



TRUST TOPICS

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Contents

Page 2

The Regent Square Lion
and its Pillar

Page 3

Winter Programme 2009
Local History Fair
Members' News

Pages 4 & 5

A Journey on Foot from
Hexthorpe to Conisbrough
Eyesore Corner

Pages 6, 7, 8 & 9

Art Deco –
Putting Fun into Function

Pages 10 & 11

Planning Matters

Page 11

Buffet Supper 2008

Page 12

The Back Page
Doncaster's Euston Arch



**The Guildhall, Frenchgate :
Doncaster's Euston Arch?
See The Back Page**

Doncaster Civic Trust : Registered Charity No. 508674 : Founded in 1946
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The Regent Square Lion and its Pillar



One of Doncaster's curiosities is the stone lion which stands on a pillar of stone blocks in Regent Square. Although it is close to the main road, on South Parade opposite The Salutation, it is obscured by the bus shelters, the waiting passengers and, until recently, the abundant landscaping.

Although not a very visible landmark, it is an important artifact. Or, rather, two important artifacts, which were brought to Regent Square and put together in 1902. The pillar is said to come from the ruins of St Mary Magdalene's Church which stood in the Market Place from Norman times to the mid C16. Parts of this building were incorporated in a new Town Hall, and only after its demolition in 1846 could the ancient masonry be removed.

The lion is reputed to have been a part of the Theatre which stood opposite the Woolpack Hotel in the Market Place. It was originally the Doncaster crest, mounted in the centre of the pediment at roof level. The building was erected in 1775 to the design of William Lindley, the architect who enlarged the Mansion House in 1801. It was dilapidated by 1880, and demolished in 1900.

Margaret Herbert, the Grand Theatre champion, had drawn the Trust's attention to the plight of the Regent Square Lion and its Pillar, and she had also spoken to Doncaster Museum's manager.



Far left: Broken leg (and previous repair?)
Left: Damage to face
Above: Weathering or frost damage

The Trust thinks that the lion carving is vulnerable to both vandalism and weathering. It is clear that part of a foreleg has broken off, its mouth has suffered damage and the stonework is eroding in places.

The Trust has offered to fund the removal of the Lion and Pillar from its present site, together with its re-erection in the Museum's secure gardens. We would also provide a plaque explaining the artifacts' history.

However, alternative solutions are being considered. One plan is for the Council to progress a major restoration scheme for Regent Square, which might include a secure perimeter of new railings. In this case the Lion and its Pillar could form an important feature in the improved park. But this looks like a long-term proposal.

We cannot talk about it for too long. We think the lion needs care and attention fairly quickly.

Winter Programme 2009

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

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

Local History Fair 22 November 2008

The Doncaster Local History Fair was held on the 22nd November at the College for the Deaf on Leger Way.

As usual there were plenty of stands representing many aspects of local history all across the Borough. There were also speakers on the Sand House, the Sprotbrough area and Brodsworth, although regrettably I was unable to hear them this year.

As a Trust we were very pleased with our allocated space. There was plenty of room for a double-sided display of our photographs, which always attract a great deal of attention.



In addition we were close to the entrance and were one of the first stands to be seen by visitors. The day was certainly successful for us as we sold a considerable number of publications as well as gaining some new members.

As usual, events of this sort can only work with the enthusiasm of its volunteer helpers. So a big thank you this year to Sue, Malcolm, Jill, Kath, Mary, Tina, John and Archie for all the work you put in on the day, as well as to Eric for his involvement in planning the event.

Peter Coote, Co-ordinator

Members' News : Fred Hibbert

We were saddened to hear of the death of Fred Hibbert, who had been an enthusiastic member of our Planning and Conservation Sub-committee for some years until he removed to the Isle of Man to be near his family. Fred had kept in touch, sending me press cuttings about Archibald Knox, a Manx artist contemporary of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In 2006 the Archibald Knox Society was founded in Douglas, Isle of Man. His widow rang me to say that September's Trust Topics had arrived shortly after Fred had passed away.

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A Journey on Foot from Hexthorpe Flatts to Conisbrough

Hugh Parkin 16 October 2008

Hugh Parkin's trip down memory lane started by describing how he used to catch a trolley bus from town to the gates of Hexthorpe Flatts. Magnesian limestone had been quarried here for centuries and although not of the highest quality, the stone was used for walls and roofing slates, or stone tiles, in the surrounding area.

