July meeting. An application to site some new canopies outside the Cumberland seemed acceptable, but at Edwards, 58 Hall Gate, we didn't like the proposed recessed entrance to form an alfresco area. A roller shutter was planned to replace the whole ground floor frontage and it was considered that this would be ugly and intrusive in the conservation area.



Rutland House



Edenfield

In August we considered a major application for 73 apartments at Rutland House, Town Field Villas. This is because Hill House has moved to Finningley and the buildings are no longer required by the school. The proposals are to convert Rutland House and Edenfield into apartments. These are two important Victorian buildings of considerable character and historic interest and we are pleased to see that they are being retained. There are also proposals to build two new blocks, one behind each of the houses. Overall, we do not object to the scheme. However we do have a few concerns around parking, landscaping and trees and we have written to the planners on these points.

Planning and Conservation Sub-committee

The Back Page - mima & The Transporter

The opening of a new gallery and an exhibition of art, design and furniture from the Bauhaus, the German design school of 1919-1933, was too good to miss, so we had a trip to Middlesbrough. As well as seeing the new Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (or mima) and its contents, it meant we could visit the Transporter Bridge, an iconic structure which I had never actually seen.



The very transparent building



The dramatic hanging wall



The stair and glazed south elevation

The £14.2 million mima (always lower case!) is a strikingly modern building by Dutch architect Erick van Egeraat. It has accommodation on three levels, accessed from a long staircase which runs almost the full height of the tall, dramatic public space. Most of the north elevation is fully glazed and looks on to a large civic square, mainly grassed and surrounded by other public buildings. Its solid walls are faced with unusually-modelled stone cladding. The south side, by contrast, is windowless, and faced in white render.



The familiar view – it is 260 metres long and almost 50 metres above the River Tees

The Transporter Bridge was built in 1911 for £84,000. It is now a grade 2 star listed building and the largest working bridge of its kind in the world. It runs like a ferry, back and forth every 15 minutes for 18 hours a day, but, unlike a boat, is not affected by the tides. The River Tees was a main centre for steel-making, and the bridge's design allowed the busy river traffic to pass easily.



The unfamiliar – the passenger gondola hung on steel cables waiting for traffic and pedestrians