

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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Belmont Business Park, Durham, DH1 1TW

TRUST MEETING

Our spring lecture will be given by **Michael Richardson**, the City's well-known historian and founder of the Gilesgate Archive of Durham photographs. He is author of a series of books of collected photographs of Durham, the latest being *Durham City through Time* (Amberley, 2009). (Extra interest in this volume is the accompanying present-day photographs of the same scene in bygone days.) In the forth-coming lecture, Michael will range from the 1850s to the 1950s, drawing on some of the 2000 images from the 'Higgins' Sale' of March last year.

The illustrated lecture, entitled '**Past Durham: Recent Photographic Discoveries**', will be in our usual venue, **Elvet Riverside 1, room 141, on Saturday 13th March at 2.15pm**. The plaque for the Trust's Architectural Award for 2009 will be presented immediately prior to the lecture. Do come!

ARCHITECTURAL AWARD

The Trust's Architectural Award is given annually for the best piece of restoration or new build in the City and surrounding area. This year, for the first time, the winner, Durham Railway Station, combines the two in a harmonious manner. For several years, and under a succession of train operators, various individual pieces of excellent renovation have been undertaken. But Trustees have intentionally with-held consideration of the Station until what they considered to be completion of the whole programme. That time has now arrived and the Award for 2009 therefore is clearly deserved by a building which plays such a key role in the life of the City.

For years, the charm of G.T. Andrews' modest 1857 creation had been demeaned by a succession of prefabricated units which had become the centre of activity. In most recent times insult was added to injury when, at the introduction of 125 express trains, the south platform was shaved, and its patterned canopy removed, to ease the curve on the approach to the viaduct.

The first of the renovations was in the mid-1990s with the opening up of the waiting room on the neglected north platform. (For this work the Station received a Railway Heritage Trust Award.) A coffee bar has recently been added, while the end wall has been covered with a stunning photographic mural of the view of castle and cathedral. Outside, the cast iron canopy and stonework have been restored.

On the opposite side the original Station building has been restored and resumed its role as centre-stage, while the prefabricated sections have been replaced by extensive glazing supported by a strong metal framework which allows glimpses of the City and protection from winds in this elevated position

At the south end of the south platform a retail and concourse lounge has been inserted, an unashamedly modern creation which takes its cue from the metal supports of the 1980's platform canopy. The complementary glazing and white floor tiles complete an enclosed space full of light.



Railway Station, the restored and the new. (D.Pocock)

The most recent feature has been the erection on both platforms of glazed barriers incorporating ticket gates. Much more appropriate than the previous wooden barriers, the new ones divide but at the same time act as a unifying feature, with no interrupting of the appreciation of the architectural space as a whole. Overall unification has



North platform waiting room, Station Manager, Mr P.Crow,

been enhanced by the application of fresh livery to buildings and structures.

The present station manager, Mr Phil Crow, is understandably proud of the renovated structure. Special tribute should be paid to architect John Ives, formerly in the Architecture and Design Group in British Railway's Board York office, now a partner of Potts, Parry, Ives and Young, Limited in York. His association with the Station actually dates back to the time of electrification. He has since been involved with almost every project. The one major exception has been the main building and concourse on the south platform which were conceived by two Australian architects, Humphrey and Edwards, brought over for a period by GNER. Even here, conception was turned into detailed drawings by John Ives.



The School from the south-west. (D.Jones)

DURHAM JOHNSTON SCHOOL

If the station manager is proud of his modernised unit, then Mrs Carolyn Roberts, head teacher of Durham Johnston School, has every justification for having equal pride in her new school building. It is difficult to conceive

of a more acceptable working environment. A legible layout results in clear circulation, both around and within. It is a welcoming building, open and light-filled, with its space at times imaginatively flexible – not only in parts of the teaching area but also in a theatre with retractable tiered seating. The evident respect which the building is shown confirms the wisdom of the early consultation between architect and both staff and pupils.

The architects, Ryder HKS, had set out to produce what they called “a building of civic proportions with a quality and rigour akin to a collegiate environment.” Trustees acknowledge that this aim has been fully realised. In collaboration with distinguished engineers, Arup, the massing is arranged in block form, although block is perhaps inappropriate in the present instance, given the degree of glazing.

