CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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TRUST MEETING

Our autumn lecture will be given by Janie Bickersteth, the inspiration behind Climate Durham. Her topic will be 'Community Action on Climate Change', a topic which is of concern to all. For us in particular, for instance, will aesthetics be compromised by adaptations that are being pursued or explored? Or what might be the repercussions if travel habits were to change? The lecture will be in our usual venue, Elvet Riverside 1, room 141, on Saturday 24th October at 2.15pm. Do come! (Christmas cards will, of course, be on sale.)

CHRISTMAS CARD

This year's Christmas card, a south-west view of Durham by W.R.Robinson, painted c.1845, has never been published before. It was first seen last year on the TV programme 'Antiques Roadshow' recorded at Auckland Castle. It was brought from Shepherds Dene, the retreat centre for the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, to whom we are grateful for permission to use.

W.R. Robinson (1810-75) had a studio in Durham in the 1840s, having earlier practised in Richmond and subsequently in Sunderland. At first glance, the view might appear identical to the well-known Carmichael painting from Observatory Hill executed a mere five or so years earlier. (It was used as the Trust's Christmas card for 1996.) In fact the view is that from near the present site of Durham School chapel. This can be seen in the alignment of the Durham School building, erected in 1844, with St Oswald's church tower, or in the relative position of the cathedral's three towers.

The painting is one of three 'long views' of Durham from the western rim of the City by Robinson at this time, the other two being from Crossgate and the head of North Road areas. The amount of interest in this picture, plus the fine delineation of the distant architecture, will repay detailed scrutiny.

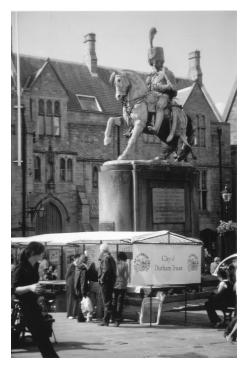
A complimentary card is enclosed, along with an order form. Please note we regret that we are unable to offer free delivery within the City this year.

THE MARKET PLACE

For several months Durham Market Place has been at the top of Trustees' agenda. Matters reached a head with the submission of a planning application in July by the County Council on behalf of Durham City Vision. Despite the inclusion of several elements in the overall package which promised environmental improvement, Trustees considered the aim of clearing the Market Place to create a bigger, safer area for a few events to be fundamentally flawed. The key feature here, of course, was the proposed relocation of the Equestrian Statue to the top end of the square. The public response, totally sceptical of Durham City Vision's assertion that a majority were in favour of movement, was immediately shown in our petition.

In little more than three weeks a record 6000+ signatures were obtained by those who agreed with the Trust's argument, which was based mainly on design/townscape grounds. (Here, Trustees would like to express their gratitude for the support of members, not least those who were 'fired' to collect signatures in their neighbourhoods. Thanks are also extended to Colin Wilkes, who allocated the Trust a prime site for its stall in the Market Place on two Saturdays.)

Our five-page response to the planning application expressed encouragement for what were considered to be several positive elements, while criticising the proposed treatment of both statues, seating and breaking up of the surface. Since these elements were almost universally opposed in the 150+ written submissions, and realising the short time-scale to which Durham City Vision was working if the £5.25M grant were to be obtained, Trustees offered an olive branch in the hope of facilitating progress. We suggested that the main aims could be achieved without clearing the Market Pace, and offered to meet with them at a formative stage of an alternative proposal.



Trust Stall in the Market Place (Photo D.Pocock)

The next we heard was news of an amended, resubmission. Five days later we received a two-line response, noting our offer and offering to be in touch "if and when appropriate." The resubmission, headed 'Amended Details', was accurately described by Durham City Vision itself as a "range of minor amendments." Londonderry, for instance, was to move "just 26 metres", instead of 27. (Our full response, to both original and revised submissions, can be seen on our website, www.durhamcity.org or on the Council's web page).

Most recently the chairman of Durham City Vision has appealed to 'protestors' not to let anger over the statues cause the loss of a £5.25M grant. The response, of course, is neither one of anger nor confined to the statues. Criticism is almost universal among all groups, both within and outside the City, and both by the general public and by a range of experts. (The last-named group possesses an expertise, and local knowledge of the City, that far exceeds that of the engaged consultants.) If the money is forfeited – and we sincerely hope it will not be – then, in the Trust's opinion, the blame must be laid squarely at the door of Durham City Vision itself.

EXHIBITION OF THE HISTORIC MARKET PLACE

Particularly timely is the new exhibition on the Market Place in the Durham Heritage Centre and Museum in St Mary-le-Bow. It is highly informative and well worth a visit. The museum is open at weekends during October,

2.00 - 4.30pm. Dennis Jones has kindly agreed to extend the opening after our meeting on the 24th if sufficient members are interested.

DURHAM MARKET HALL

While attention was on the Market Place, the Indoor or Covered Market was the subject of an appeal against the Authority's refusal to grant permission for an extension of its mezzanine floor at the lower end of the Hall.

At the Inquiry in June the Authority reiterated its two grounds for refusal. Firstly, the extension did not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area (although an earlier permission for a bigger mezzanine floor along the left-hand, south, wall had been granted. The Market Company was prepared to cede this option for the proposed, smaller extension). Secondly, the extension was considered detrimental to the setting of the Town Hall (even though it would extend away from the Town Hall, whereas the recent, existing mezzanine ran towards it).

Your Secretary presented evidence for the Trust in support of what we considered an entirely appropriate feature in a venue much valued by both residents and visitors – and by the tourist authority. The Inspector's Report, issued in September, found strongly in favour of the Market Company.

