

Exeter Civic Society



Founded in 1961

Newsletter - Summer 2018

From the Chairman, Peter Wadham

I have thought long and hard about this---
"Is Exeter a better place than it was a year ago"
And sadly the answer I come up with is NO
Firstly The Royal Clarence Hotel. Nineteen months after the fire that gutted this much loved treasure it is still a ruin, all that has changed is that weeds grow in its interior
Re roofing of the Well House building (which was not so badly damaged) is in progress which is a good sign, but when do we get our much loved Hotel back?
This corner of Cathedral Yard and the Close remains blighted and ugly causing trading problems for the businesses close by. Plans for the rebuilt Hotel unveiled in July 2017 said "expected to be completed in 18 months" one wonders what has gone wrong.
Then there is the blighted Bus and Coach station. Have Cllrs Edwards and Bialyk found a contractor to build the promised St Sidwell's Point Leisure Centre and at what price?
The loss of the Clifton Hill Leisure Centre is a blow to the City and the neglect of Pyramids swimming Pool is sad to see, you don't even have to go inside, the outside of the building shows how maintainable has been neglected.
There has been a lot of building in Exeter recently but I have to ask is there a single good new piece of architecture gone up in the City in the last year? --- answers please.
The highlight of the past year from Exeter Civic Society's point of view has to be our Blue Plaques commemorating important people in the City's past history.
Oh and I think our monthly talks have been outstandingly interesting this year with an average of 40 members attending.

From Hazel Harvey, our President

Seventy Years of the National Health Service.

Our Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital is an important part of Exeter. It originated in a building in Southernhay, conjured up in 1742 by Dean Clarke.

He has previously provided the same resource for Winchester. He said then "Whenever a better provision is made for the sick poor by Parliament, this hospital will become part of that provision." This happened on 5th July 1948. In 1998 the RD & E commissioned a history of the first fifty years under the NHS. This book was called *A Better Provision*. This year they are celebrating seventy years of the NHS. They will display an expanded version of my book on boards along the corridors of the RD&E. We can be proud of our exceptional hospital.

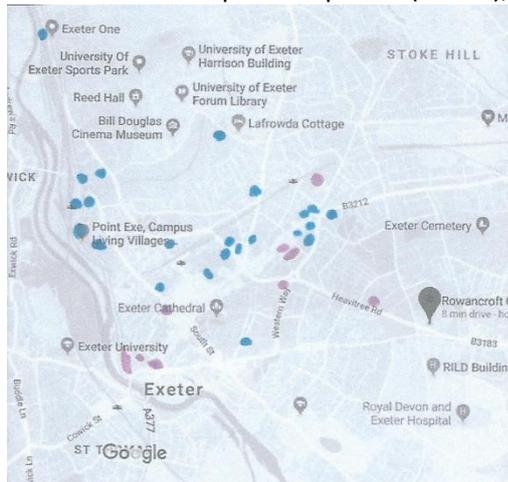
Brian George died in February. For many years he was a helpful and knowledgeable member of the Society's Committee. He was a civil engineer who had worked on many of Devon's bridges. He sent off letters on the Society's behalf suggesting how to solve the problem of flooding on the railway lines at Cowley Bridge. He will be remembered for his comprehensive book on the work of the civil engineer, bridge and canal builder James Green whose Exeter residence is now the Imperial Hotel.

From Keith Lewis, our Vice Chairman

University of Exeter Student Accommodation in Exeter.

Student accommodation seems to be an area of development that most people in the city want to object to. People ask 'why do we need yet more student accommodation', so I hope to inform members about the number of students and purpose built accommodation in the city, although I am not making any observations here about the impact of such developments.

As part of the latest planning application for 111 student bedrooms in Summerland Street (to be built on the site of the former Transport Club and automobile centre), the applicant states that in 2017 there were 20,515 students at the University of Exeter, and 8,193 Purpose Built Student Accommodation (bedrooms) – PBSA. This means that 12,322 students must be either living at home, in Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMOs), or in other accommodation.



