

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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TRUST LECTURE

Our autumn lecture will be given by Colin Wilkes, managing director of the Durham Markets Company, entitled 'Durham as a Retail Centre,' on Saturday 18th October, 2.15pm, Elvet Riverside1, room 141.

The recent departure of Waitrose and the number of empty shops in the centre, in contrast to the increasing success of edge-of-town development, raise serious questions concerning the future of retailing in the City. No one is better qualified to speak on this topic than Colin Wilkes, who is managing director of Durham Markets Company Limited, also vice-chair of Durham Chamber of Trade and a board member of Durham City Forum.. Do come and hear a dynamic speaker!

CHRISTMAS CARD

This year's card depicts the scene from Pelaw bank across the Race Course to the peninsular climax. It forms one of the classic long views of Durham. The choice is sparked by the Elvet Waterside planning application, still current before the Authority. In its present form, the proposal threatens to remove the bounding trees and produce a higher, hard eastern edge fronting the green.

The image has been supplied by Roger Cornwell, Trustee and former chairman, and is the first to be produced in-house. A sample card is enclosed, together with an Order Form. Cards will also be on sale at the Open Meeting on 18th October.

ARRIVAL OF 'THE JOURNEY'

On 26th September the Princess Royal unveiled Fenwick Lawson's sculpture of 'The Journey' in Millennium Place. The sculpture had begun as a millennium project at the suggestion of Durham City Arts, but stalled for several years before a regime change and its display among a series of the artist's works in the cathedral in 2004 brought a renewed interest. Concerted fund-raising followed under the leadership of the Dean.

Trustees had supported the project of their former colleague from the outset – and suggested a site in Millennium Place when the latter was still on the drawing board. We were kindly allowed to reproduce the sculpture on our card for 1999. Now that the bronze pall-bearers are in position, it is evident that, not only is the work of art uniquely related to the City and appropriately located within Millennium Place, but that, further, the expressionist carving of the sculpture complements the clean lines of David Prichard's architecture.

Dare one suggest, now 'The Journey' is in position, that the artist's accompanying 'Wheel Cross' project might be revived. Crosses at the points of sojourn of the wandering Cuthbert Community would link City to Region and provide a distinctive marker in the early cultural evolution of the north.



'The Journey' in Millennium Place
with sculptor Fenwick Lawson
(Photo D. Jones)

DEPARTURE OF 'THE SACRED JOURNEY'

In 2002 the Authority unveiled what it termed "the North's most sensational visitor attraction.... 'Sacred Journey' gives Durham city a new dimension you won't forget." For a cost nearly three times that of the new sculpture, we were presented with a 20 minute film allegedly telling the story of Cuthbert. Unfortunately, Hollywood triumphed over history, and it certainly provided no introduction to the City. A £4 ticket for admission was soon dropped to £2.50, but still it proved no attraction.

Showings decreased in number until finally they had to be requested (by groups). It has now been finally 'put to bed,' although it is rumoured that a DVD might be available. The Authority may have been correct: we "won't forget," but for the wrong reasons.

PREPARING FOR RETURN OF OVE ARUP SCULPTURE

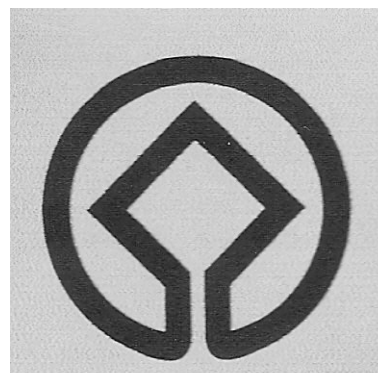
Members will remember with regret the news that the portrait head of Sir Ove Arup, erected on the side of Dunelm House, was winched off by thieves for the value of its bronze in 2006. Now, with the permission of the sculptor, and with the encouragement (again) of the Arups and the University, Trustees have ordered a replacement head, this time to be cast in resin and stone-coloured. We trust there are no resin-collectors out there.

DURHAM'S WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Durham's World Heritage Site is no longer a split site. In August UNESCO registered the proposal forwarded from ICOMOS/UK that the area between cathedral and castle be incorporated. The boundary is now both more logical and clearly defined, joining the two parts by using the line of the city wall to the west and the North Bailey (west side) to the east.

