



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY Newsletter – Winter 2005/06

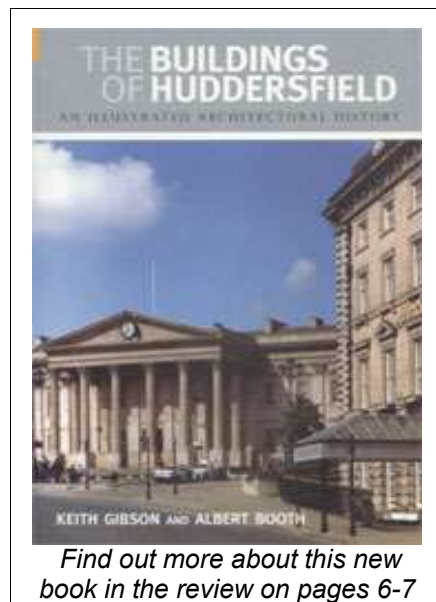
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Welcome to the Winter edition of the newsletter of Huddersfield Civic Society. Now that the Christmas rush is out of the way, why not spend some time catching up on all the news of the Society from the past six months.

Clare Madders, Newsletter Editor

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Find out more about this new book in the review on pages 6-7



Huddersfield in Bloom

The annual Awards Ceremony took place at the Huddersfield Hotel on 22 September. Richard Ward presented the Society's Cup to The Piazza as overall winner and the Tidy Trader Rosebowl to Beaverbrooks jewellers in King Street.



Richard Ward (left) & Julia Lilof (right) with prize winners (from left) Jag Khela & John Beardall (The Piazza) and Joanne Stead (Beaverbrooks).

The red, white and blue baskets to celebrate 50 years twinning with Besancon were very attractive and added to the appearance of the town centre but the gaps left by the absence of baskets on major stores and banks were regretted.

The Town Hall benefited from baskets on lampposts outside and two small trees placed on either side of the Concert Hall entrance.

On the whole the town centre has looked very colourful and we look forward to an even better display next year.

Mary Hirst

Civic Society Outings and Lecture meetings

Visit to Wakefield

My knowledge of Wakefield was, until our evening visit in August, little more than of the speed camera lined route to Westgate Station. The President of Wakefield Civic Society proved to be a most informative and enthusiastic guide explaining for us the city's early development and taking us to tree-lined Georgian squares, the cathedral and other interesting buildings and corners, whilst outlining the huge new redevelopment which is proposed.

Lecture meetings

Our September lecture on the construction of the Millennium Dome, by Bernard Ainsworth OBE, certainly attracted some publicity in the press but, sadly, was again less successful in attracting an audience worthy of such a distinguished guest. I've often wondered, on a huge building site, who tells the workmen where



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to dig the first hole, who co-ordinates all the hundreds of different activities, whose responsibility is it to see that it is completed on time and to budget. Mr Ainsworth's was a fascinating tale of just that and of the success in achieving a remarkable building.

In November Stan Driver's talk and illustrations on the responsibilities of both Kirklees and the owners of listed buildings proved to be most interesting and relevant to the work of the Society; and Brian Johnson's presentation to be heard in January, on the architecture of Dubai, should be out of this world, or almost! Mr Johnson, son of Austen Johnson, is senior partner in Godwin Austen Johnson an architectural practice which, in 2004, won a major international competition for the buildings for the Dubai Creek Golf Club. (Crosland Heath, Fixby and Woodsome take note!)They are presently engaged in building an hotel at the Bab El Shams Resort. No doubt every architects dream project!

At the December meeting we were given a presentation on 'The Waterfront Quarter', by representatives of the developer Ramsden and Colne Developments LLP and their architects DLG Architects. Further detail on that presentation can be found on page 10 of this newsletter, within the Planning Report.

As the Society is able to attract prominent speakers do come along, invite your friends, and support your society. Don't forget that these are public lectures which deserve a large audience.

Forthcoming Events

Monday 16th January: The architecture of Dubai - a personal view by Mr Brian Johnson.

Monday 20th February: Business Meeting, to include a short presentation on the restoration plans for Greenhead Park.

