



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY Newsletter – Summer 2006

1

This will be my last newsletter as Michael (your current webmaster) and I will be moving to North Wales very soon as I have a new job there. I hope you have enjoyed the newsletters during my time as editor.

Clare Madders, Newsletter Editor

Contents

- **Chairman**
- **Huddersfield in Bloom**
- **Civic Society Outings & Lecture Meetings**
- **New Publication**
- **YHACS Report**
- **Blue Plaques Update**
- **Best & Worst Buildings – Update**
- **Huddersfield Renaissance: major projects officer liaison group**
- **Local Architecture Heritage Group**
- **Planning Report**
- **"On being a good member"**

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Chairman

Mike Green completed five years as our Chairman in March. Mike has given a great deal to the Society - his lively mind always alert to opportunities to develop activities and further the Society's ends. Mike has devoted much time to work on our behalf. Passionate about music, he frequently missed recitals in order to carry out Society duties. Another of his passions is architecture and as a



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter – Summer 2006

2

member of the national Georgian and Victorian Societies, his knowledge is deep and wide. In particular his judgement as to when and how to intervene in planning matters is admirable. Making such judgements is not easy and planning requirements are not new. In 1385, after the French had burnt Rye in 1377 and Winchelsea in 1380, Sir Edward Dalyngridge applied to Richard II for licence to crenellate his manor house. The outcome was in fact a new building, which we still have, the magnificent Bodiam Castle.

At a time when, as Alain de Botton has recently pointed out, a new house which doesn't resemble an old house is a rarity, we must exercise fine judgement in our attitude to new ideas. Sometimes this is easy. Abaker's jury of thirteen members wholly agreed that the Huddersfield Technical College's Animal Centre merited a Blue Plaque. With less good, but not wholly objectionable building plans, difficulties arise. We must not weaken our voice by objecting too readily, yet we must strive to support high standards. Mike Green's judgement was sound and let us hope that the Society can follow his example.

Michael Hill, Chairman, Huddersfield Civic Society

Huddersfield in Bloom

The provision of hanging baskets is well under way and at the March meeting 131 baskets had already been ordered. We are entering Yorkshire in Bloom in the same category as last year.

There were 19 entries for the Tidy Trader Competition, but Street Wardens had been asked to help in boosting figures. 24 extra baskets are to be put in the George Hotel area and 4 barrier planters at the end of New North Parade. A winner has been chosen from entries for the Childrens' Flower Bed Competition, which was for children aged 6-14. The theme was 'Summer Time' and the use of a flower bed in Greenhead Park had been offered.

The trees in planters on John William Street have been planted in the 'wrong type' of soil, but there is an attempt to rescue them. Attempts to get some floral



decoration in Market Place have been unsuccessful so far, as it was designed to be an open space. The Committee agreed that this was unsatisfactory. The Civic Society got some unexpected publicity on St Valentine's Day when the Town Crier handed out roses carrying the TCA and Civic Society logos. Plant sales will again be held on New Street on the 10th June and 15th July.

Mary Hirst

Civic Society Outings and Lecture Meetings

Lecture meeting & outing

The May meeting was planned as preparation for the annual coach excursion. Stephanie Hiscott from Yorkshire Forward gave a talk outlining ideas in their Renaissance Market Towns Strategy. This is a 10 year plan, launched in 2002, to support sustainable market towns in Yorkshire and Humberside. £2.8 million is to be spent to ensure that the region's rural capitals are places where people want, and are able, to live, work, invest and visit. Whilst Stephanie is primarily concerned with towns in the Upper Calder Valley and Colne Valley, the same principles apply to the towns of East Yorkshire, which we were to visit. Her talk provoked a lively debate about this Yorkshire Forward strategy.

Thirty members then took part in the coach excursion on Saturday, June 17th. We visited Howden, Market Weighton and Beverley.



We found each to be very different and blessed with extremely lively and enterprising Civic Societies. Each society provided us with excellent guides who



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY Newsletter – Summer 2006

4

showed us round the architecture of their historic towns, including most attractive and appropriate new housing, delightful quiet corners and majestic churches; whilst also engaging us in the problems of traffic and parking, the effect of supermarkets, loss of cattle markets and employment situations. Despite nearly getting the coach permanently stuck in the Market Place in Howden it was a good day.

