

# CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

## BULLETIN

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### TRUST LECTURE

Durham's Lighting and Darkness Strategy is perhaps the most exciting and least controversial of the various elements in the 20/20/Vision Masterplan. Durham could become the first city in the U.K. to adopt a comprehensive strategy by which a highly-prized daytime townscape would be complemented by an attractive night-time version.

In a lecture unusually dependent on illustration there will be a power-point demonstration to explain fully the underlying aims and consequences. The demonstration will be master-minded by Michael Hurlow, Durham's Heritage and Design Manager, on 20th October, 2.15pm, Elvet Riverside 1, room 141.

### EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Immediately before the Lecture there will be a brief E.G.M. in order to put to members the following motion:

"From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 the subscription rates for membership of the Trust shall be as follows:  
Life - £150, Ordinary - £10, Joint Ordinary - £12,  
Senior, Student & State Benefit - £5, Joint Senior - £7".

The increase, the first for eleven years, stems from discussion at the AGM in May, when there was unanimous agreement that an increase was acceptable, if not overdue. It was agreed that Trustees would present a motion at the autumn meeting.

### CHRISTMAS CARD

This year's card marks the importance of the railway in the City's recent history. The station and viaduct were constructed exactly 150 years ago in 1857. The viaduct immediately became one of the notable architectural features of Durham. It is now a Grade 2\* listed structure, while the station, currently undergoing renovation, is listed Grade 2.

In the 1920s the L.N.E.R. commissioned various artists to produce bill-board and carriage advertising material. Most of the Durham posters were striking images of cathedral, railway and riverbanks. Trustees, however, have chosen a relatively unusual design Based on

mediaeval manuscripts but executed in art nouveau and art deco style, it illustrates the Translation of St Cuthbert's remains, with clear reference back to the foundation of the earlier cathedral and on to its contemporary silhouette.

The artist, Doris Zinkeisen, was Scottish, trained in England, and was well-known as a painter and sculptor in London and in Paris, particularly in the inter-war years. She was especially noted for her portraits and for her theatre and film designs.

The Trust is extremely grateful to the National Railway Museum/Science and Society Picture Library for generous permission to reproduce this image. A sample card is enclosed, together with an Order Form. Cards will also be on sale at the Trust Open Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October.

(M.E.S.)

### NORTHERN RELIEF ROAD

The County Council, with aid of the Transport Innovation Fund, is near to concluding its research into City road pricing and associated "infrastructure provision." For the latter, read Northern Relief Road. It is a deceptive description, being neither northern nor offering any significant relief, but assuredly threatening immense environmental damage to the immediate green environs of the City.

Although the Trust possesses professional experience to mount an environmental counter-argument, it is less competent regarding traffic and highway management. Trustees have therefore engaged an independent firm of consultants, Steer, Davies, Gleave of London, to undertake an independent critique of the Business Plan of the County's Highways Department, when it is completed, and to submit it to the Department for Environment.

### WALKERGATE

The August bank holiday saw the official opening of Walkergate, a complex conceived from the beginning as a focus of commercial leisure, a financially necessary consequence of accepting a large grant to enable the building of the Millennium scheme, with its community facilities.

In the opinion of the agent advertising Clement's Wharf, "the flagship Walkergate has redefined the concept of Durham City." This is a rather generous definition for a series of eating and drinking places, which, according to the arts reporter of *The Durham Times*, are "taking over from the North Road as the most popular destination for weekend revellers from outlying pit villages." It is certainly a far cry from the time when a multiplex cinema was promised, a music centre was pencilled in, or, at one time, when even a northern centre for the National Portrait Gallery was being considered.

**SOUTH ROAD MAYPOLE**

As was mentioned in the Annual Report, both the roadside siting and colourful blue and mauve banding of the O2 monopole on South Road were chosen by the Planning Department, against the advice of its Heritage and Culture Section. As a result, an urban structure was given unnecessary prominence in what has been one of the City's green entries. (Although the Park and Ride site, opened two years earlier, had been an unfortunate gash in this entry, it is hoped that the County's landscaping, both belated and 'thin', may eventually provide some shielding.)