The quarries became unprofitable and were disused by 1850 when the Town Council decided to change it into a public pleasure ground. They asked Joseph Paxton (of Chatsworth and later Crystal Palace fame) to design a scheme. After meeting the committee he advised them against it and nothing was done for a further 50 years. In 1902 the Council finally decided to make the Flatts into a park, and this was opened the same year on August Bank Holiday, with a great crowd of people enjoying themselves. By 1903 there was boating on the river Don, and by 1929 a café had been built and a bandstand erected in one of the former quarries which had been named the Dell. Apart from concerts with bands or choirs, plays were performed. In 1933, illuminations were installed in the Dell.

Continuing westwards along the river takes you to the Horseshoe Tunnel and a railway line started in 1910. It was completed in 1914 and included a bridge constructed of steel pillars filled with limestone.

Further on is the bridge which carries the A1(M) motorway over the river. This was opened by Ernest Marples, Minister of Transport, on 31 July 1961.



Across the river can be seen St Dominic's cave, of local legend fame, and the heights of Sprotbrough, on which the Copley family built Sprotbrough Hall in 1680. The Hall has long since been demolished, and only part of the stable block remains. Next is Engine Wood, named after an engine that was used for raising water from the river up to the Hall.

Sprotbrough Bridge and the River Don

Sprotbrough Lock was constructed as part of the Don Navigation Scheme starting in the 1730's. From 1841 a water bus carried passengers from Doncaster to Swinton.

Until 1849, river crossing was by ferry boat, hence the house named "Ferry House" where, reputedly, Sir Walter Scott stayed when he was writing Ivanhoe.

The bridge and toll house were built in 1849 for Sir Joseph William Copley of Sprotbrough Hall. Tolls collected here for passage over Sprotbrough Bridge were said to have been given by the Copley family to the Doncaster Dispensary.



Sprotbrough Bridge
Toll House 1849

Further along the river was the hamlet of Levitt Hagg which has a history of its own. From the 18th century it was involved in the quarrying and burning of limestone (to create quicklime for mortar and fertilizer). The building of small ships was also carried out. Recently, after years of quarrying, the area has been turned into a landfill site.

Walking upstream you come across Farcliffe Wood, Sprotbrough Flash Nature Reserve, Fellsight Flash, Cadeby Common and various other quarries, some of which provided the stone to build York Minster.

You then come to the Conisbrough Rainbow Bridge which was completed in 1849, and the spectacular Conisbrough Viaduct, built in 1909. This has 21 arches and was built from 12 million Conisbrough blue bricks. This line is now disused.



Further along on the left is the view of the magnificent keep of Conisbrough Castle (right).

And finally, after a short walk, you can cross the railway line and catch a train back to Doncaster.

Liz Brown



Eyesore Corner Revisited

The rash of unauthorised advertisements continues to spread over the skin of the former Odeon cinema. If this is allowed to continue, people might begin to think it is considered acceptable on a building in a conservation area.



Art Deco – Putting Fun into Function

Professor Clyde Binfield - 20 November 2008

This was no ordinary slide show. Professor Binfield used a very carefully crafted commentary to set out what Art Deco was; what it wasn't; and how it came about.

The 1925 Paris exhibition *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* is regarded as the start of the movement. The name Art Deco was taken up widely after 1968, when the art historian Bevis Hillier wrote "Art Deco of the 20s and 30s", making a snappy abbreviation from the original French.



Art Deco was modern and it was an international style, but it wasn't modernist.

The International Style or international modernism (left) was rational, philosophical and intellectual.

Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, 1931
Architect: Le Corbusier (photo Arcaid)

Art Deco was fleeting, irrational, commercial, stylish and contemporary (below right). Surfaces played a big part, but the style was no mere veneer. It had the shock of the new, but the style can still be placed in the development of design.

It was quite short-lived: from 1925 until 1939 and the Second World War. Its origins lay not only in Art Nouveau, where geometric patterns had been developed by some designers alongside the more familiar whiplash curves, but also in the Futurism, Expressionism and Cubism movements. In 1921 Tutankhamen's tomb was opened and world-wide interest grew in Egyptian design motifs. Anthropologists published studies of other cultures and their art. The world was changing, with aeroplanes, mass production and machines. Everything seemed to be metal and streamlined.



