



TRUST TOPICS

Doncaster Civic Trust Newsletter ©

Issue No. 50

September 2013



Contents

Page 2

Two Town Trails

Page 3

Members' News

Pages 4-5

A Photograph from the Past

Page 6

Five Facts about the
Market Place: Doncaster Show

Page 7

Anyone for Croquet?

Page 8

The Hall Cross

Page 9

Planning Matters
E-newsletters?

Pages 10-11

A Nearby Gem :
Historic Newark

Page 12 The Back Page

Town Centre Living



Historic Newark

(The Town of Eight Trails)

See pages 10-11

Member of



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Two Summer Town Trail Walks

One: South Parade

On a warm but overcast Sunday morning in July, I led a small group of members and friends to explore the history and origins of South Parade.

Setting off from the corner of Waterdale, we were soon discussing some of the mysteries of the street. For example, there are two doors in use and two other blocked-up doorways at the Pillared Houses yet there were only ever three houses. Which one was the real doorway? We didn't have the answer though!

Further along, we stopped at the Hall, a building with a fascinating history, but now standing empty and looking somewhat forlorn.



As I spoke to the group outside the Salutation, the landlady Sue Bee recognised some of us and asked 'Would we like a tour of the cellars?' 'Yes, please' we replied. I was brought up at the Salutation, but this was my first visit to the cellars for many years. A visit to the vaulted Regency beer storage area, as well as the original cellars under the eighteenth century inn, followed. This was a kind and most unexpected interlude. Bidding Sue and daughter Gayle farewell, we continued on our way.

We made our way up Hall Cross Hill, looking at fanlights, boot-scrappers, signs, iron railings, bell-pulls and many other details of the Georgian (and one Victorian) houses, until finally we reached the summit of the hill, and, at the top, Hall Cross itself. The walk ended here. I had promised it would last 60 minutes but with our diversion we had been walking for 75 minutes. There were only eight of us on the walk but there were plenty of questions and discussions which always make it more enjoyable, for the leader anyway.

Peter Coote (with thanks also to Sue and Gayle Bee)

Two: The Original Town Trail

A week later, I led another small group of members and friends on what was meant to be the full trail, to last about two hours. In fact, we were all swapping stories and facts about most of the buildings that we passed, as we made our way rather slowly up High Street.

We made better progress up Hall Gate, and then took our time on South Parade. By the time we reached the Hall Cross, our two hours were almost up. Undaunted, we investigated the inscriptions on the cross, trying to make sense of the Ancient Norman. (see page 8)



We walked into the park in Regent Square where Peter Coote explained why this land was developed later than South Parade. The Hall (now Denison House) wanted to keep its open aspect! We had a look at Christ Church, the Terrace and the Grammar School, and called it a day.

Archie Sinclair

Members' News

Winter Programme 2013-14

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

All on Thursdays at 7.30 pm

2013

VERY SOON 19 September Victoria Henshaw on Doncaster's Urban Smellscape

10 October Helen Houlst & Richard Green on Holgate Mill, York

14 November Annual General Meeting and Buffet Supper

There will be no meeting in December.

2014

23 January Brian Sprakes on Stained Glass from Churches to Houses

20 February Jackie Wrigglesworth on Art Nouveau Buildings in Europe

20 March Michelle Stevens on Landscape Gardens

17 April Members' Social Forum

The Tree Sub-committee

The Trust used to have a tree committee, convened by Eric Braim. It did valuable work, notably part-funding tree planting schemes carried out by the Council on highway verges and other prominent sites. After a series of events, beginning with tree officer Mick Cooper's departure from the Council, the tree committee seemed to have fallen by the wayside.

The Trust has, however, still managed to fund a few tree planting schemes in the last few years, but these have been a bit ad hoc, and have not been particularly well fitted into the Trust's committee structure. Our best work is usually done by dedicated small groups of members, concentrating on particular aspects of the Trust's work. The most recent of these is the Bursary Group, led by Jeff Prior, which has managed the award of bursaries and the Education Programme, both very successfully.

What we need are three or four members, ideally with some knowledge of trees, but more importantly with an enthusiasm to see trees being planted, funded by the Trust, in places that will enhance the local environment. It would be really good to develop a relationship with other bodies, which might or might not include the Council, so that a continuing programme of sites and planting could be planned.

Any members interested in taking this forward can phone or e-mail the editor using the contact details below.