The original delimitation, which has long been recognised as unsatisfactory, resulted from the undue haste in assembling material for inclusion of Durham in the first batch of UK submissions to UNESCO. A month before submission date the Cathedral and University were asked to reply in less than a fortnight whether they would object to the submission of cathedral and castle, respectively. At the same time a man from the Ministry, with limited knowledge of Durham, satisfied himself with two days on the peninsula. (He returned to London not knowing whether there was a Conservation Area in the City.)

The present extension is the most that the government could submit to UNESCO in recent years without risk of delisting and a long process of resubmission. Further boundary extension, however, remains a possible long-term objective. More than a decade ago your Secretary argued for an extension that would incorporate the River Banks, taking in the wooded area around the peninsula between the two medieval bridges of Elvet and Framwellgate. There would be few complications with land ownership or boundary delimitation. The river defile and wooded banks would complement the high plateau of the peninsula, both components of which figure in most classic views of Durham. It would also perfectly echo the World Heritage emblem, which "symbolises the interdependence of cultural and natural properties: the central square is a form created by man and the circle represents nature, the two being intimately linked."



UNESCO symbol for World Heritage Sites

Meanwhile, plans are well advanced for a WHS (Visitor) Centre through conversion of a pair of former almshouses in Owengate. Elsewhere on the peninsula the Cathedral has received a Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake conservation on a section of its woodland, while Durham City Vision is preparing a bid to the HLF for restoration of part of the Banks between the Count's House and Kingsgate Bridge. Exposure of overgrown garden terraces and ice houses would enable appreciation of a facet of the City's social history. Trustees' initial scepticism was lifted when they were assured that, despite frequent reference to Durham's 'hanging gardens', it was not the intention to convert the Banks to the 'shaven' state depicted in the 1745 line-drawing by the Buck brothers. (Neither is there to be an admission charge to the restored sections of the gardens.)

MARKET PLACE REDESIGN

Members will know the concerns that Trustees have over several aspects of this part of the Durham City Vision project. It was therefore interesting to learn recently of the views on the scheme of the District's first – and distinguished – planning officer, Anthony RN Scott:

"How things have changed over 30 years. In 1974 the repaving of Durham's Market Place and the city's medieval streets led to a Civic Trust Award and international acclaim during the European Urban Renaissance Campaign.

The Proposal had universal support and confidence of the city council, the university, the City of Durham Trust and, by and large, the Chamber of Trade.

Today, it seems such important considerations are dealt with very differently. Local people are now 'consulted' or offered options rather than being fully engaged in the design process, ideas can be formulated by people far away and unlikely to be connected with the city,

local democracy is less evident and there appears to be a commercial overtone to any issue that may influence sensitivity of place or quality of life”
(Durham Times, 11th July 2008)

CITY CENTRE NOW A SINGLE LICENSED AREA

Durham now has a City Centre licence, covering not only the streets one might expect to be included but also Wharton Park and the grounds of the DLI to the west and the Church Street and Hallgarth area to the east. The extensions were included to facilitate the Durham Miners’ Gala. At the meeting which decided the city-wide area, the Trust was represented by Dr Charters, Mr Cornwell and Mrs Gill. The last-named was also able to bring forward the views of the Elvet Residents’ Association.

Trustees saw benefits in being able to regulate street entertainment, but had considerable reservations about extending the area covered into residential streets in order simply to cover the once-a-year Miners’ Gala. The licence also removes the right of residents to object to large scale events because these are now covered by the new licence. We therefore objected to the licence, initially on nine grounds, and entered into negotiations with the City Council. As a result, we were able to achieve a number of concessions and clarifications, and thus were able to withdraw all but two of the objections. We put our case to the licensing panel on these two remaining points, but were unable to make further progress.

Overall, Trustees feel they achieved considerable improvements. In particular, the residential nature of some streets will be respected, and there will be publicity for forthcoming events, which will afford the opportunity to make representations. There remains the unknown, however, about what will happen after the new unitary authority takes over in April 2009.

(R.C.)

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION (1)

The attractiveness of Durham’s environment - “near perfection” was Bill Bryson’s most recent declaration – elicits in general a caring response from its citizens. Aberrations are therefore quickly noticed, notably this summer for instance, when debris disfigured the river weirs and was the subject of several letters in the local press.

The river has been a focus of concern to Trustees for many a year. (It is now two decades since your Secretary retrieved some dozen shopping trolleys from the river in front of Millburngate, finally inducing the supermarket concerned to take greater care of its trolleys.) This year, with more than usual debris being washed down by storm flows, Trustees wrote to Northumbrian Water, only to learn

that it was “not responsible for rivers.” The Environment Agency, despite advertising itself as “It’s our job to look after your environment,” replied that it would intervene only if the flow was threatened. Fortunately, the City Council agreed to release some of its capital before its demise next April for a one-off clearance.