Monday 20th March: Annual General Meeting followed by a presentation by the Huddersfield Video and Cine Club

Summer 2006 Excursions

The day excursion this year will be on Saturday 17th June probably to look at some of the market towns of East Yorkshire.

The evening excursion will be on Monday 7th August – probably a short circular walk along the new Colne Valley Greenway and a visit to the Titanic Mill Development which should, by then, be nearing completion.

John Lockwood



YHACS Report

Bradford now has a Civic Society thanks to the sterling work of the Association's Development Officer, Katie Bishop. I attended the very impressive inaugural meeting to which a large audience turned out on what was a very poor (weather wise) night. We are now working on Sheffield, which also does not presently have a Civic Society.

The last quarterly meeting was held in Rotherham, a town which is "re-inventing" itself after years of industrial decline. When the Committee gathered in the sunny centre at 10.30 on the Saturday morning for our usual pre-meeting meeting, we were greeted by the sight of Morris dancers performing in front of fountains. *It was almost Continental!* The guest speaker in the afternoon spoke about the regional transport strategy.

As part of our remit to help member societies I recently attended a meeting of Greater Elland Civic Trust to offer them assistance. Working at regional level makes one realise what a wide range of societies exist – and what different activities they get involved in, from organising the village fete to drawing up Design Statements for the local authority.

At a recent Committee Meeting we were discussing how better to convey the message to societies who, to say the least, are parochial in their outlook and don't seem to grasp that decisions which affect all our lives (including planning) are being made by regional government. Only a regional body such as YHACS can hope to represent our interests.

We have adopted a new mantra, attributed to Colum Giles, Head of Urban Research at English Heritage: "To command respect, today's amateurs must maintain professional standards, based on good knowledge of modern techniques and on the latest thinking within the discipline."

The next general meeting is the AGM in Harrogate on 28 January 2006 when it is hoped the guest speaker will be Paul Sykes. Failing him, it will be a bigwig from English Heritage. It should be good. Why not have a day out? Come along and exchange views with other people from the region.

Finally, do take a look at the YHACS website (www.yhacs.org.uk) which has lots of interesting information on it; as well as our own Society's website (www.huddersfieldcivicsociety.org.uk).

Richard Ward

Blue Plaques and Civic Awards update

This year we have been concerned with both considering buildings for a Blue Plaque Award and also for the National Civic Trust Awards. For our own Blue Plaque Awards we have begun to consider three buildings. Firstly a group of our



members had a detailed look at the `Technology Centre at Holset Engineering on St. Andrews Road, a building known as Raynor's Mill.

I remember this building from the days of W.C.Holmes'. I was working as an assistant for the architects Abbey and Hanson Rowe and Partners, now renamed Aedas, and I was responsible for installing a continuous welding plant on the ground floor of Raynors Mill. As I recall the whole building was then a very basic engineering workshop built in the style of fireproof construction developed by William Faulkner in the 1870s for the Lancashire cotton mills. Some time later the roof and the floor below collapsed!

Holset's architect, James Cubitt and Partners, have done a first rate conversion of what was a very well built, traditional mill with its semicircular headed windows. By installing a modern lift and an interesting lightweight roof they have produced a first class technical building employing some 300 people. It is to Holset's credit that this conversion has brought back into use an elderly piece of architecture on which no expense has been spared. I am sure Holsets can expect many useful years in Raynor's Mill.

Unfortunately however we had not appreciated that this conversion was at least 9 years old and, if we were to present this building with a Blue Plaque, we would be creating a precedent that would introduce work which had been done years earlier. It was agreed therefore in this instance not to award a plaque.

Another building being considered for a Blue Plaque is the totally new school at Moldgreen.

This was officially opened at the beginning of this school year. It has been built on the same site as the original school and Kirklees Architects have incorporated one of the architectural features from fragments of the old school. We have not yet had the opportunity to visit and see the interior and see how it is working but with one of Mr. Snow's architects I have looked at the exterior. There are some interesting features including a large play area built on top of the staff car park, thereby developing this restricted site. We look forward to having a full visit to Moldgreen School in the Spring.

The third project to be considered by the Civic Society is the Reptile and Animal Centre of the Technical College at Taylor Hill, which has been nominated by Michael Raynor.