Forthcoming Event.

Monday 7th August at 6.30pm.

Our summer evening social event will be a guided architectural walk in Huddersfield Town Centre. This will be led by David Wyles as part of the launch of the new revised edition of his book, "The Buildings of Huddersfield—five architectural walks." Additionally Mr Wyles will be pointing out some of the current proposals for new developments in the town.

The walk will take approximately one hour and 30 minutes and will end with a buffet supper at the reopened Albert. **Numbers will be restricted to 30.**

The cost for the evening will be £3-00. Should you wish, copies of David Wyles book will also be available on the night at a cost of £3 -95.

If you would like to attend this event, please send your name and cheque (made payable to 'Huddersfield Civic Society') to: John Lockwood, Ashes Common Farm, Almondbury. HD4 6TE by Friday 28th July.

Future Lecture Meetings.

Monday 18th September – 8pm - "Meet the landscape architects".

Three landscape architects will each describe one of their recent projects.

Monday 20th November – 8pm - "Regeneration in Manchester" by Mr Roy Mason.

John Lockwood

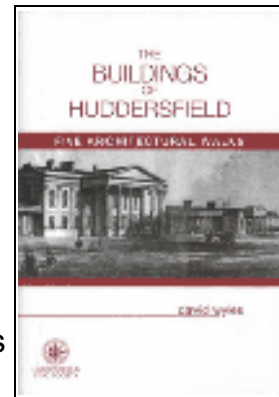


New Publication

By the time this newsletter is published, I hope “**The Buildings of Huddersfield – Five Architectural Walks**” will be available in bookshops (and you will buy several copies!)

It’s been a long time coming and even longer since the first edition, based on four architectural walks, was published in 1984.

It all began in 1982, when I was asked by Huddersfield Art Gallery to lead four evening walks around the town centre. It was an experiment by Kirklees Library, Museums and Arts and I was the guinea pig. Fortunately, all four evenings



were bright and sunny and by the final walk 70 people were following my architectural pied piper tour.

It was the enthusiasm of the audience that convinced me that there was a need to produce, for a wider audience, a guide to the town’s remarkable architectural heritage.

Until that time generally available information was in short supply. Pevsner had paid scant attention to the town and by far the best outline of the region’s architecture was Derek Linstrum’s ‘West Yorkshire Architects and Architecture’.

The Department of the Environment had carried out a full review of buildings of architectural and historic interest within the former borough boundaries, in 1978. At the time I was part of the heritage team within Kirklees Council’s Planning department. We became one of the first district councils to gain approval to carry out survey work on behalf of the DoE and I led a small team, appointed under the Manpower Services Commission Programme, in surveying historic buildings along the Colne Valley.

My knowledge of the mills and domestic vernacular of the Colne Valley little prepared me for the depth of research required to describe the predominately Victorian architecture of Huddersfield. Various research had been carried out



into aspects of the town's history but I needed to discover more about the architects, their clients and the influences that shaped the town. It took some time to discover the inner sanctum of the local studies library and trawl through dry and dusty documents.

Predominately only buildings built before 1840 had been listed and apart from individual examples there was little coverage of later periods (the listing of Neaverson's shopfront but not the rest of Kirkgate Buildings is still a major omission).

I also learnt by my mistakes. By the time of publication in 1984 a number of others were carrying out related research. Edward Law, investigating the work of local architects, pointed out my error in ascribing Britannia Buildings to William Tite and not to William Cocking. Malcolm Dean of the Holmfirth Adult Education Geology Group exposed my ignorance in differentiating granite from marble.

The book's publication did, however, demonstrate the public's growing interest and pride in the architecture of their town, one that had been hidden beneath a layer of grime for years and fundamentally ignored by many. Particularly gratifying was that people were looking upwards to delight in the quality of the stonework and the various influences shaping each building. At one presentation (it may have been to the Civic Society) I hid within photographs of Huddersfield, details of palazzo architecture from Genoa and Venice. Feigning forgetfulness I asked where the buildings were to be told they were probably in the new town area of Huddersfield. It was with some relish I was able to demonstrate to the audience that they couldn't tell the difference between these great cities and Huddersfield.

