

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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MEETING TO VIEW DURHAM CITY ON FILM

Two films shot in the City in the mid-20th century will be shown at our Spring meeting on Saturday 6th March at 2.15 pm in Elvet Riverside 1, room 141. *Durham City* is a colourful portrait of the City depicting the changing seasons. *The Big Meeting* is an amalgam of events during the Galas of 1951-55.

The person with the camera in the 1950s was Edward Roberts, an inspector of schools for Durham County who made a series of 16mm films for the Audio-Visual library he was creating for the Education Committee. These films are now historical documents, and the family of the late Mr Roberts are pleased that they can be shown again to a wider public. A soundtrack of North-eastern ballads and music, along with authentic Gala Day sounds, has been added by David Williams.

David Williams, our projectionist, will be known to Trust members from his illustrated lecture three years ago on the history of the cinema in Durham City and surrounding area. The material on the evolution of cinema in the district from 1896 to 2003, accumulated over many years research, is now in published form in his book *Cinema in a Cathedral City* (2004), £20, available from the Durham Tourist Information Office and local bookshops. The book, almost 400 pages and profusely illustrated, depicts the progress from flickering actualities to giant screen fictions. En route the City is shown as one of the last places in the whole country to be able to show films on Sunday, a state of affairs which often drew showmen and the clergy into acrimonious dispute.

Incidentally, the memoirs of the earlier life of Edward Roberts, of growing up at the beginning of the 20th century in a mining community, have recently been published, *Across the Green* (History of Education Project, £6, plus £1 postage from The Miners' Hall, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB.)

NEW ARCHITECTURE IN DURHAM, 2003

The fact that Trustees decided not to make an architectural commendation for 2003 does not mean that no designs of merit were completed in the city during the last twelve

months. Several structures are worthy of acknowledgement.

Prime among the candidates is the Earth Sciences' Building on the Science Site of the University. The Science Site, with the exception of the William Whitfield-inspired West Building and Ogden Centre for Fundamental Physics (see Bulletin 52), has accumulated a motley collection of buildings during the 80 years of its existence. For much of the time an extensive area of prefabricated huts has occupied the centre of the Site. Now, the so-called "temporary" structures have at last been cleared and a striking new heart inserted.



Earth Sciences' Building

The Earth Sciences' Building (architects Ryder HKS of Newcastle, contractors Heery International of Walton on Thames) catches the eye through its size and massing, simple clean lines of the industrialised cladding and a position along the "top" or southern perimeter of the newly-grassed central area. In terms of context, especially when viewed from the through road of the Site, which runs towards the lower or northern perimeter of the green open space, its stature puts it in the category of buildings which create their *own* context.

Unlike many a modern steel-framed building, its inspiration cannot be traced to an aircraft hangar; neither is it an example of the recent genre which Charles Jencks calls "blobitecture". A teaching and research function requires order and integrity, and this is expressed in its outline, materials and detailing. The concrete-block base and upper aluminium-faced panels present a clean, moulded outline, while its angled end-roofs and two large, round tinted glass

windows suggest symmetry. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that its strong horizontal dimension, emphasised by the shadow gaps in the panelling, together with the round windows, evokes a marine metaphor.

A structure of such proportions, however, might have been expected to have a more prominent entrance. Unfortunately also, appreciation of the building – as a mighty vessel moored at the edge of the green – will be lost if the University proceeds with its plan to erect a suite of lecture theatres in front of it on the present open space. A final query is to wonder whether Planners gave the structure the “cathedral test”, since in every respect it is clearly the most prominent building on the Science Site.

The part-conversion, part-new build of the Embleton’s Garage site in New Elvet (architect Andrew Scott, of Jesmond Group) has given a pleasing uplift to the inner part of our city. Especially appropriate is the riverside elevation, whether seen from the towpath or Elvet Bridge, where a former industrial unit has been replaced by a rhythmic gabled frontage, its verticality being iterated by changes in material and colour-wash. A board walk adds visual interest in front of the lowest level of flats, although present unimpeded public access is hardly likely to continue, given that French windows of each unit open directly onto it.

The view of the south elevation with its prominent small bays, looking towards the underground car park for the 35 flats, is also pleasing. On the other hand, the end wall facing up New Elvet has hardly been touched and is thus left barely disguising the scar from demolition of part of the street scene in the 1960s. One point which Trustees made at the planning application stage, and which has not been rectified, is the mismatch between floors and upper windows on the New Elvet elevation. In general, however, the influence of the Planning Office over detailing is acknowledged. It is also pleasing to note the appropriate name for this new development - St Andrew’s Court, after the chapel formerly on the medieval bridge.



St Andrew’s Court

Nearby, behind 33 Old Elvet, a distinctive single private dwelling has arisen on the site of the former Roman Catholic presbytery. A prominent feature acknowledging its heritage is a large gothic window in the rear elevation. The frontage is respectful to its setting onto the Race Course, although at close quarters it exhibits a somewhat ponderous appearance. Overall, its unique, perhaps idiosyncratic, quality evokes a comparison with the nearby Masonic building, which in a previous era made its own statement amid Georgian neighbours.



Castle Chare Bridge

The Methodist church at Carrville was completed during the year, being the final phase of a project which brings much credit to its congregation. The vision was realised in two parts over several years. A complex of hall and offices won the Trust’s Commendation in 1995 (see Bulletin 38); now, a new church has been attached, bringing the building line to the High Street. Internally, the high quality of the hall complex has been replicated. The façade onto the High Street, however, disappoints. Deference to its modest neighbours is understandable, but the statement made by inflating its gable ridge with “false” walling is weak.

