



TRUST TOPICS

Doncaster Civic Trust Newsletter ©

Issue No. 38

September 2009



Contents

Page 2

Inaugural Civic Lecture
Change of Venue : Please Note

Page 3

Members' News
Winter Programme 2009-2010
David Rix

Page 4

Local History Fair
Executive Committee
Eyesore Corner

Pages 5

Odeon - The Last Picture Show
Its Role in Doncaster Music

Page 7-9

Summer Outings:
Markenfield Hall
Bramham Park

Pages 9-10

Planning Matters

Page 11-12 The Back Pages

Destination Herten
German Twin Town



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

Inaugural Civic Lecture

Doncaster's Blue Building in High Street originally housed the Design Centre, on the first floor, as well as the Tourist Information Centre at ground level. Because of a shortage of funds, the Design Centre was closed and the space became offices. After a successful bid for external funding, a part-time worker, Jayne Bradley, has been employed to promote the Design Centre and its events.

Doncaster's new Design Centre, to be re-branded 'The Shed' has organised an architecture week which is themed 'A Sense of Place'. It will run from 14 – 20 September and all events are free.

Doncaster Civic Trust was keen to support this initiative and agreed to sponsor the main event on the opening evening, Monday 14 September. We had always thought that now and again the Trust should invite speakers of national or international recognition, in addition to the regional and local speakers that provide us with our traditional varied programme of talks.

Robert Harbison is Professor of Architectural History and Theory at London Metropolitan University. He obtained a BA at Amherst College and a PhD at Cornell University. His research interests range widely across cultural history and include gardens, architecture and the other arts, overlaps between different cultures, and the Baroque in all its forms. He has taught at London's Architectural Association, Cornell University and Washington University, St Louis.

Details for this Event

Monday 14 September 6.00pm - 8.30pm Inaugural Civic Lecture

Hall Cross School Library, Hall Cross Upper School, Thorne Road, Doncaster DN1 2HY.

Disobeying Orders: Imaginative transformations of the Classical

Professor Robert Harbison of London Metropolitan University.

The long survival of classical architecture with its highly conventionalized orders is often a story of creative conflict between tradition and the disruptive promptings of designers with ideas of their own.

The talk will focus on a series of unconventional classicists including Michelangelo, Borromini, Hawksmoor and Soane. The moral: escaping from classicism may be harder than we think.

This event has been added to our Winter Programme, on page 3.

Do not miss a great opportunity to hear a recognised authority on architectural history, in the setting of George Gilbert Scott's neo-gothic Grammar School of 1869, now the Hall Cross Upper School Library.

A Change of Venue – Members Please Note

The Civic Lecture will be the last time we will be able to meet at Hall Cross School. The careers room, which has been our regular and cosy home for many years, is being split and transformed into a business centre, with fixed furniture and computers. So, at very short notice, we are relocating to St Peter's RC Church Hall in Chequer Road, where we have held our Christmas Buffet Supper for the last few years. It's at ground level with good parking and toilets, and access will be much easier than at Hall Cross Upper School.

Winter Programme 2009 – 2010

All events except the Civic Lecture to take place at
St Peter's RC Church Hall, Chequer Road, Doncaster

2009

Monday 14 September at 6.00 pm at Hall Cross Upper School Library
Inaugural Civic Lecture (see page 2)

Professor Robert Harbison of London Metropolitan University on
"Disobeying Orders: Imaginative Transformations of the Classical"

Thursday 15 October 2009 at 7.30 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
John Dabell on "Hickleton Hall"

Thursday 19 November 2009 at 7.15 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
Annual General Meeting, followed by
Garry Swann on "The History of Doncaster Royal Infirmary"

Wednesday 9 December 2009 at 7.30 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
Christmas Buffet Supper
Brian Elliott on "Postcards, People, Places and Public Art" (title to be confirmed)

2010

Thursday 14 January 2010 at 7.30 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
Richard Bell on "Hyde Park Cemetery"

Thursday 18 February 2010 at 7.30 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
Sue Clifton on "An Embroidered Family History in Wall Panels"

Thursday 18 March 2010 at 7.30 pm at St Peter's RC Church Hall
Professor Clyde Binfield on "Twentieth Century Dutch"

Members' News : David Rix



David Rix died on 16 May 2009 in Doncaster Royal Infirmary, after a short illness. He had served on the Trust's Executive since 1971, giving 38 years' service, and was a regular supporter of all of our activities. He was a member of the Tree Committee for many years including the time when the Trust was sponsoring many of the trees planted by Doncaster MBC on major roads.