The Breakwater Hotel, Ocean Drive, Miami Beach 1939
(photo Patricia Bayer)

At this point I was hoping that the Professor was going to show a Gresley A4 Pacific steam locomotive, as we were in Doncaster, but no. He could have done.

Art Deco was no style for the Thought Police. Although it was the first truly international style, because it was taken up so widely, there were no great Art Deco architects. Art Deco lacked the rigour and strategy to be an intellectual art movement. Many leading architects were in Germany in the 20s, and made their way to the United States, some via Britain, before the War. They took with them the ethos of the Bauhaus and International Modernism and captured the American architecture schools for their great architecture, not for Art Deco.

At this point, Professor Binfield told us that his talk hadn't yet begun – he was only giving us the background.



The lecture (you couldn't really call it just a talk) began with an image of a building in Covent Garden. It looked like a grand classical house of the 18th century, with a wealth of Baroque elements.

We were told that it was, in fact, an office building with floors of equal height, despite the carefully devised elevation. It was in the "Wrenaissance" style, a name given to Edwardian Baroque, where motifs and elements "culled and adapted from the golden age of English architecture were part and parcel of the movement". It was actually the offices of Country Life magazine, by Edwin Lutyens, 1904, shown left. It was a good, naughty building by a good, naughty architect, said the speaker, who pointed out details of the design which anticipated those found in Art Deco. (photo Richard Fellows, Edwardian Architecture)

The next building was by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, his only work in England, at Northampton. In 1916 he remodelled a narrow terraced house at 78 Derngate as the first home of the newly married Bassett-Lowkes. Mackintosh had little significant architectural work in Glasgow after 1907, and had moved to Walberswick on the Suffolk coast to paint, mostly watercolour flower studies. We heard how the locals there had mistaken him for a spy, with his strange (Scottish) accent and his continual sketching. So the Mackintoshes relocated to Chelsea.



Front door, 78 Derngate

Bassett-Lowke knew of Mackintosh's earlier work and wanted something special, and he was not disappointed. The geometric patterns in the hall at Derngate were original and striking. The chevrons and triangles could have been designed 15 years later.



Three years later, Mackintosh designed the guest bedroom at 78 Derngate in a riot of blue and white stripes.

After the Bassett-Lowkes had George Bernard Shaw to stay, he was asked, "How could you sleep in that bedroom?" "I shut my eyes" was his reply.

A few years later in 1926, Bassett-Lowke wanted to build a new detached house on a plot in the Northampton suburbs. By this time, however, Mackintosh and his wife had made their home in Port Vendres, southern France, so Bassett-Lowke commissioned Peter Behrens, a German architect, to build him "New Ways".

Guest bedroom, 78 Derngate, 1919 (photo Colin Baxter)

Although a renowned modernist, Behrens incorporated design elements of Art Deco.



New Ways, shown in Ideal Home Magazine January 1927



2006 photo showing its more traditional neighbours

We were shown Stockholm City Hall 1911-23 by Ragnar Ostberg, a powerful brick building with a tower, and asked to compare it with Norwich City Hall 1932-38. Another Northern European building was the Atlantis cinema in Bremen, 1931, with its glass block walling, “the Art Deco give-away”, said our speaker. It had a dramatic rocket-like staircase. Art Deco was the style of cinemas and theatres, entertainment and glamour.

We had seen examples from the United States, great buildings in New York, and a concentration in Miami Beach, in Florida. Others were in Manila in the Philippines, Brazil in South America, and Havana in Cuba.

The Professor then took us on an imaginary journey with visitors from Australia, itself home to many Art Deco buildings, to London. We saw Claridge’s and The Savoy and their stylish interiors, and then a series of 1930s buildings which visitors would use: For travelling: the Daimler Garage, London Transport Headquarters (with sculpture by Epstein, Gill and Moore), Imperial Airways Terminal and Victoria Coach Station; and for shopping: Heals (with “a truly smoochy staircase”), Derry and Thoms and Harrods.

A trip out on the Western Avenue took us to the former Hoover Factory, by Wallis Gilbert and Partners, 1933, (“where Egypt meets the Aztecs – and wins”), one of this country’s best known Art Deco buildings, and now a Tesco. Fortunately the new signage is discreet, and the building still says Hoover.

Back into the city to the BBC’s Broadcasting House, 1932, with its curves, geometric patterns and sculpture by Eric Gill and Gilbert Bayes.