Now, 22 years after the original publication, the Civic Society has helped bring about a new edition of the book, with one additional walk to the original four. Much has changed since this time, some good, some bad. I personally believe that, by and large, changes have been for the better. For me 1994 was a key



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter – Summer 2006

7

date and it was in this year I changed roles, becoming a project manager largely dealing with town centre regeneration.

1994 was also the year that the McAlpine (now Galpharm) Stadium, The Lawrence Batley Theatre and the first phase of the Media Centre all opened. The sometimes controversial development of Kingsgate had its own benefits: the sensitive refurbishment of the King Street yards and the building of the new Methodist Mission on Lord Street. The transition from Polytechnic to University led to major investment in and around the main campus, including some fine new architecture, such as the 'Harold Wilson' Building.

More troublesome was that over the period virtually every pub was refurbished and renamed, banks and building societies changed hands and my updates and redrafts of the original script multiplied.

All these changes, however, signified a renewed confidence in the town, new investment and fresh challenges. Some of these challenges had been to recognise the quality of buildings when vulnerable to redevelopment. The recent listing of the library and market hall illustrate the dilemma of attracting investment, retaining significant buildings, and aspiring to high standards of design.

As building materials change and greater emphasis is placed on sustainability, how does Huddersfield retain its distinctiveness? Perhaps we shouldn't worry too much. The architecture of Huddersfield, once it departed from the vernacular, has relentlessly copied styles from past generations and various countries.

What I do hope is that the book adds to the growing number of publications which now recognise and describe our town's architecture and that people will dip into it and celebrate its quality and diversity.

At this rate I shall be almost 80 before the next edition, so I thank the Civic Society from helping to reissue this book now.

David Wyles



YHACS Report

The Association has in the past few months submitted its response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The Regional Spatial Strategy is the top layer of planning and I, on behalf of the Society, joined with Wakefield Civic Society in objecting to the proposal that Leeds should be the “capital” of the region and that all the other towns, such as Huddersfield, would be mere local centres. I said that we were keen to preserve our local character and had no wish to become even more of a dormitory to Leeds. This is important from the point of the future development of Huddersfield and, in particular, in the provision of funding.

We have also considered the regional transport plans and how these impact on our individual towns. Of particular interest is what is planned for the development of the M62 and the transpennine railway.

The Association is still leading the way for the other regional associations in the Country and the next important events on the calendar are the two Conferences we are running in June and to which the Society has been invited.

There are some good speakers lined up, including the Chairman and the Chief Executive of the Civic Trust and an English Heritage Commissioner. There are also to be workshops and topics to be covered include the management of a civic society, how to deal with planning applications and how to organise projects.

Don't forget, if you want further information about the work of the YHACS then take a look at their website (www.yhacs.org.uk); and of course our own Society's website too (www.huddersfieldcivicsociety.org.uk).

Richard Ward



Blue Plaques Update

Earlier this year members of the Civic Society visited 'The School of Caring' at Taylor Hill. Despite short notice, well over a dozen members visited and approved that a Blue Plaque should be awarded to the Governors of Huddersfield Technical College.



This award is to take place in September and it is hoped can be combined with the further celebrations of the National Civic Trust Award; which was given earlier this year on the instigation of the Huddersfield Civic Society.

Both Governors and the Architects are justifiably proud of these awards and feel they should be brought to the attention of the wider public.

Please remember that Derek Bennett and I are always ready to hear suggestions from other members about projects you feel should be considered for a blue plaque. Our contact details can be found on the Society website and programme card.

Albert Booth

Best & Worst Buildings – Update

As reported in our Winter newsletter, we have decided, with the assistance of the Huddersfield Examiner and of course the help of Civic Society members, to find out which local buildings are seen as the 10 best and 10 worst. Awareness of our inheritance and the need to enhance it is behind the idea.

Members of the Civic Society were therefore asked to nominate buildings for either category and it was interesting to see the same building sometimes appearing under both headings!

In mid April, over two days, the *Examiner* carried photographs of the ten best and the ten worst buildings. Out of the many suggested, those chosen to be published were roughly in the centre and were a selection from the many possibilities. The photographs were supplied by Albert Booth and Gill Cullingford.