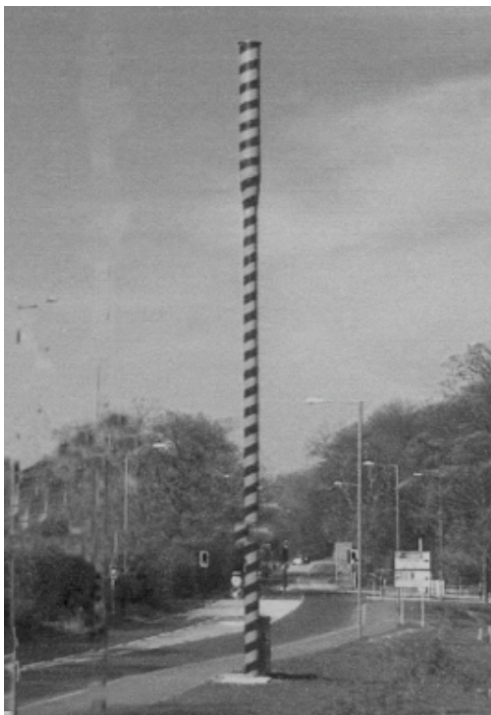
While the monopole remains an affront to any with landscape sensitivity – and a regret for those with knowledge of its evolution – some continental visitors may have a different reaction, wondering why Durham's maypole is so far from the centre. At least our maypole

lacks – thus far – the attached advertisements of its Bavarian cousin, illustrated here.

**SOCCARENA**

One can hardly miss it. A steel structure measuring 145 by 50 metres and rising to 11 metres, is clearly visible in long-distance views from West Rainton in the east to Crossgate in the west, and across the Wear Valley from Aykley Heads, Newton Hall and the railway. The City's Local Plan has policies to prevent such developments, but the planning committee failed to consider these when approving the application. As a result of the initiative, and stamina, of a Trust member, the Local Government Ombudsman investigated and found the City Council guilty of maladministration.

The decision, although a rap on the knuckles of the Authority, in practical terms will leave the building unaltered. The office of Ombudsman 'lacks teeth' for anything dramatic: only recommendations can be made – and these are open to the Authority to reject! The actual wording of the Ombudsman's Report make this explicit: "...the Council has agreed to my recommendations for a remedy. It will commission an independent consultant to examine the site and produce a report and recommendations outlining what, if anything, can be done to reduce the visual impact of the building. The Council will then consider these recommendations, and decide whether any of the actions identified should be taken."



O2 Monopole (or Maypole?) in South Road



Maypole in Munich

## 'COUNCIL GREED'

Reproduced here, by permission, is a letter from Dr Jean Hargreaves published in *The Times* of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006. Concern is raised regarding the threat to historic towns arising from the coincidence of interest of local authorities and developers - particularly on sites owned by the former - and the current planning system. Members might like to reflect whether Durham has been free from overdevelopment of this nature: whether developers and local authority have acted differently from those in York and Winchester.

### Council greed

Sir, The threat to Winchester (report, Aug 28) is replicated in many other historic towns and cities throughout the UK. It stems from greed arising from overdevelopment by developers who care little about the scale, massing, form and character of their potential site.

What is particularly worrying is that many of the available sites currently being developed are owned by local councils. They therefore have a vested interest in exploiting the site's value in order to obtain the highest financial return.

The selected developers will then submit their schemes to the same council for planning permission, thus placing planning officers in an untenable position. In these situations planning policies (which other developers are expected to observe) are frequently ignored in the interest of supporting the financial aspirations of their employers. The councillors, who make the decision on the applications, are unlikely to risk the much-needed income by insisting on respecting such ethereal matters as scale and character.

This points to a serious flaw in the planning system and to a need for decisions on applications for council-owned sites to be taken by an independent agency, and thus remove the "judge and jury" role currently played by these councils.

JUNE HARGREAVES  
York

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

In July the government announced the result of its White Paper consultation on the reorganisation of local government, recommending the abolition of District

Councils in County Durham to be replaced by a single, unitary, County-wide Council. Naturally, our District Council was disappointed and is currently exploring the possibility of a legal challenge. Strangely, in view of its well publicised opposition to one large unitary authority, the District did not respond to the White Paper invitation to make proposals for future local government structure. The Trust did make a response, along the lines summarised in the Annual Report, namely that different functions will continue to have different population thresholds which require service areas of different optimum size. In this respect, an arrangement between county and districts sharing services of different thresholds seemed a reasonable compromise.