Right: Broadcasting House, with in foreground John Nash’s All Souls’ Church, Langham Place

Far right: Eric Gill’s Prospero and Ariel carving above the main entrance 1931



Charles Holden, who designed many buildings for London Transport including their HQ, also designed London University's Senate House, 1932-37. Our speaker thought that its Aztec bulk crushed the heart out of Bloomsbury. At 19 storeys high, it certainly dominates the elegant London squares nearby.

And so to our final destination: Eltham Palace was acquired in 1305, and its Great Hall built in 1470. It was the boyhood home of Henry VIII but after the 16th century it was eclipsed by Greenwich Palace and declined rapidly. It was used as a farm and its parkland was cleared and reduced in size. The hall was saved from demolition in the 19th century but despite its restoration in 1828, it was still used as a barn.



In the 1930s a lease was acquired by Stephen and Virginia Courtauld, a wealthy couple whose family had done well in funeral clothing and brewing. They built a new house adjoining the hall.

Although English Heritage calls this “an ultra-modern design”, this has to be just the interior.

The Professor suggested its exterior was “sub-Wren and sub-Lutyens, definitely not English and possibly Louis XIII or XIV”.

Entrance Hall, Eltham Palace (photo English Heritage)

The Courtaulds occupied their new house for only eight years, from 1936-44. It was then occupied by Army educational units until 1992. English Heritage took it over in 1995 and opened it to the public, restored or replicated to its Art Deco splendour, in 1999.

We enjoyed a tour of the lavish interior, with its streamlined lighting, built-in furniture, pink leather chairs, aluminium coved ceilings and fine woods, like bird's eye maple. We saw an electric fire set in a marble surround of black and white marble in a Greek Key design; and a bathroom in yellow “Vitrolite” from Pilkington's glass – possibly from Kirk Sandall?

Our speaker pointed out the bathroom's bidet; “bidet fixe” was his comment, a pun on the French *idée fixe*, meaning an obsession. I felt that I needed to know where that came from.

It was a wonderful evening, full of history, design, wisdom and entertainment. It was a pleasure to hear such a well-considered and modulated presentation.

And the bidet fixe? The late Osbert Lancaster, cartoonist, artist, writer and all-round genius, had a mother-in-law obsessed with hygiene to such an extent that she travelled abroad not only with her own sheets but also her bidet, an elaborate Victorian model, decorated with hand-painted violets and lilies of the valley. Once Osbert, much to his embarrassment, had to carry this receptacle the length of the Blue Train after it had been mislaid on the Calais quayside. His wife Karen attempted to ease the situation by explaining: “You must realise, darling, that my poor dear mother suffers from a bidet-fixe.”

Osbert Lancaster, writing about his mother-in-law in his memoir *With an Eye to the Future* (1967):

Archie Sinclair

Planning Matters

The Planning and Conservation sub-committee meets every month to consider whether to object or comment on applications relating to conservation areas, listed buildings and major projects.

There has been a decline in the overall number of planning applications in recent months, no doubt due to the economic downturn. Consequently our objections have been few, but we have been fully occupied with other conservation matters, including some reviews of designated conservation areas.

In September we expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed alterations to both the ground floor and first floor of Edwards, the pub on Hall Gate. The frontage of Edwards was not old but it made a positive contribution to the street. By contrast we felt the proposed alterations would detract from the appearance of the Conservation area.

Also in September we studied the outline proposals for the Civic and Cultural Quarter. We were concerned that some of the development was too high, notably residential development of 5 storeys close to St Peter's Church and a proposed 4 storey hotel on the Civic Theatre site. Both should be 3 storeys. In addition, we felt that the whole plan lacked sufficient greenery. This could be remedied with avenues of trees. We also felt there was insufficient space between the tall buildings.

We also commented on an application for changes to 8, Market Place, in Thorne's conservation area. One of the proposals was to replace the windows in the upper floors and we requested that these should be sash windows to match the adjoining property. The two buildings together form one architectural unit.

We looked at a number of proposals for new development but only objected to one: a proposal to build 143 dwellings off Littleworth Lane, Old Rossington. According to the Unitary Development Plan, this land is designated as a countryside policy area not housing.

Doncaster MBC is reviewing all its designated conservation areas. These areas usually contain a mix of listed and unlisted buildings. The main advantage of the designation is that it helps to protect the character of these conservation areas by ensuring that no building can be demolished without consent. Trust Topics has previously reported our comments on the review of the Market Place and High Street conservation areas, undertaken by consultants.