David began his career as an architectural technician with the former County Borough Architect's department after completing his National Service. He was to remain with Doncaster Council until his retirement. He was an active member of the Friends of the Grand Theatre group and a member of St Mary's Church in Wheatley, not far from his home.

He was very enthusiastic about many things, particularly aeroplanes and cars. Members remember that he was the proud owner of an immaculate Lancia Fulvia, quite an exotic vehicle in its day. A collection of early or vintage children's toys which he had collected will find a new home at a museum of childhood.

Local History Fair 26 September – Always a Good Show

This year's Local History Fair will be a one-day event held on Saturday 26 September 2009, from 10.00 am until 4.00 pm, at Doncaster Museum, Chequer Road.

The Trust will be having a stand and display as usual, and will be selling its own publications. There is always a great variety of local heritage groups, and something to interest everyone.

We would be pleased to see our members supporting the Fair, and even more pleased if they can find some time to help run the stand. You won't be on your own!

Volunteers should contact Peter Coote on Doncaster 532202.

Executive Committee – Serious Business

This committee is the decision-making body within the Trust. It meets four times a year, for about two hours. All the Trust's other groups report in to the "Exec", and it controls matters of finance and policy, rather than detail, which is left to the groups.

As well as a chairman, secretary and treasurer, our constitution allows us to have up to 20 members on the "Exec". We must have at least 12. By 2008 the "Exec" had reduced to the minimum, and with the recent loss of David Rix, we are now constitutionally short, at only 11 members.

Each year at the AGM, the Chairman thanks the members for supporting the Trust's meetings and activities, and asks if some members might like to consider helping to run the Trust, being a bit more than just a supporter. It doesn't mean you have to come out of the audience and get up on the stage, just join a group of up to 14 people who meet to attend to the Trust's business four times a year.

I am optimistic that members will want to secure the future of the Trust, and our problem will be short-term.



Eyesore Corner



Left: overkill: the Sleep Giant seems to need giant signs, presumably unauthorised, on this site in Hallgate Conservation Area.



Right: an altogether more restrained approach: minimal signage on a listed building on the opposite side of the same street.

The Last Picture Show

As I write this on 19 August 2009, workers are erecting scaffolding on the Thorne Road elevation of the former Odeon cinema.

The building will soon be sheeted, and its demolition carried out, unseen. This will be to preserve the public's safety, rather than its sensitivities.

This very interesting image of the Gaumont Palace was included in the Design Statement which accompanied the latest proposals for the site.



The film showing is “Princess Charming”, starring Evelyn Laye and Max Miller, and released in 1934. The Gaumont was opened on 3 September 1934, and in this very early view the artificial stone cladding is clean and new, looking like real Portland stone.

The sculpted frieze below the upper balcony has been a feature of great local interest since it was revealed when the metal cladding was taken off on in June (see Planning Matters on page 10 for more details).

The Odeon : Reflections on its Contribution to Doncaster Music

The decline, even the possible disappearance of the Odeon, formerly Gaumont, is, as indicated in the article in Newsletter 37, a sad business. Its role in Doncaster's musical heritage is worthy of recall. Its predecessor on the site, the elegant Majestic (initially South Parade Cinema) had a respectable orchestra in the “silent” film era. When the Gaumont opened in 1934 a major feature was a superb Compton organ, said at the time to be one of the best theatre/cinema instruments in the United Kingdom; successive Gaumont organists Hebron Morland and Con Docherty broadcast quite often and were capable composer/arrangers.