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A Photograph from the Past: the Town Centre in the 1890s



The above photograph which shows part of Frenchgate and High Street was probably taken in about 1890. It contains much of interest. Look for the water pump, on the right, together with a splendid street lamp nearby. On the other side of the road some people, including a policeman, are taking a break from their work to look at the camera. A horse and cart is about to make its way up High Street. The town clock hangs above the scene telling us that it was almost twenty to three in the afternoon.

The buildings all look well kept yet, by the end of the century, many of them had gone and the appearance of the junction changed completely. The building at the corner of Baxtergate and Frenchgate had originally been constructed in the eighteenth century. In 1837 it was altered by architect William Hurst who rounded its corner, which by that time had become a traditional way of smartening up the town's streets. The clock was added in 1838 and for most of the rest of the century this was a prominent feature of Doncaster viewed by every traveller on the Great North Road. Although the Corporation owned the building, it was rented out for many years to Edward Hawksby Walker, a chemist, who dispensed pills and potions in the shop beneath the clock. When his family were young the family lived above the shop, and the pendulum of the clock used to swing in the nursery. One of the children, James Greenhalgh Walker, later recalled how he and his brother Joseph used to ride to and fro on it.

By the 1890s the Corporation was becoming concerned about some of the narrow streets which impeded vehicles even before the dawn of the motor age. They decided to take action. Baxtergate was to be widened and this meant that the old building on the corner had to go.

The next picture, below right, shows demolition in progress. Look at the missing windows. The only item rescued was the clock's movement which was re-used in Sunny Bar.

The building next door in Frenchgate had been purchased by Edward Hawksby Walker and was occupied by his son Joseph who ran an ironmonger's business from there until his death in 1893. If you look closely at the top photograph you may be able to see his name on the board at second floor level. After the demolition of the old Clock Corner this became the new corner building, owned by the widowed Mrs E H Walker. As the site only had a very narrow frontage to Frenchgate she tried to buy some of the adjacent site in Frenchgate but the owners, the Corporation, refused to sell and Mrs Walker had to rebuild on the restricted plot. By this time her son, James Greenhalgh Walker, one of the boys who had swung on the old clock's pendulum as a child, had grown up to be an architect and it was he who designed the new Clock Corner. It is this building that we still see today.



“Old Clock Corner” building in the early 1890s

On the Summer Town Trail this year, our guide Archie Sinclair pointed out that you can see the architect's initials, JGW, on the building, together with the date of 1894, all in the stonework. The upper floors were designed for use by the architect as his offices, whilst the ground floor was leased as a shop, a role it still fulfils. The Clock Corner building is high quality with plenty of interesting detail. This made it an ideal choice to be adopted as the Trust's logo in 1981. It appears on the front of the newsletter you are reading, and is on all our publications.

In the first photograph you can see the shop nearest to the camera called Oliver, the confectioners. Surprisingly, this building is still there but you wouldn't know it from its appearance as it had a modern façade added in the 1930s.

Beyond Baxtergate and onto High Street there are several buildings in the first photograph which appear to be three Georgian houses adapted for more commercial use. The Trust knows little about them but they were typical of many of the buildings in the town: three storey properties all reflecting the scale and character of their surroundings. Yet changes on this corner were afoot here too. Since the 18th century banks had played an increasing part in the High Street, often by adapting private houses.

However, some were purpose built, as you can see from the premises of the Yorkshire Bank, now Barclays, built in 1885, further down High Street.

In around 1887 the York City and County Bank took the premises in the house on the corner of Baxtergate and High Street, although you can't see a name in the photograph.

Clock Corner & the HSBC Bank in an E L Scrivens post card c.1915



Evidently the premises weren't large enough because in 1895 the bank acquired all the property up to the Yorkshire Bank.

They proceeded to erect a new building to the design of Walter Brierley of Demaine & Brierley, architects, of York. This was the first time that white Portland stone had been used in the town. The building with its statuary and green, copper clad dome, topped by the figure of the winged Mercury, the god of trade, was an attractive addition to the town centre. The bank only occupied part of the ground floor originally. The Home and Colonial Tea Company had a shop in Baxtergate whilst there was a stockbroker's office in High Street. The bank is now the HSBC and is the first building on our Town Trail.

We started this article by looking at an interesting late Victorian street scene. Yet it is remarkable that the buildings that were soon to be demolished were replaced by two stylish corner properties that still add so much character to the junction today. Despite that, their character has not always been appreciated. The Clock Corner was once threatened with demolition for street widening but the Trust suggested that Baxtergate should be pedestrianised instead and it was this view that eventually prevailed. More recently, some damaging alterations were proposed for the ground floor of the bank, but fortunately the proposals were reduced.

Details of sources used for this article will be provided on request.