The centre is a new building by architects Walton Horsfall and Associates, built on a rather difficult steeply sloping site. Interestingly it has its own wind generating tower to charge the batteries for the reptile house. We have not yet had the chance to have a full visit here but what has been seen was enough for us to put this building forward for a Civic Trust Award, together with an interesting modern house in Birkby by the architects Acumen.



Reptile & Animal Centre



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Both projects have gone through the first stage of the competition and have been inspected by an appointed architect and the Local Assessor.

Of course, Derek Bennett and I also look forward to other members giving us details of other projects for consideration. Contact details can be found on the Society website and programme card.

Albert Booth

Heritage Open Weekend

Our contribution this year took the usual form of leading a Town Centre walk on the Sunday. Disappointingly, only 9 people turned up. The Weekend locally appeared to be rather tired with nothing new added this year for people to visit. Other Civic Societies in Yorkshire have complained about a lack of national and regional publicity.

The Committee will discuss within the next few months what we might do to improve the situation. One suggestion is that if we continue with the Town Centre Walk we hold it in the afternoon so that people from a distance can come. If you have any ideas on this subject please let me know.

Michael Green

Book Review:

The Buildings of Huddersfield: An Illustrated Architectural History, by Keith Gibson and Albert Booth (Stroud, Tempus Publishing 2005)

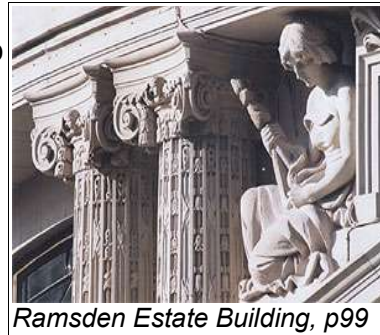
This book splendidly celebrates the history of good architecture in Huddersfield. The text and illustrations make it a real joy. But it is a book that works at more than one level. At the most obvious it brings out the merits of the architecture that can be appreciated by anyone who cares to look around and notice the surroundings and the sense of place. The text and pictures convey the enthusiasm and relish for what can too easily be taken for granted. The authors explore and present, in a most attractive and stimulating way, a range of interesting and worthwhile buildings.



At the second level the book is also a history of the town. The buildings are put in context, because the circumstances in which they were built is of prime importance in understanding what the architecture represents. The book conveys the understanding that buildings matter and how they relate to each other and to the people who use them. The history of the town gives an important background to the meaning of the buildings and is a lucid outline of the town's development and its future.



The third level is more subtle but very important. The very act of selection draws attention to the many alternatives to the good buildings, to the wasted opportunities, to urban blight and to indifference. There is a strain of melancholy that comes about because the authors care; “these things matter” (p 25). They not only bring the past to life and celebrate all the best that has survived, but are concerned about the future. The sense of disappointment, at the lack of vision and the carelessness, cannot but seep through.



The examples of the past, the destruction of important buildings and, even more telling, the obliteration of vital townscapes, all make the present the more fragile. “We cannot afford to lose any more high quality historic buildings through well meaning but misguided development” (p153). Huddersfield was noted as a ‘handsome’ town in the past. What gives this book its special edge is the sense of the need for “local pride”. Without it, all we will be left with is the celebration of the past, which this book so successfully and entertainingly presents. It is to be hoped that this well produced book will also do something for the future.

Cedric Cullingford

Best & Worst Buildings – request for nominations

You might have seen the recent television series which looked at buildings that people think should be demolished ([Destruction](#), presented by Kevin McCloud). We have arranged for The Examiner to run two features; one an initial list of the 10 worst buildings in Huddersfield and one an initial list of the 10 best. I hope to work with Albert Booth on this, but would like to have your nominations in either category. Whether we want to make this an official civic society list or not, your advice and opinions would be most helpful. Please e-mail ideas to: cullingfords@stirley.wanadoo.com.uk

It is hoped this initiative will stir up interest in the architectural heritage of the town and also more support for the Society.