A final structure worthy of comment is Castle Chare Cycle Bridge (design by County Council in conjunction with Capita; contractors, Balfour Beatty.) - presumably “Cycle” will soon be dropped from the name, for quite why cyclists need to be diverted through Highgate on one side or how they will proceed on the other side of the bridge, is not clear. Pedestrian access to and from the railway station is a far more likely use of the bridge.

The bridge serves as a healing feature in the gash cut into the mound between St Godric’s church and the station by the Castle Chare section of the inner ring road in 1970. At the same time it also enriches the experience of “the view from the road”, for drivers travelling east may read the gentle bow of the bridge as a proscenium arch, with the stage of the city centre opening up in front of them as they approach the Millburngate roundabout. When observed as a structure in its own right, it is a pity that the Authority

has painted it in the now customary blue-grey. The shade is presumably intended to be neutral; the response of many is to wonder when it will receive its top coat.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

If a majority of people in the North-East vote later in the year in favour of having a directly-elected regional assembly, then the question of a secondary tier of unitary councils will have to be decided. To this end, the Boundary Commission of the Local Government Review has drawn up three options for the area currently served by Durham County. Our Durham District could be (a) combined with Easington District in a three-fold split of the present county, or (b) combined with Easington, Derwentside and Chester-le-Street Districts in a two-fold split, or (c) combined with all Districts in an area co-terminus with the present county.

The Boundary Commission has invited the public to express its views (Boundary Commission for England, Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HS) by 23rd February, but how many people are aware of the request? Trustees, who are sceptical of the advantages purported to attach to regional government - it is not to be equated to Scottish or Welsh home rule - must confine their interest to Durham District. Anything which spreads responsibility for planning and development control beyond the present District would not only weaken Trustees' ability to monitor changes, it would also be beyond the remit of our constitution.

MEMORIAL SEAT

While Edward Roberts was filming Durham in the mid-50s, Desmond Kelly was about to begin to take what was to become a unique collection of black and white photographs of the City during a phase of dramatic change. Behind his watchful eye lay a deep care for the City, one expression of which was his membership of the Trust from 1980, becoming a Trustee between 1989-91. At the wish of his fellow Trustees, and with the agreement of his wife, Audrey, and permission of the University, a seat is to be positioned in the University Botanical Gardens as a memorial to Des. It will be unveiled this Spring, but the exact date is unknown at the time of going to press.

D.C.D.P.

TREE PLANTING

Trustees have recently been pleased to be able to use the Trust's tree planting fund to assist the Schools Grounds Project which includes in its functions the promotion of Tree Planting Week within school grounds. The Project always has more applications than it can accept and was grateful for the Trust's offer of assistance.

The School Grounds Co-ordinator, Joanne Stukins, reviewed the applications in the Durham area and Trustees agreed to finance schemes of tree planting at Finchale, Framwellgate, Gilesgate and Nevilles Cross Primary Schools. The work consisted of planting small trees (whips and transplants) and shrubs according to the requirements of each school. These varied from a woodland area to a beech hedge, a birch avenue, and some willows which will eventually be woven into a sculpture!

One of the essential points of the scheme is that the pupils should be actively involved throughout the whole process. The planting is physically carried out by the pupils, under supervision. In some of the schools every pupil was involved (and we hope they will continue to be involved in maintaining and looking after the trees).

The Trust paid for the plants – all of which were sourced locally – and for stakes, compost etc. Several members of the Trust have helped with the supervision of the children during the planting.

P.B.

TRUST GREETING CARD 2004

Trustees will soon be considering production of our next card, to be published in the autumn. Suggestions from Members would, as always, be very welcome. Contact any Trustee and give us your ideas about design, size, colour, price and packaging.

M.E.S.

FOR YOUR DIARY

This year's AGM and lecture will be on Wednesday, 12th May at 7.30pm. Please make a note in your diary now! Remember also that the monthly meeting of Trustees, on the third Tuesday of each month at Alington House at 7pm, is open to all members.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION

Listed below are publications received by the Trust in recent months and an indication of contents which may be of particular interest. Members wishing to borrow any title should telephone Mary Sales on 378 1703.

Civic Trust

Annual Review 2003

Civic Focus No 44 Autumn 2003

- includes items on Heritage Open Days 2003; VAT and Historic Buildings; designer David Adjaye).

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Countryside Voice Autumn 2003

- includes articles on the environmental implications of air travel.

Georgian Group

The Georgian Summer 2003

- includes Casework report on the Governor's House, Berwick upon Tweed.

The Georgian Autumn/Winter 2003

Journal vol X111. 2003.

- both publications feature articles on Sir John Soane to mark the 250th anniversary of his birth.

Landscape Design Trust

Green Places No 1 December 2003.

- includes article on the restoration of Saltwell Park, Gateshead

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

Annual membership subscriptions: *Please tick*

Ordinary	£5	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 own bank's name and 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 (*in capitals*)

Address (*in capitals*)

.....

.....

**To become a Member please post the completed form to:
The Honorary Secretary,
The City of Durham Trust
c/o Blakett, Hart and Pratt,
Kepier House
Belmont Business Park
Durham. DH1 1TW**