Since September the Trust's views have been sought by Doncaster MBC on reviews of two further areas, St. George's and Newton.

St. George's Conservation Area is an important part of the town with the fine Victorian Gothic Minster at its heart.



It also includes a number of other key buildings including the old college, the former Old Crown pub and the Clergy House, also known as Doctor Miller's house after the musician and antiquarian who once lived there. Our main comment on this report was to state that we felt that the Memorial Hall, shown left, situated behind the church, contributed to the character of the area and should not be undervalued. This important area is now receiving attention: some time ago we also commented on the Minster Quarter Regeneration plans.

Less well known is Newton, a tiny hamlet hidden away between the suburbia of Sprotbrough Road and the River Don. It has considerable character and, after a visit, we agreed that we were happy with the detailed report. Some re-drawing of the eastern boundary of the conservation area will have to be made due to some changes in the features of the landscape, but all the buildings will remain within the designated area.

Planning and Conservation Sub-committee

Buffet Supper December 2008

After the previous year's less-than-cheery event, the Trust decided to things differently. Although we chose to return to St Peter's in Chequer Road, for its excellent parking and access, we were determined that all efforts had to be made to bring the venue up to a comfortable temperature. And, in spite of the cold weather on the night, there was a warm welcome for members in the hall. We also decided that we would have a shorter talk, and keep it "in house", to keep down the time (and the cost!). Eric Braim had offered a collection of slides of Doncaster's demolished buildings which he had taken mostly in the 1960's. I added some of my own, and put together a virtual tour of the town centre with 50 images. We sped through these and got on to the main business of the evening – the buffet. Our usual team of Tina, the two Sues and their husbands, Malc and Colin, John and helpers Mary and Mairaid did a fantastic job, and members rallied round at the end to put the room back in order. So, thanks to everyone for their efforts, and special thanks to the Church for responding to our plea (via John) for more heat.



Before: Tina takes stock of her desserts



After: The proof of the pudding...



John caught red-handed

Below: The main attraction of the evening – the buffet!



Many hands make light work



Archie Sinclair

The Back Page - Doncaster's Euston Arch?

Last September we received a fascinating letter from a local resident. He was appealing to us for help in finding the demolished Guildhall's portico columns.

Doncaster's Guildhall of 1848 was one of the lost buildings featured in the talk at the Buffet Supper in December. It was an imposing neo-classical building in blackened sandstone with Corinthian columns and stood on the Great North Road in Frenchgate. After the new Police HQ and Courts were built in 1968, the old Guildhall was demolished, and on its site a new extension was constructed for Marks & Spencer, linked to its Baxtergate premises.



Frenchgate, looking north, with the Guildhall dominating the street

The letter writer said that when Doncaster MBC opened up the Sandy Lane tip to start the developments at Lakeside in the early 1990's he saw the segments of the Guildhall's portico columns. He informed Doncaster Museum, and there were suggestions that the columns could be erected at the entrance to Sandall Beat or at Cusworth Hall, but nothing ever materialized. The columns have disappeared but, he said, they were last reported by locals in Hyde Park to have been used in the construction of the roads around Lakeside as it was developed.

He wondered if they were stolen, or did Doncaster MBC sell them? Or do they now occupy a position in a councillor's, or ex-councillor's, garden? He appealed to the Doncaster Civic Trust for "anything constructive as to where to start the search, or any information whatsoever".

The writer was hoping that the Trust had some inside knowledge about the columns, but actually we don't. Sorry. The writer knows much more than we do. In short, he has first-hand knowledge that the segments were in or on the Sandy Lane tip, and second-hand knowledge that the sections of stone were used in the engineering works at Lakeside. Confirmation of their Lakeside resting place could only come from Doncaster MBC's engineers or their contractors.



Euston Arch 1837 Architect: Philip Hardwick

But the mystery of the whereabouts of parts of a neo-classical landmark is not a new one. Readers may remember London's Euston Arch, a monument destroyed in the modernisation of the station in 1961. Some of the stones ended up in Bromley, in the garden of the demolition contractor. Then, in 1994, the broadcaster and architectural historian Dan Cruickshank discovered that about 60 per cent of them had been used to plug a large hole in the bed of the Prescott Channel, a canal in the East End. The stone is Yorkshire gritstone and reputed to be in good condition. There is now a campaign to re-erect the Arch using all available original material.