The main spine runs north-south, parallel to the A167, with lower wings projecting eastwards, away from the road and enclosing open courtyards. The wings are partially in brick – a reminder of the old school, now demolished – but coloured laminate panels and glazing predominate on its public elevations. A contrast in the use of these two materials occasions an immediately-recognisable division of the main spine.

In the northern half there is an ordered rhythm to the arrangement of glazing and panels, with the latter restricted to a muted colour range. To the south there is a separation of materials to an extent that large sections are composed of varied, brightly-coloured panels arranged without any apparent order. This sudden change of mood brings a certain loss of dignity or gravitas to the whole structure. If such treatment is intended to suggest that learning can be fun, surely the whole structure exudes sufficient excitement to make this additional eye-catching feature unnecessary. However, this is the only jarring feature in a building which is a decided addition to the architecture of the City.

MARKET PLACE

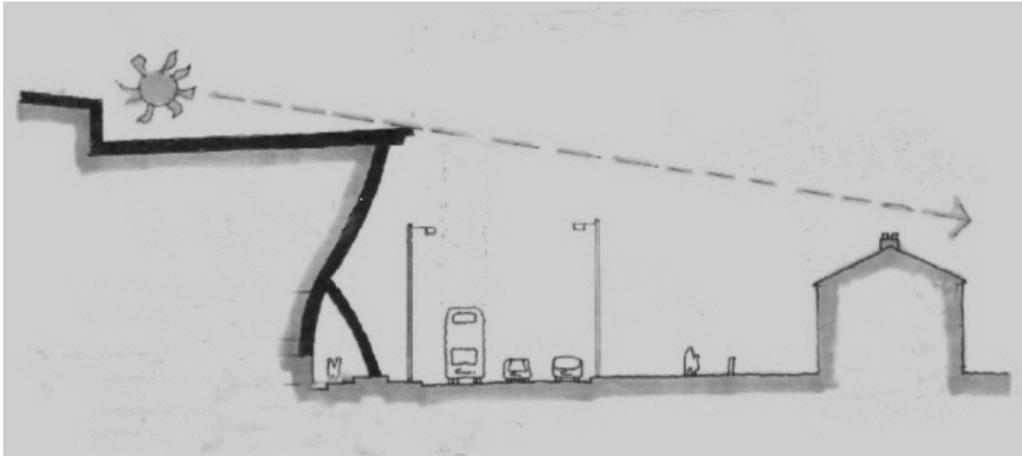
Of several important planning applications to reach the point of decision in the last three months, none of course has involved Trustees, Trust members and the public more than the three relating to the Market Place and its two listed statues of Lord Londonderry and Neptune. All will now be well aware that in November the County Council approved the general application and were minded

to approve those relating to the statues. In mid-January the Secretary of State announced that he sided with the Council's view.

Trustees were unhappy at the reasoning by which the Secretary of State reached his decision. (They were equally unhappy with the reasoning in the Planning Officer's Report, of course.) As this Bulletin goes to press, Trustees are taking advice on whether to take the matter further.

UNIVERSITY GATEWAY PROJECT

A second major application to gain approval towards the end of the year was the University's Gateway project on Stockton Road. A library extension, reception suite, administrative offices and a Law Department were proposed in a scheme which would bring advantages to the University, as well as leading to knock-on benefits to the City and region as a whole.



Sketch of Gateway project, looking west along Stockton Road, showing obstruction of the winter sun. (C.Jubb)

It was unfortunate that emphasis was put on the benefit to the University and further afield – both during pre-application promotion and at the decisive Council planning meeting – at the expense of the architecture itself. Trustees' comments revolved solely around the architecture, which consisted in a prominent, public face along the length of Stockton Road. In this respect the Trustees, along with Elvet Residents' Association and English Heritage, considered that the architecture respected neither the immediate nor wider context. Apart from a lack of any acknowledgment that it was a gateway to the whole City, there was no allusion of any kind to the City in which it was set and scant respect for the terraced housing opposite. In fact the latter was to be put permanently in shade during mid-winter by the height of the new Centre. "It's a bit big but worth it," one of the councillors is reported to have remarked at the meeting which approved the application.