Cedric Cullingford

Town Centre Working Group

Unfortunately there have been few meaningful meetings of this group since the last newsletter. The current emphasis seems to be on separate groups discussing the larger projects, such as St. George's Square. As such, Kirklees officers are now discussing whether to continue with the Town Centre Group. We have made it clear how useful attendance has been to the Civic Society, both as a source of information and as an opportunity to make our views known. We must wait to see what is decided.

John Lockwood



Local History Heritage Group

At our November Business Meeting we had an interesting presentation by Richard Fellows and Hilary Haigh from the University and Louise Clare from the Heritage Lottery Fund on a proposal to establish a Local History Heritage Group, initially for Huddersfield but eventually possibly for all Kirklees. The Group's main aim would be to set up a database of all the buildings which exist or have existed in the district. Already the basic details have been entered for all buildings erected between 1870 and 1970 in the central area of Huddersfield.

It is proposed to apply for a Heritage Lottery grant to pay for all the data inputting and then to encourage everyone in the town to come forward with documents, maps, photographs and written and oral reminiscences. Obviously this project will be of great interest to all our members and we will keep you posted on the project's progress.

In the meantime we have been asked to nominate one of our members to the Steering Group which will set up the project. What is needed is someone who is sympathetic to the aims of the project, who can communicate the views of the Civic Society concisely and who can work well in a group to progress the project. An understanding (though not necessarily a wide knowledge) of the built environment) is desirable. If you are interested please contact me on 530803.

Michael Green

National Trust Proposal

A proposal has been made to the National Trust that it should look to acquire Banney Royd in Huddersfield. This building, with many Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau features, was by the prominent architect Edgar Wood. The building is a splendid example of early 20th Century domestic architecture.

If you would like to support the proposal, please submit this in writing to: Ms Fiona Reynolds, Director General, The National Trust, Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon, SN2 2NA.

Jane V Carter

Planning Report

Since the last newsletter we have had no major applications come our way. However, there have been developments (or rather lack of them) relating to past applications, of which the Castle Hill saga is the most significant. Close behind comes the future of the Library and Queensgate Market, both now listed. Listing has effectively ruled out several of the seven schemes put forward for these buildings. This does not mean, however, that the present library building will continue to be used as a library nor that some sort of large-scale development around the two sites is ruled out. We await proposals.

It is sometimes tempting to think that the granting of planning permissions that we have welcomed means that action will soon follow but that is a mistake. The Railway Warehouse and Folly Hall Mills are two examples of prominent buildings



which have permission for conversion (the latter to offices not flats as originally intended), but which show no sign of activity so far, to the detriment of them and their surroundings.



Railway Warehouse



Folly Hall Mill

The Railway Warehouse has a history of promises left unfulfilled and we may be entertaining another false hope. Meanwhile it is heartening to see the continuing progress of conversions at the Commercial Mills site in Firth Street, a success story that shows what is possible once work gets underway.

On 14 October Richard Ward, Michael Green, John Lockwood and I met three senior Kirklees planning officers for a helpful discussion about several matters of concern. Of course the Castle Hill controversy and the lessons to be learned from that episode figured large but we also raised questions about the future of the Library/Market, progress at the Railway Warehouse, the availability of an updated schedule of listed buildings, progress towards putting full planning applications on the Internet and enforcement issues.

Afterwards we had a useful meeting with Andrew Croft of Atkins Heritage, who have been retained by Kirklees as consultants to work with the Council and English Heritage to develop a Conservation Management Plan for Castle Hill. There was a wide-ranging discussion about the importance of the site and issues arising from that, such as appearance, maintenance, facilities and traffic. We were invited to write in with our views when the next stage of public consultation opens.

Though not strictly a planning issue, the successful application for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Greenhead Park must be a matter for rejoicing. For too long our parks nationally have been neglected and kept going with the minimum of care. We may be seeing a national change of heart. Certainly the award of £4 million to restore Greenhead will make a major impact : a restored lake, a Japanese-style bandstand and restored gardens are among many planned improvements. We are not yet clear whether the bandstand will be a replacement for the existing one, which was



Bandstand, Greenhead Park



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repaired and listed some years ago at our prompting, or a replacement for it. We have been approached by Robert Whittaker of Kirklees Council, who is co-ordinating the plans, to see if we can be involved in the project. As a first step he has accepted an invitation to speak to our meeting in February 2006. We also hope to take part in the promised consultation exercise.