Peter Coote

Five Facts about the Market Place

1. The Red Lion once had two rooms known as 'The Unicorn' and 'The Lyon'. It was traditional for inn rooms to be given names, but these records, from 1800 and 1806 respectively, are the first known for any Doncaster inn.
2. When the new Market Hall opened in 1849, it was originally open Monday to Friday until 8pm, and until 11.30 pm on Saturday nights.
3. The sandstone that was used to build the Market Hall didn't come far. According to historian William Sheardown it came from Mexborough and Barnburgh.
4. The Polish restaurant on the corner of Sunny Bar and the Market Place was once a public house called The Queen. Prior to that it was A J Smith's, wine and spirit merchant. Arthur Joseph Smith was twice Mayor, in 1870 and 1871, and in this capacity he laid the foundation stone for the new Corn Exchange. You can still see his name on the stone today but the inscription is much worn.
5. Doncaster's first theatre was in the Market Place, the last lessee being John William Chapman, who went on to play a key role in the building of the Grand Theatre. Chapman's name lives on today in the J W Chapman Trust, a charity set up to help the needy.

The Lions Doncaster Show 2013

The Trust had a stall and display on Saturday 31 August at the College for the Deaf. A theme of the show was 'Heritage' which included Doncaster Family History Society, a photographic display of old photographs from the Hub, a mocked-up shop with an excellent display of tins from Doncaster sweet manufacturers by June and Geoff Bennett, and ourselves. Our indoor location was a good one and we were kept busy with enquiries and sales of our publications, although the late afternoon was very quiet. We are well-experienced in attending history fairs but this was a good opportunity for us to become known to a wider public.

We would like to thank the nine volunteers who gave up their time to help on the stand.



I discovered recently that two of our members went regularly to Brodsworth Hall to play croquet. They suggested that other Trust members might be interested, and they arranged for Sheila Hird, who runs the croquet club, to give me a ring. The result of our 'phone conversation was that I was invited to go and see the croquet, and even have a go, and in exchange I offered to write an article in the newsletter to promote the sport at Brodsworth.

On a lovely morning at the end of July I drove up to the Hall, now an English Heritage property. Not being a member of EH, I was hoping that Sheila had spoken to the man on the front desk to see if I could get a free pass. Yes, he said, I was expected, and Sheila would be along soon to meet me. After the formalities, Scot on the desk gave me a complimentary ticket printed "Member of the Media". I had never thought of Trust Topics as part of the media, but it is now, officially.

The setting was wonderful: four croquet lawns marked out with fabric tape, not painted lines, and eight players in whites, seen against a backdrop of countless clipped evergreen bushes in one direction, and against the rear elevation of the Hall in the other. We sat and watched play, while Sheila explained what was happening. I learned that they play "Golf Croquet" at Brodsworth.

Each lawn had six metal hoops, set out in a standard, symmetrical way. There were four coloured balls: blue, red, black and yellow, and they were always played in that order by the four players. If there were only two players, one would play blue and black, and the other red and yellow. The first player to get their ball through the hoop won that hoop; play continued until one player had won seven hoops; and they became the winner of the game.

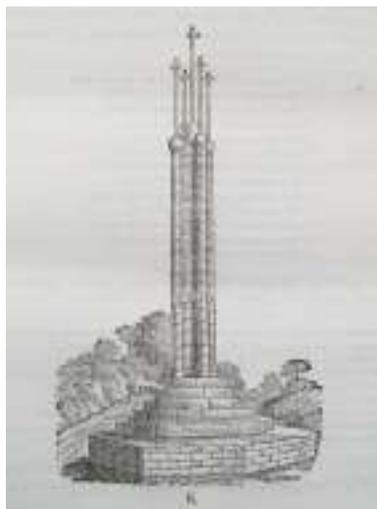
It was not quite that straightforward. Part of the play was to try and ensure that the others didn't score, by knocking their balls out of the way. But, on the day, it all seemed relaxed and well-mannered, perhaps because the competitors were mainly ladies.

I was told that croquet was suitable for all age groups, as there was no bending down to pick up your ball. You just pushed it along with your mallet between hoops.

If croquet at Brodsworth appeals to you, you can find out more by calling Sheila Hird on 01302-811211.



The Hall Cross and Ote de Tilli's cross



On the recent Town Trail we had reached its southernmost point, the Hall Cross, and began to look at the inscriptions on the monument. I remembered that the higher one referred to Ote de Tilli, but none of the group could really make out the wording. This might have been because none of us was particularly strong on ancient French. I said I would find out more and pass it on.