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter – Summer 2006

10

The articles clearly had an impact. Only ten days later it was announced that the Glynn Webb outlet was going to be closed and replaced and its nomination as one of the ten worst buildings was cited. Since the articles people have also been writing to the *Examiner*, sometimes with photo's, to add to the list of the most hideous buildings, although rarely to the good ones.

The choice, of course, is endless. The buildings were chosen to make particular points, symbolic of broader issues. There are good modern buildings that should not be resented because they replaced previously distinguished one. There are good buildings that are not listed. There are buildings which clearly enhance the spirit and image of the town. After a concert broadcast on Radio 3 from the Town Hall, the announcer was lyrical about both the venue and the train station. Conversely there are buildings that by their insensitivity to their surroundings, or their abject use of inappropriate materials, cast a shadow in the environment. It is the sense of carelessness and indifference that are most striking. Buildings matter; they affect people more than they know.

In addition to these articles on the ten best and worst buildings (a subject to which we are sure to return), there have also been other articles in the local paper, from the Civic Society. These have been on trees, signs and the idea of listed buildings, and there will be more to come.

One result of the piece on signs was an agreement with Kirklees to have a short and long term strategy to deal with some of the issues. I do hope that these constant invitations to join the Society have some effect.

Cedric Cullingford

Huddersfield Renaissance: major projects officer liaison group

The Society has been invited to send a representative to this group and we are grateful for the opportunity. The aims of the group are broadly strategic. An example of its concerns are plans for St Georges Square. A design competition



is in progress and HCS will be asked to contribute a member of the panel to judge it.

Another objective is the improvement of St Peters Gardens. Various ideas are being considered for this development, which requires working closely with Church authorities.

Plans for St Georges warehouse and its surrounding area are another concern and David Wyles has produced a list of major possible changes needing consideration over the next seven years. It is important that HCS maintains an active interest in this working group.

Michael Hill

Local Architecture Heritage Group

In the late nineties it was proposed that, as part of the ongoing revision of Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series, there would be a new version of the *West Riding* volume. The editor of the work asked if myself and colleagues at the University could contribute to the section on Huddersfield and its surroundings. Some time has lapsed since the invitation and overall the production of the new work has proved to be a mammoth task, covering the huge conurbations in South and West Yorkshire and many rural communities. It is, therefore, still in preparation.

The request to participate was an opportunity for academic staff to contribute to research within the School of Architecture as well as being a worthwhile activity in its own right. However, progress was fitful because the research was always pushed out by pressing academic and managerial issues, even when Albert Booth and Hilary Haigh joined in. It was then noted, thanks to other local initiatives, that Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) money could be applied for to employ a researcher to drive the process on. The application procedure is now being completed and we hope to submit documentation to HLF by the time that you read this newsletter.



HUDDERSFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY **Newsletter – Summer 2006**

12

HLF usually expects community involvement and outcomes that involve the participation of the general public. In this case, local people will contribute their own knowledge and memories to a growing fund of information, and the outcomes (exhibitions, guides, etc) will help raise the level of interest and appreciation of the built environment and its history.

In addition, we hope that when development is complete that we shall be able to make the electronic database accessible to those with allied interests such as social, political and transport history, because all of these are interlinked and related to the built environment.

The Huddersfield area (and it is the old CB on which we intend to concentrate in the first instance) has a proud and distinctive heritage, ranging from Isabella Ramsden's grand developments of the mid nineteenth century, through to public spaces like Greenhead park and civil engineering works for the railway. These are just a few examples of built environment in Huddersfield that should be celebrated and appreciated.

Hilary Haigh and myself employed a (history) student over the summer vacation for two successive years to begin work on the records of building development in the old CB from 1870-1974, using registers from the West Yorkshire archives. In addition, Albert Booths' encyclopaedic knowledge has proved invaluable to help get us started.

The Civic Society will have representation on the committee which, it is proposed, will direct the work of the initiative. In raising awareness we hope that the public will not only better appreciate their surroundings, but will be in a more informed position to participate in decision making about them.

We now await a decision from HLF on the funding.