NEW AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE IN ACTION

This year's Annual Report discussed what we considered an unsatisfactory arrangement of area planning committees ushered in by the new Unitary Authority. In the combining of former District committees, Durham was linked with Easington, with the committee completed by an additional third of councillors from across the County. It was evident that the wishes of 'home' councillors might easily be out-voted. Two early examples have already come to pass.

In **St Mary's Close, Shincliffe**, there was a proposal for external modifications to a house in the award-winning development by Donald Insall. The Trust considered it contextually inappropriate, so did the Parish Council and so did the three 'home' councillors. At the Committee meeting the views of the last-named were thwarted as 'outside' councillors tipped the vote by one.

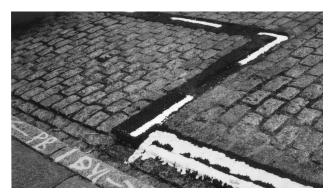
More recently, a proposal for a house at the rear of **Dryburn Road** in the City was again 'carried' by a majority of 'outside' votes despite widespread local opposition.

There is no suggestion that either decision was improper or undemocratic, but the new County Authority has hardly brought decision-making closer to the people.

SOUTH STREET DEFACED

To Trustees' disbelief, in late August it was noticed that South Street was closed for the application of 'anti-skid strips' and 'thermoplastic yellow lining.' For years, this precious street has had yellow lining, with parking spaces discreetly marked by setts of a more reddish hue. It now has what looks like strips of tarmac laid along the street edge and out around the parking spaces. On top have been painted the yellow lines – the paint has 'run' in places - and white for the parking areas. Moreover, a further permanent feature in yellow paint on the kerb at periodic intervals is a series of instructions left for the 'liners.'

Such treatment, in the Conservation Area, in a famous street with a world-renowned view of the Peninsula – and on the best setts in Durham – is a classic example of uncoordinated thinking, with the Highway Authority doing its own thing. – At least, that is what was assumed until a reply arrived from the County's Strategic Traffic Management Section. Ignoring the fact that it repeatedly referred to the surface as "cobbles", the Section claimed that "officers from the Heritage and Design team inspected this area and…agreed that this was the most appropriate method." Unbelievable! Look out Owengate, beware Dun Cow and South Bailey!



Insensitive treatment of South Street (Photo D.Pocock)

LICENSING

Walkabout on the North Road closed in May and the site is still boarded up. (The Trust had gained widespread support for its campaign to save the Robbins Cinema previously on the site.) The venue opened five years ago after appealing its licence application to Durham Crown Court. According to the trade press, it had takings of £696,510 in its most recent full year, and it had a 35-year lease on an annual rent of £112,560. Although the takings may look high, in 2001 Walkabout bars were averaging annual takings of £2.3million each.

The Loft night club, next door to the Walkabout and previously in the news when the owners tried to open a

lap-dancing club, won the Best Bar None award in June as the best run venue in Durham. However, in August it started to run an 'all you can drink for £10' offer which, not surprisingly, was met with widespread public condemnation when the *Sunday Sun* ran the story. The Trust called on Best Bar None to strip them of the award, and we were pleased when, within the week, this was done.

The Trust continues to note planning applications for the conversion of former public houses into blocks of flats

(**R.C.**)

THE CIVIC TRUST

The Civic Trust, without warning, went into administration in April. It would be too simple to attribute it to the economic downturn, although, since its foundation in 1967, the body had broadened far from a focus on architecture and conservation. In so doing it had become increasingly reliant on lucrative contracts, which, when suddenly withdrawn, caused its collapse.

A 'Civic Societies' Initiative' was launched in June, with encouragement from C.P.R.E. and the National Trust. The latter seconded Tony Burton to head the Initiative, the objective of which is "to explore options and build consensus around the provision of a national voice and support for the civic society movement by 2010."

Tony Burton has been visiting each of the regional groupings of the former body to explore the field, and a national convention is planned for mid-October. The N.E. Federation of Civic Societies met in Newcastle in July, when the visitor spent far too long in front of his flip chart, with delegates expected to volunteer details of present activities, and too little on possible future options. Members present were agreed on the need for a voice at national level, complemented by regional networking, but were not altogether sanguine about the present 'Initiative'.

PERSONALIA

Trustees were saddened to hear of the death in April of our former colleague, **J.B.** (**Jack**) **Scollen.** A gentle man, he sat at our table throughout the 1980s, combining an innate common sense with experience as a senior civil servant, tempered by war service in the Far East.

A current Trustee, **Dr Soran Reader**, has been missing from our table for several months as a result of serious illness. We wish her a complete recovery and hope that she is soon able to rejoin us.

D.C.D.P.

Exercise to 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.

Completion of the following Standing Order form will enable your bank to make the payment now for this year and on I January of each subsequent year. Most members pay by this method which is convenient for them and for the Trust.

STANDING ORDER

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:

Please pay to the Co-operative Bank ple, 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

Signed Date Date Date Date Standards)

Address (capitals)

Postcode

my account; number.....

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

APPLICATION FORM

Full Name & Address (capitals) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms	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.	SignedDate	Current annual membership subscriptions:	Please Tick	Please tick Ordinary£10	Joint (couple)	Senior (over 60)£5	Joint senior (both over 60)£7	Student£5	Dependent solely on State Benefit£5	Life£150
Full Name & Ado	Tel. No. Email	GiftAid: I pay in notify the Trust, I and any donations	Signed	Current and		Please tick	Joint (coup	Senior (ove	Joint senio	Student	Dependent	Life