BARN AT OLD DURHAM

Although it could by no means be called major, a third application which was recently approved is worthy of mention, namely, re-submitted plans for the restoration and conversion to a dwelling of a neglected, but listed, barn at Old Durham. There was no disagreement over the proposed change of use, but the manner of the proposed restoration was opposed locally, by the Trust, English Heritage, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the North of England Civic Trust. (The last-named is a hands-on restoration body which rarely comments on planning applications; SPAB also has rarely commented on applications in Durham.)

The above comments, however, counted for nothing. The inappropriate architectural detailing was approved on what the Planning Officer called "pragmatic" grounds. That is, he accepted a report by the applicant's structural engineer that collapse was imminent. (Dennis

Jones, who has surveyed the building, acknowledged an urgency but not an immediacy.) Needless to report, the approval vote was again given by a committee heavily weighted by councillors from outside the City.

FROM FANTASY TO THE FANTASTIC

A proposal which did not get to the application stage was the Viking Theme Park to be created at Houghall. Its appearance

emphasises once again the ceaseless pressure for development in and around Durham, always with the accompanying promise of extra employment and prosperity, as if this is automatically a 'good thing.' In this particular instance, a liaison between entrepreneur and Houghall College - apparently "a marriage made in heaven" – had also slipped in an executive housing development on the Green Belt site.

If the Theme Park was fantasy, then fantastic is a fit description for the highlight of the four-day Lumiere festival in November – the light and sound display on the Palace Green elevation of the Cathedral illustrating our history. Produced by Artichoke from London, it was a performance perfectly in accord with its World Heritage setting

D.C.D.P.

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST is a society set up in 1942 by local people who saw the need to conserve and encourage the appreciation of the historic City of Durham and its surroundings.

Our members are people who take a keen interest in what goes on in Durham City. They appreciate the role the Trust plays as a strong independent voice, free from party political agendas, that can put their concerns forward.

This leaflet tells you more about the Trust and how you can become a member.

What do we do?

Most people first hear of the Trust because of the campaigns we run, for example to save Brown's Boathouse, to oppose the growth of large pubs in the City centre, and to get a Green Belt for the City.

Behind this lies a solid body of work: around 1200 planning applications are made to Durham City Council each year and the Trust reviews them all, and makes representations where appropriate. Once or twice a year we will put our views at a Public Inquiry. We also have input into the County Structure Plan and City Local Plan, which set the planning policies in the longer term. We also make representations to the Licensing Justices about new pubs and clubs.

We restored the statue of Neptune in the Market Place and the teapot in Saddler Street. We make annual awards to the architects and clients of the best new or restored buildings. The Trust has placed plaques on buildings of interest, and provided trees for sites such as Stockton Road and Old Durham Gardens.

The Trust keeps its members and the wider public informed by holding public meetings and lectures, by publishing Annual Reports, Bulletins, books, and leaflets about the City (see back of the membership form), and via its web site (www.DurhamCity.org).

We co-operate with other City organisations and pressure groups. We have joined other bodies like ourselves by affiliating to the Civic Trust. We also consult with national bodies such as English Heritage.

How do we do it?

The Trust is managed by its Trustees, up to 20 in number, who are elected from the membership by the members. The work of running the Trust is carried out by the Honorary Secretary, the Trustees, and other members who are able to give their time and expertise to the Trust

The Trustees meet monthly in Alington House, North Bailey. Members are welcome to attend these meetings, and may speak with the agreement of the chair. But if members want to bring anything to the attention of the Trust, they are encouraged to approach any Trustee, all of whom live in or around the City.

So why not join us?

The effectiveness of the Trust depends on the support and size of its membership. We hope you will want to help the work we are doing by becoming a member. Please fill in the membership form (attached) and send it to:

**The Honorary Secretary,
City of Durham Trust,
c/o Blackett, Hart and Pratt,
Kepier House,
Belmont Business Park,
Durham DH1 1TW**

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
.....
.....
Tel. No. postcode
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 annual membership subscriptions:

Please tick Ordinary£10 *Please Tick*
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:(Your bank's name)
(address).....

Please pay to the Co-operative Bank plc, 29 High Street, Durham DH1 3PL now and on each 1st January starting 1st January 20.... 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.....Date.....

Signed.....
Name (capitals).....
Address (capitals).....
.....
.....Postcode.....