Not every cinema had, still less has, a stage but the Gaumont was noted for its facility in that respect plus a good sized orchestra pit. For many years Doncaster Amateur Operatic Society put on its annual production there, confident of its ability to fill 1,700 seats six times during the week. Up to the 1980s this stage hosted the (old) Carl Rosa Opera, English Music Theatre, the short-lived Yorkshire Opera, (English National) Opera North, Scottish Opera, Northern Ballet Theatre and other ballet companies. Concerts also took place: an important performance of Handel's Messiah in summer 1943, when the cinema was crowded and which led to the founding of the Doncaster (and District) Choral Society, the opening event of Doncaster Arts Festival 1966 with the Wheatsheaf and Police Choirs and pianist Semprini (again the available 1,732 tickets were greatly over-subscribed), at least one visit from the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra, many band concerts, brass and military, and contests, and of course the Beatles.

The Odeon is greatly missed for its music alone.

Philip Scowcroft

Summer Outings 2009

Markenfield Hall and Ripon: Tuesday 2nd June 2009

The weather forecast promised a hot, sunny day so the comfort of an air-conditioned coach was very welcome for this day trip, my first since joining the Civic Trust. A trouble-free run to Ripon gave us plenty of time to take in the sights of this historic small market town with its interesting cathedral and small museums, and provided a choice of eating places for lunch to suit all tastes and pockets.



The Gatehouse

Image: John Furlong

We set off to arrive at nearby Markenfield Hall for 2.00 pm. The Hall is one of only a few medieval houses that still retain many of their original characteristics. The approach is through parkland, down a narrow winding lane until entering through the working farmyard where we were greeted by an imposing moat, surrounding the walled courtyard with a striking 16th century gatehouse.

It is likely that the site, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book, was first built on during the 1200's, perhaps around the time the nearby Fountains Abbey, with which it shares a water source, was being built. Much of the main house is dated slightly later with a licence to crenellate (fortify) being granted by Edward II in 1310. The main building is L-shaped with the Great Hall taking up the northern arm and the Chapel the eastern one. Later additions provided accommodation for the tenant farmer and some farm workers. A tenant farmer is still in residence working the surrounding land.



Entrance Elevation

Image: John Furlong

The Hall was occupied by the de Markenfield family but in Elizabethan times Sir Thomas Markenfield and his uncle Richard Norton, from the nearby Norton Conyers estate, chose to support Mary Queen of Scots.

She was imprisoned in nearby Bolton Castle in what became known as the Rising of the North, when in 1569 an alliance of Catholic families tried to get Mary reinstated as the rightful Queen. This ended disastrously and the Markenfield and Norton families were forced to flee abroad with their estates being confiscated.

The land was forfeited and for 200 years was largely neglected and abandoned to the care of successive tenanted farmers. Paradoxically it was probably this that ensured the survival of the building in a relatively unaltered state, although it did begin to fall into decay. It was saved when in 1761 it was purchased by Sir Fletcher Norton, the First Lord Grantley, a direct descendent of Thomas Markenfield. The Grantley family still owns it and, after returning to live here in the 1980s, began a programme of restoration.

An informative volunteer guide showed us the undercroft which still retains part of the vaulted ceiling from the earlier house. This is now the entrance hall but would once have been the main storage area. Access to the Great Hall above was gained from an external staircase, traces of which can still be seen on the outside of the building. The Great Hall is now fitted out as a large, comfortable library and sitting area which reflects the life and interests of the Grantley family. Adjoining the Hall is the Chapel which once separated the private family apartments from the public Great Hall. This Chapel is a Catholic one and classed as an Ecclesiastical Peculiar, meaning it is exempt from the Bishop's control. However, good relations are maintained with the Anglican Church and services alternate between the Catholic and Anglican forms of service. Recent restoration to rebuild a load-bearing wall has been carried out very sympathetically with the modern work blending in without trying to imitate the original stonework.

We spent about 1½ hours in the Hall leaving just enough time for those who wished to walk round the moat braving the park's herd of cows, complete with bull. Our excellent day out was nicely rounded off by a pre-arranged visit to a neighbouring garden centre for tea and cakes.