Restoration of a classic view: Clearing debris from Framwellgate weir, August. (Photo R Cornwell)

Since the weirs are foreground features in classic views, and given Durham City Vision’s concern for the attractiveness of the environment in order to foster a ‘vibrant’ City, Trustees wrote inquiringly to Vision’s chairman. (The latter also happens to be corporate director of Northumbrian Water.) Our query was whether his Vision team could seek funding or whether a fraction of the money devoted to community projects by his corporation might be set aside for weir clearance in the City. The initial reply was not without hope.

Since storms are ever likely to generate bulky river flotsam which ultimately finishes up on the City’s weirs, Trustees floated the idea of some interceptor device upstream. A simple wire or two across the river, angled diagonally to encourage material to drift to a simple collecting platform, might be the most effective long-term solution. A point immediately below, or just above, Shincliffe Bridge, might be acceptable for anglers - and certainly for any canoeists, since portage is necessary here. It would still be subject, of course, to permission being given by the riparian land-owners (University or Cathedral).

DEGRADATION (2)

Mention has been made before of the increasing plethora of signs which are of questionable value, even legality, and which certainly deface the environment. Yellow housing development notices have multiplied since the last mention. Any lamp standard, or pole, appears fair game for attaching standard size directional signs, particularly in the vicinity of cross-roads or roundabouts. A count

in August, for example, found 17 such signs at the Sniperley roundabout, while the junction at Neville's Cross had sprouted no fewer than 27 of the yellow advertisements.

Before leaving the question of signage, the blue variety relating to cyclists may also be mentioned since they have contributed to the overall increase in density in the last decade. Not all, surely, are necessary, or require their own separate pole on which to attach information. Moreover, cycle road markings can be pedantic, with 'bites' taken out of kerbs, or confusing. (One sympathises with cyclists for not dismounting at roundabouts, as signage directs, and becoming pedestrians to cross the road before continuing on two wheels.)

DEGRADATION (3)

For those highly sensitive to the environment, discarded chewing gum, officially classed as litter, is a further polluting menace. The City Authority is currently running a campaign, "determined to rid our streets of unsightly chewing gum," and warning of a £50 fine for dropping the chewed stuff. Special 'gummy bins' have even been installed in three suburban locations, but it is difficult to be sanguine. (Certainly, gum-chewing football managers on TV make poor role models.) It apparently costs three times as much to clear from an ordinary street surface as to buy in the first instance. In Durham the prize, or boot, for a spotted, Dalmatian appearance is surely the lower part of North Road, from Framwellgate Peth to the 'Fighting Cocks'. The number of drops or spots must run into thousands.

LOW BURN HALL

Members will remember that Ed Pomfret's lecture at the AGM on the work of the Woodland Trust came hard on the heels of that Organisation's purchase of Low Burn Hall. The Woodland Trust has since held a local meeting of interested parties and discussed in some detail how the area will be conserved and managed. As a result the Trust has donated £400 towards the work.

DR KENNETH ASHBY

Recent Bulletins have paid tribute to the late Ken Ashby, Trustee for 47 years and environmentalist extraordinaire. Now, the Trust has just received an exceedingly generous bequest from his will. Thus, at the same time as expressing gratitude, the gift will also ensure that his influence on the work of the Trust will carry on.

D.C.D.P.

APPLICATION FORM

I/We wish to become a member of the City of Durham Trust and I/We enclose Cash/Standing Order/Cheque payable to *The City of Durham Trust*.

Full Name & address (capitals)

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

.....

.....*postcode*.....

Telephone.....

E-mail.....

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*.....

.....

Annual membership subscriptions: *please tick*

- Ordinary £10
- Joint (couple) £12
- Senior (over 60) £5
- Joint Senior (both over 60) £7
- Student £5
- Dependent solely on State benefit £5
- Life £150

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:.....(*subscriber's own bank*)

Address.....

.....

Please pay the Cooperative Bank plc, 29 High Street, Durham, DH1 3PL (sort code 08-90-70) now and on 1 January of each year the sum of £..... until further notice, for the credit of *The City of Durham Trust* (a/c no. 50410022), and debit my *Account Number*.....

Signed.....*Date*.....

Name (capitals).....

Address (capitals).....

.....

.....*Postcode*.....