Richard Fellows



Planning Report

In the last newsletter I said that there were no major applications to report on. They must have been lurking in the wings and have now come out in some force as there has been a surge of applications, large and small, all of interest. The larger schemes include outline plans for The Waterfront Quarter, which, if approved, will transform the area between Manchester Road, Chapel Hill and the river. Not only will there be flats, offices, cafes and restaurants on the site but also a canalside path and a piazza. The skyline and views will be changed considerably, whether seen from the town or the approach roads. The society welcomed the development with reservations, since it looks as if the traffic movement in that area will get even worse at peak times, the proposed piazza will be in the shadow of one of the high-rise buildings for much of the day, pedestrian access from the town will become more important but no easier than at present, and the knock-on effect on offices both in the town and in the proposed conversion of Folly Hall Mills could be harmful.

On another “gateway” to the town, there is a proposal to build a glass-fronted block of apartments, nicknamed The Armadillo, between Wakefield Road, Somerset Road and Kings Mill Lane. We were concerned about the scale of the building and have suggested it should be lower and the glass should be one-way so that passers by are not treated to views of domestic interiors.

Coincidentally, just next door to this proposal, there has been an application to demolish the Glynn Webb building and erect a new Lidl supermarket. The plans show a long, unrelieved stone wall facing Wakefield Road and we have suggested varying the relief of this wall, planting some trees to soften the line and not allowing parking in that area.

One other large proposal is due for consideration: the redevelopment of Acre Mills for HRI use, including a multi-storey car park on the site of the present car park opposite the mills. We have also learned that an application is to be



submitted to build on the car park fronting the university, which is a prominent site on the Inner Ring Road.

Smaller but still significant proposals have also come our way. We opposed an application to erect two illuminated box signs on the Market Hall building. One would have been adjacent to the Town Hall, affecting the setting of a listed building and the other would have replaced the present sign over the ceramic sculpture facing the Inner Ring Road. We also suggested that the present cheap and unlovely signs be removed when their consent runs out. Very recently we had a vigorous discussion in our committee about a proposal to demolish a house on Halifax Road, Beech Hollow, just the town side of Banney Royd, and replace it with a block of 3 flats. The new building would have a flat roof and a funnel-like service shaft at the rear. The society had not opposed the demolition but was divided in its view of the proposed replacement. One half thought that its modernistic design would be out of keeping with its surroundings, while the other criticised it for not being adventurous and bold enough. This division of opinion was reported to the planners and we now await the decision of the planning sub-committee. It was an interesting case for the Society because it confronted us with the need to take a view on the introduction of modern designs in an area that mostly lacks them.

Unfortunately there is still no progress on a number of applications which have been granted but not acted upon, Folly Hall Mills being a case in point. This conspicuous building continues to deteriorate and, though it recently had a banner displayed on one side raising hopes of some imminent activity, this banner soon disappeared. We also still await proposals for the Library and Queensgate Market area.

Michael Rayner



"On being a good member"

The other day I read about someone being thrown out of his organisation for not obeying "the Rules". And it started me wondering how many members the Society would have if it followed that policy. For example, when was the last time you or I "encouraged high standards of architecture and town planning" – the first Object of the Society?

We are all members because we believe in the Society's Objects. But are you getting out of Huddersfield Civic Society what you put into it – or are you getting out of it what others are putting into it? Is receiving a Newsletter twice a year and perhaps attending the odd talk or outing the summit of your aims?

Huddersfield has one of the largest memberships of a civic society in the region and we are thus perceived as having boundless energy and enthusiasm. The reality of course is that a handful of officers is fire fighting. The mere thought that we should be addressing legitimate civic society matters such as Heritage Open Days, renewable energy and transport issues must fill our new Chairman with horror as he struggles when seeking volunteers.

The irony of course is that we have a wealth of experience and a body of like-minded people who, one might think, would want to play some part in furthering the Society's aims, rather than merely paying lip service. There is an old, but very apt, proverb that "many hands make light work" and I venture to suggest that it is our duty to one another to share out the load. Otherwise I fear we shall lose the services of some people who are starting to feel that they are just being asked to do much.

So perhaps we should re-read the Society's Objects and consider whether some of us might just be able to spare the odd hour to "do our bit". Many of the jobs can be done from the armchair; an ability to clean out rivers is not a requirement! And if you have a particular interest or concern, let someone know. It may be appropriate for a campaign of its own.

Richard Ward

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Contacting the Civic Society:

Officer contact details are on both the annual programme card and the Society's website www.huddersfieldcivicsociety.org.uk