Markenfield Hall has limited public opening and group visits are limited to only one group at a time so this was a valuable opportunity to see a fascinating piece of history.

Gill Johnson.

Bramham Park and York Gate : Thursday 23 July 2009

The usual band of twenty-four loyal "day trippers" armed with umbrellas (just in case) arrived at our first port of call, Bramham Park, "just down the road". And the sun was out.

Bramham Park is one of the greatest formal landscapes in Britain, planned in the French manner of Louis XIV by Robert Benson, later Lord Bingley (1675-1731), who was MP for York and a Chancellor of the Exchequer. He acquired his ideas while doing the Grand Tour at the age of 22.



Eager to explore, we entered the Hall which had once been open to the sky, so the walls and columns were weathered. There were oil paintings hung on the stone walls and marble busts in the niches – and we were met by a table holding coffee pots and four enormous home-made cakes. What a heavenly start!

We split into two groups, one setting off for the gardens. My group (the noisy ones!) were led around the house by the new House Manager who had been in the Blues and Royals with Nicholas Lane Fox, who now runs the estate. He is a descendent of Lord Bingley, and lives with his wife Rachel and their five children, six dogs and his father George, who inherited the estate in 1971.

The house was completed in 1710 and eventually passed to a George Lane Fox "The Gambler" who ran up betting debts of £175,000. So, when the house was gutted by fire in 1828, there was no money to restore it. For 80 years it remained a shell until, in 1906, it was brought back to its former glory.

The house has to earn its keep and it has been used as a set for films: *Brideshead* and *Finding Jane Austen*, and for a Laura Ashley photo shoot. The grounds are used not only for the Horse Trials, but also for the Leeds 3-day pop festival each year. What I do like when touring a house is looking at the family photos in their frames.



Then it was our turn for the gardens. The 900 acres of parkland is listed grade one on the Register of Parks and Gardens. The predominantly wooded area is cut through with avenues, the intersections marked with statues and temples creating arresting vistas. There are the Cascade Ponds, the T-Pond and a Gothic Temple (left).

While looking around the hidden Dogs' Graveyard I came across a simple grave with a cross, with the name and dates of someone who appeared to be Mr George Lane Fox's late wife. How fabulous to be buried on one's own land.

Most of the temples and follies, and the Chapel, are the work of the architect James Paine. These are all accessible to those who pay to visit the garden, but we were lucky to be shown around the private family home.



York Gate Garden

We had our picnic on the bus, though few of us were hungry after "the cake", and off we set towards Leeds to York Gate. This is a one-acre garden created by the Spencer family between 1951 and 1994. Frederick and Sybil Spencer purchased the property in 1951 when their only son Robin was 17 years old. Until that time it had been a farm. At first they kept a small amount of livestock.

The Spencers laid out the garden and, after his father's death in 1962, Robin was largely responsible for its development. Robin died suddenly in 1982 at the age of 48, and his mother carried on adding to the plant collection. On her death in 1994 the garden passed into the care of Perennial, a charity dedicated to supporting those in need from the world of horticulture. Titchmarsh need not worry!



The garden is run by volunteers who show their enthusiasm. It has various "rooms", like the Fern Border, Herb Garden, Kitchen Garden, Canal Garden, White and Silver Garden, the Dell, and more. There was also the Plant Stall. Such temptation!

How lucky we were. With the visit almost completed, the heavens opened. So it was a mad dash for the tea and biscuits.



Bearing our purchases we returned to the bus and back home. This trip was to two places so near to Doncaster, but I'd never been to either. I can say that they are both well worth a visit. So do go.

Sue Burley
Photos: Peter Coote

Planning Matters

Members of the Planning and Conservation Sub Committee meet every month to consider commenting on planning applications likely to impact on the quality of the environment.

Although we are kept busy, nevertheless since the last Trust Topics we have only objected to two applications.

Firstly, we considered the plans for the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf on Leger Way, who wished to redevelop parts of the present site.

The main school building (right) would not be affected.



However, this was a major application, involving much of our time.

We were certainly pleased with some of the proposals, notably the intention to retain a school building of 1902 by architect J.G Walker (right). Some other elements, however, gave us cause for concern.