Recently Gill Cullingford, Richard Ward, David Bowen and I met the consultants who are carrying out an audit of open spaces, parks and footpaths for Kirklees Council. We had a good discussion of various issues and look forward to the report, due in several months. If any members of the society wish to comment direct on this topic they can contact consultant Victoria Taylor direct on 0161 764 7040 or via email at victoria.taylor@kcp.co.uk.

Finally, the Business meeting on December 19th was preceded by a presentation by the architects DLG of the proposed large development known as 'The Waterfront' on the site bounded by the River Colne, Chapel Hill and Manchester Road. The presentation showed that this development would comprise residential apartments, offices, leisure facilities and open space but no retail outlets. The presentation gave an indication of the layout, buildings and vistas of a major gateway development that must be an improvement on the present prospect. The proposals took account of the sloping site and the setting against the river, Folly Hall Mills and the elegant, if worn, appearance of the buildings on Manchester Road.

However there were questions raised about the height of some of the buildings and the effect of this on light penetration, building materials, access to the town centre across the hostile Ring Road, parking provision on the site, and increased traffic congestion on Manchester Road and Chapel Hill. The feeling of the meeting was that the project was very attractive in principle but one which prompted reservations. We await the planning application, when there will be an opportunity for detailed comment.

Michael Rayner

Webmaster Report

The website continues to attract new interest in the society and keeps members informed about current local issues as well as society news and events.

So far the website has attracted 7625 visitors in total, 1420 of which were first time visitors. www.huddersfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

Michael Flaherty

Publications update

Since the revised edition of 'The Old Yards of Huddersfield' was first put on sale a year ago the printing costs have now just about been met. The uncertainty is because some members took copies to sell and may still have some unsold. Sales have understandably slowed during the last few months. For someone in later life attempting salesmanship for the first time, approaching managers of



outlets, was educational. Responses to polite requests to help our voluntarily manned, public-spirited Civic Society by selling a few booklets varied widely, from cheerful and friendly willingness to egregiously offensive refusal. A photograph of the renovated Hammond's Yard, off King Street, was chosen as the cover illustration because of the distinctive shape of the Proust Coffee Shop. Three days after printing was completed (by the helpful and efficient Barden Print), the name of the cafe was changed. Such is life, as Ned Kelly observed in the face of a more serious setback.

We have recently learned that our application to the National Lottery 'Awards For All' scheme was successful. We had asked for a grant of £1800 in order to publish a second, revised edition of David Wyles's book 'Architectural Walks in Huddersfield'. Many members will remember this excellent booklet (first published in 1984) by Mr Wyles, who until recently was Town Centre Manager. Mr Wyles has added a fifth walk and amended the original four. Many points were made in our application. Underlying all the points made in our application was the fundamental objective of our society 'to stimulate interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the town and its surroundings'.

Michael Hill

Personnel changes

David Hinchliffe has resigned as Planning Officer for Almondbury and Eric Twigg has taken over the role. We are grateful to David for all he has done for Almondbury. A lot of work was generated for him by the successive applications to redevelop the JCT garage site in Somerset Road. His efforts were crowned by success last month when the Planning Inspector rejected the developers appeals against the rejection of its latest schemes by Kirklees. The reasons given by the Inspector were identical with the objections David had put forward on our behalf.

George Keith who temporarily relinquished the post of Publicity Officer earlier this year for family reasons now feels that he must retire on a permanent basis. The tasks of publicising our forthcoming events and keeping in touch with the media on a day to day basis have been incorporated in Richard Huddleston's secretarial duties. George also pioneered the writing of occasional articles for the Examiner and this task will be carried forward by Professor Cedric Cullingford.

Gill Cullingford has joined Mary Hirst on the Huddersfield in Bloom Committee as an additional Society representative.

Michael Green

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Contacting the Civic Society:

All officers' contact details are given on the annual programme card.

Alternatively you could email via the 'contact us' page of the website:
www.huddersfieldcivicsociety.org.uk