A look at "The Changing Face of Doncaster" by Colin Walton, 1980, told me that this was a copy of the inscription on the original cross that stood at the junction of Bennetthorpe and Thorne Road (forever to be called Gaumont Corner, by those of a certain age). The listed buildings website "Images of England" referred to a Latin inscription round the column, about half way up. It gave its source as Miller's "History of Doncaster", published in 1804.

I went to my copy of Miller which had the drawing above and gave us the inscription in full, together with the information that the language was Ancient Norman. Once you had a copy of the inscription, it was not too difficult to make out some of the text on the monument.



CRVICE: OTE: DE: TIL..... and on the next face..... **LI: A: KI: ALME: DEV: EN**

The whole text is:

ICEST: EST:LA: CRVICE: OTE: D: TILLI: A: KI: ALME: DEV: EN: FACE: MERCI: AM

and Miller gives us this translation:

This is the cross of Ote de Tilli, to whose soul God shew mercy. Amen

On the Trail we could all manage the other inscription, on the base of the column facing the Great North Road:



THIS CROSS
was Rebuilt by the
CORPORATION 1793.
HENRY HEATON Esq.
MAYOR

Archie Sinclair

Planning Matters

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

Since the last Trust Topics the committee has looked at 21 applications and objected to just two of them.

One of these relates to Rossington Hall. We have been very pleased that the mansion has been adapted to a new use, that of restaurant and a hotel. Whilst the efforts to shake off the institutional feel of the Hall have been successful and the gardens nicely restored, there has still remained a blight: several houses near the front door that had been built by the Council for resident staff when the Hall was a school. There had been an earlier plan to refurbish these and build several more properties. Now the plans are to demolish these houses which we certainly welcome, as they are out of character.

However, we have major concerns about the new proposals to erect two rows of cottages in an L-shape, consisting of 12 self-contained apartments, as staff accommodation, on a different site within the park. Unfortunately, we have not been able to see what they would look like as the Planning Authority has not up-loaded all the drawings on to its website. We have made a complaint about this matter together with other aspects of the application. Today, applications are all viewed on the web by the Trust and we need them to be complete. Regardless of that, it is difficult to see how twelve new dwellings in the countryside can possibly be justified. They will affect the parkland atmosphere and the approach to the Hall. We have objected to this application and believe it should be refused.

Some time ago we perused a mixed use application for retail and business use on a large site in Marshgate which had once been occupied by car showrooms. We were concerned about the proposals, particularly with regard to the possibility of losing further retail space to an out of town site. In addition, we expressed reservations about access in and out of the site. Overall we submitted five different reasons to reject the application. Then, last month, we were notified that the Council had refused the application, but only for a single reason: that the proposal failed "the sequential test". In this case the Council believes that there is another suitable site, more centrally located, that should be developed before Marshgate. The applicant appealed and requested a hearing which is yet to take place. The decision hinges on whether the Waterdale Centre site is suitable or available. Almost immediately after the application was refused, the Waterdale Centre was sold at auction for £3,675,000 to St Modwen, "the UK's leading regeneration specialist". We await the result of the appeal with interest.

The Sub Committee also deals with questions from members and others. In the past few months examples have included providing information for the Council on the history of the planting of the trees in Avenue Road and giving advice to a member about the demolition of part of a stone wall in a conservation area. Over the last year, too, we have helped the Conservation Team at the Council with a document on the Borough's Parks and Gardens. The Committee will soon be giving this a final review.

Planning and Conservation Sub-committee

Newsletters

It has been suggested that some members might like to receive their newsletters by e-mail (and in colour), instead of a paper copy. The main advantage to the Trust is the saving in postage costs. If you would like this, please e-mail to tell us on mail@doncastercivictrust.org.uk

A Nearby Gem : Historic Newark

I knew little about Newark. I had subconsciously avoided it since its by-pass was built in 1964, coincidentally the year that I started driving. Then I came across an interesting article by Stephen McClarence in the Times last year, celebrating Newark's qualities: its medieval street pattern, timber-framed buildings, and generous market square, below. It was said that the square had been in almost daily use for 500 years. A visit was called for.



But first, some lazy research on the internet revealed that Newark had no less than eight separate town trails, all covering the centre. These were published by Newark Civic Trust with support from Newark Town Partnership and others. Whatever your chosen period, there was a trail for you: Medieval, Georgian, Victorian, or Art Deco, plus Civil War, Historic Riverside, Malting & Brewing and a Trail of Curiosities. And they all had photographs and maps, in colour, and were available free on line at the click of a mouse.