One of the proposals was to build a new enterprise centre on the corner of Leger Way and Town Moor Avenue. Although the present view (right) is hardly inspiring, we felt that the proposed building was too tall and should be reduced to three storeys. In addition we felt that the design was unsatisfactory and alien to the character of the conservation area.



Some student accommodation, in the form of large semi-detached houses, was proposed on the playing fields fronting Town Moor Avenue. We made no objection to these proposals but we did ask that attention be paid to the detailing of the properties. We also requested that care be taken to ensure that any access to the proposed accommodation from Town Moor Avenue does not endanger the trees in the grass verge or within the site.

We did not comment on the individual designs of all the proposed buildings but we were concerned that the proposals included a mix of designs and materials.

In the 80s and 90s the new buildings were of red brick, and we were surprised that this was not to be continued in the new buildings.



Playing fields frontage at the School for the Deaf



Housing opposite on Town Moor Avenue

The other application related to a proposed pharmacy at Cavendish Court on South Parade. There were considerable discrepancies between the drawings and the applicant's Design and Access Statement and for that reason we requested that the application be refused.

Readers may remember that we were content with the last application for the redevelopment of the Gaumont/Odeon corner site. In June we were consulted about further proposed changes. We felt that these were improvements, notably the proposal to relocate the frieze from the front of the cinema and incorporate it within the new site.



On Sunday 21 June 2009 the cladding was removed from the façade of the former Gaumont/Odeon cinema. There was damage to the curved high level balcony, which had been cut back to accommodate the flat metal framework for the cladding, and the restaurant glazing had disappeared (left).

However, amid the destruction, the frieze has survived remarkably well, it would appear. The developer, Lazarus, intends to re-fix its seven panels at the rear corner of the new building, facing towards Christ Church Terrace

The frieze was by the cinema architect's brother, Newbury A Trent, and depicts "the progress of a film from its conception, the writing of a scenario, the building of the set, to the shooting and completion" (detail below).



Another aspect of our work involves commenting on the Council's review of its 46 Conservation Areas. This is being undertaken in stages, with Conisbrough being the latest to be reviewed. There are a number of recommendations, including extending part of the Conservation Area, whilst removing other parts. We have visited Conisbrough and we are in the process of replying to DMBC. We agree with most of the recommendations but also feel some amendments to the proposals are appropriate.

Planning and Conservation Sub Committee

The Back Pages

Destination: Herten

Herten is a former mining town in Northern Germany which has been twinned with Doncaster for 20 years. In May we travelled to Germany with the Herten Friendship Club to commemorate the event.



Much of the town centre appears to have been rebuilt in the 1960s and later and, although pleasant enough with plenty of greenery, it had little of architectural interest. Indeed we were told that until well into the nineteenth century it was a hamlet with just a few scattered cottages. However on the edge of town there were a few buildings of note.

We particularly liked the Schloss (above). It has its origins in the 14th century but the present building dates from 1650 with some rebuilding after a fire in 1702. It is surrounded by a large park which you can access right from the centre of Herten. It was bought by the council some years ago and extensively restored. Before that it had stood inaccessible and unused for many years, as the owner lived elsewhere.

The building shown right is a former farmhouse, which looks to be half timbered, dated 1783, now standing amongst 1950's development.



The image below shows the interesting detail on the lintel above the door in the gable.



The building known as the Katzenbusch (overleaf), with Art Nouveau detailing, dates from 1904 and is now a restaurant. It has interesting external ornamentation depicting animals, plants and birds. The interior has some interesting original features too.



There is a large Greek community here and this is their new and impressive church (left).

I photographed the building, a doctor's house of about 1900 (below). It has a nice frieze but the window design is bizarre - a bow window with the corner of the building corbelled out above it.



Peter and Sue Coote

The editor is very grateful to the six members who have contributed to this edition.

Trust Topics is edited by:
Archie Sinclair, 43 Ellers Avenue, Bessacarr, Doncaster DN4 7DY
e-mail: sinclairs@e-malin.freemove.co.uk
tel: 01302 538225