The topic is of interest to the Trust, which has a defined area of oversight. When founded, this was focused on Durham Municipal Borough, but was extended at the time of the last local government reorganisation in 1974. Legal advice received was that the Trust's area of concern was properly defined as that area which at any particular time was defined as the 'City of Durham.' Hence our interest in the whole of the City of Durham District. The County's submission on the White Paper contained two alternative "geographies" which subdivided the county into 11 and 14 "main natural communities." In the former subdivision, the present area of City of Durham District would remain as one community; if there were 14 natural communities, the District would be divided into three, with the historic core separated from villages to both east and west. No decision would be made before consultation with stakeholders and others.

## CARDS FOR GOOD CAUSES

As usual in the weeks leading to Christmas, Cards for Good Causes will be selling greetings cards published by a number of charities, including our own. Unfortunately, at the time of going to press, the location has still to be fixed, but the Trust has again undertaken to staff the premises on Thursday afternoons. A rota of two-person, two-hour shifts will be arranged, and we would like to hear from members willing to participate. Do consider volunteering! For further details, please telephone Mary Sales on 378 1703.

(M.E.S.)

## OBITUARIES

**Professor Richard Brown**, Trustee from 1999-2002, died in at the end of March. He had been a Trust member for more than thirty years, but, following early retirement from the University, gave us the benefit of his wisdom at our table, to which he brought an academic perceptiveness with a care for people and place. Unfortunately, his contributions – but not his ready smile - were cruelly cut short by a stroke, from which there was only

partially recovery. For those not in academia, the long obituary in *The Guardian* spelt out the intellectual quality of he whom we sadly miss. – It also captured his modesty in describing him as having “a strong line in self-deprecation.”

Another former Trustee, **Walter (Wally) Woodfield**, died at the end of August. Wally, who brought with him previous civic society experience in Enfield, joined the Trust immediately on arrival in Durham and was soon elected Trustee and Treasurer in 1992. He held the post for eight years, during which time there was a marked change in the manner of presenting charity accounts, but this, along with any apparent problem, was simply a challenge to Wally, who always responded with a chuckle. Besides keeping a watchful eye on the eastern quarter of the City, his role as tree warden further underlined his care for the environment.

Probably few will remember **Mrs Doris Thain**, since she moved away from Durham in 1973. She remained a member, however, with a lively interest in the City. Mrs Thain died in March, and her daughter has just forwarded a most generous legacy from the will. In addition to gratitude, it is always heartening to learn of sustained interest and support for work of the Trust for the City we love.

**D.C.D.P.**

**PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION**

Listed below are publications received by the Trust in recent months. Members wishing to borrow any title should telephone Mary Sales on 378 1703.

Campaign to Protect Rural England  
 Countryside Voice Spring 2007  
 Fieldwork March & June 2007

Civic Trust  
 Better Places for people -  
 the Civic Trust at 50 years. 2007

Friends of Durham Cathedral  
 Annual Report 2006  
 Newsletter Spring 2007

Landmark Trust  
 Landmark News Spring 2007

(M.E.S.)

**APPLICATION FORM**

I/We wish to become a member of the City of Durham Trust and  
 I/We enclose cash / standing order / a cheque payable to  
*The City of Durham Trust.*

Full Name & Address (*capitals*) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms . . .  
 .....  
 .....  
 ..... (postcode).....

Tel. No . . . . .

Email . . . . .

**GiftAid:** I pay income tax and, unless I cease to do so and notify the Trust, I would like the tax on my subscriptions and any donations to be reclaimed by the Trust.

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . .

Current minimum annual membership subscriptions:

Ordinary	£5	<i>Please tick</i>
Joint (couple)	£7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior (over 60)	£2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint senior (both over 60)	£4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student	£2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dependent solely on State Benefit	£2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	£100	<input type="checkbox"/>

Completion of the following Standing Order form will enable your bank to make the payment now for this year and on 1 January of each subsequent year. Most members pay by this method which is convenient for them and for the Trust.

**STANDING ORDER**

To: . . . . . (*Your bank's name*)  
 (*address*) . . . . .

Please pay to the Co-operative Bank plc, 29 High Street, Durham DH1 3PL from 1 January 20....., and on 1st January in each year until further notice, the sum of £..... For the credit of the 'City of Durham Trust' (A/c number 50410022, sort code 08-90-70) and debit my account number . . . . .

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . .

Name (*capitals*) . . . . .

Address (*capitals*) . . . . .  
 .....  
 ..... (postcode) . . . . .