Newark has some things in common with Doncaster. You will already have picked up its by-pass and Civic Trust. It's also on the Great North Road and the East Coast Main Line, and at a river crossing. But that's about it. Newark has a castle to defend its bridge, and a network of narrow streets with historic buildings, connecting to a large, well-enclosed Market Place. It has benefited, in terms of its townscape quality, from a lack of road widening, comprehensive development and new road building. Doncaster carried all of these "improvements", over the centuries, but lost much of its character as a result.

It was a very easy drive to Newark: turn right at the end of Boswell Road on to the old A1, and keep going for 38 miles or 47 minutes (according to Google) until you get to the River Trent, and you're there. After parking to the west of the river, we crossed it by the Town Bridge on a street named Beast Market Hill, where we a bit taken aback by a large Victorian building.



This was originally the Ossington Coffee Palace, left, built in 1882 in red brick and tile as a temperance hotel. It had the form of a medieval market hall, similar to Gilbert Scott's original Doncaster Grammar School building. It is now in commercial use, with apartments above. A photo of its corbelled oriel windows is on the cover of this newsletter.



Our first stop was at the Gilstrap Centre, right, a gallery, museum and tourist information centre housed in the former Gilstrap Free Library, built 1883. Inside was a clever reconstruction of a Romanesque arch, left, rebuilt in 2009 from fragments recovered from the river, then stored in the castle for years. It is a convincing trompe l'oeuil, as the view through the archway is a large photograph mounted on the flat wall.



Nearby, the former Corn Exchange, below, designed by London architect Henry Duesbury left no one in any doubt as to its architect or the date when it was built. Very helpful; thank you.



Walking towards the Market Place we arrived at a beautifully and recently restored timber-framed building, below, dated at 1452.



It was originally a dwelling house built for a wealthy family in the “Wealden” style that originated in Kent. Until recently it had been the Woolpack pub, with its timber work almost completely hidden by render. Returned to its former glory, it is now the Prince Rupert Inn.

Almost in the Market Place, the “Governor’s House” of 1475, right, was so called because it was commandeered by the town’s military governor during the Civic War. It is a fine 3 storeyed, close-studded and jettied house, with each jetty coved, or curved.



In the corner of the Market Place, the former Old White Hart Inn of 1459, left, was identified in 1959 by Niklaus Pevsner as “one of the paramount examples of late 15th century timber-framed architecture in England”. The whole building had a “masterly restoration” in 1970 that included re-creation of the decorative figures and original colours of the frontage.

The Town Hall, below right, dominates the Market Place. Designed in 1774 by John Carr of York in the Palladian style, it has an ornate and well-proportioned Assembly Room on its first floor. Carr had been working with Robert Adam on Harewood House, and Adam’s influence on this interior is apparent, below left.



Town Centre Living?

People have often said that Town Planning these days is not about grand schemes like Bath or Edinburgh, and not even about a planned settlement like a modern new town. Instead it is reduced to “managing change”; dealing with situations that arise, apparently of their own making.

But of course we have all been watching the changes in town centres over recent years, driven mainly by shopping habits: first supermarkets, then superstores, and now the internet and home delivery. Will people eventually be able to stay at home, shut away with their TV, PC, laptop, tablet, or smart phone? The fact is that the decline in town centres, not just in the shopping but also office space, has led to a big rise in the number of empty buildings. Many are to let or for sale.

Some building owners have tried to re-let their vacant commercial premises, and have not been successful. They have had to look instead at alternative uses, with residential being a favourite. Some recent applications have been quite significant.



4 South Parade



15 South Parade



18 South Parade

The owner of 4 South Parade, above left, was granted permission for a change of use to 6 apartments in July 2011, but the work has not gone ahead. More recently, in August 2013, the first floor of 87-89 St Sepulchre Gate, once Elland’s Store and last used as a children’s play centre, was granted permission to create 12 apartments.

It is likely that Denison House, 15 South Parade, above centre, will be sold for conversion to residential use. Another stylish listed building, 18 South Parade, above right, known as Bourne-Swann Chambers, has recently been advertised to let or for sale and, across the road at Regent Terrace, numbers 5, 6 and 7 have been tastefully renovated and greatly improved to attract new commercial tenants.



5, 6 & 7 Regent Terrace

If these tenants cannot be found, then residential use would seem to be the fall-back option. It is ironic that these buildings were originally grand dwellings, so putting them into residential use is taking them back to where they started. But the trend for new town centre apartments has been for very small, often one person, flats and such radical sub-division might not be appropriate for these grand listed buildings.

Might larger, high quality town flats be an option?

Archie Sinclair