Information acquired from Exeter City Council in 2017 show that there are 3501 university controlled bedrooms, mainly close to the main campus, and the university has planning approval to build a further 1,543 bedrooms, which includes a controversial development of 1,300 bedrooms at East Park. At least these buildings will not infringe upon the city centre.

But people are mainly concerned about accommodation that exists or is being built away from the university, in and around the city centre. There are currently 9 large developments under construction which will provide a further 1,868 bedroom spaces either this year or next. And many of these developments will change the face of the city because they are generally replacing old

unattractive buildings, and having looked at many of the planning applications, many of the new buildings will be attractive addition additions to the city. This is because the developers are building 'high end' accommodation that will be expensive, but also needs to be attractive. As an example, the recently finished accommodation in Queen Street fits well into the street scene between the telephone exchange and the college building by the clock tower.

The information from the city council shows that once all of the sites with planning approval are built (including current planning applications) there will be about 10,517 PBSA, suggesting there will still be 10,000 students living in alternative accommodation. It is difficult to know if there will be further developments in the city centre, but with sites for student accommodation selling for high prices we can surmise that student accommodation developers are likely to out-bid those who may wish to build family residential accommodation, whether for sale or rental.

Keith Lewis, Vice Chairman.

The Greater Exeter Strategic Plan

We have reported before that the local authorities of East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge and Devon County Council are working together, engaging with stakeholders and

communities, to prepare a Greater Exeter Strategic Plan. This formal statutory document will provide the overall spatial strategy and level of housing and employment land to be provided up to 2040.

The Councils' started this process in February 2017 with consultation about the scope and content of the Plan, and key issues facing the area. In addition, they invited the submission of sites for development, whether for employment or housing. It was intended that the list of sites would be published in the autumn, with a draft strategic plan published early in 2018, but this was then delayed. Those of us who follow these things have been patiently waiting for something to be published, and were advised earlier this year that we could expect something by September this year, but the GESP website <https://www.gesp.org.uk/> gives no clues.



Exeter City Council have yet to debate the progress of the plan, but Teignbridge District Council (who employ the lead planning officer for the GESP) reported to their Executive in early May that the Plan will be delayed until the summer of 2019 – at least 18 months later than anticipated. The report says that if all goes to plan then it is hoped to adopt the GESP after it has been consulted on. They cite the following reasons for the delay:

- A national review of planning guidance and housebuilding strategy.
- A high number of submissions for sites to be developed – over 700.
- A need to resolve complex transport issues, particularly in the Exeter area

All four District Councils and the County Council adopt a top-down approach to developing their plans which is not good for local democracy. Both the government and the Civic Voice organisation support consultation processes which are based around community engagement, that is bottom-up. The delay in the publication of the GESP now offers these councils a perfect opportunity to engage with communities about the future

From the Membership Secretary, Christo Skelton

Thank you to all members who have sent in their Consent Forms so that the Society can keep your name, address, telephone number and email address in a database. At the time of writing, I have not received consent from just a small number of members.

River, Canal and Quayside Group

Peter Nickol

On April 7 Peter Nickol, chair of the RCQ group, led a walk around the Quay and canal basin area, looking less at historical aspects than at current activity, ranging from the Environment Agency's extensive and still continuing flood alleviation programme to sporting activities on the water and in the Climbing Centre. Jane Evans, secretary of the Canoe Club, met us at Maclaines Warehouse and showed us the club's exercise and boat storage areas. It was good to see so many young people

engaging in these activities. The walk ended at the promontory between the canal entrance and the river, looking over the Trews Weir flood relief channel.

As usual the Quay will be busy over the summer, with craft and music events, boat trips down the canal to Double Locks, and much else.

The Friends of Exeter Ship Canal had their AGM on 8 June. New or potential members will be welcome. See www.friendsofexetershipcanal.co.uk or contact John Monks, jbmonks@btinternet.com, for details. Together with the Inland Waterways Association FESC have made a new trail leaflet for the canal: pick up your copy at the visitor centre at the Custom House on the Quay.

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

February – May 2018

I was sorry not to make a Planning report for the Spring Newsletter but you had a very good Newsletter without it and Peter and Keith's reports on the Society's involvement with Bus Station matters very well covered the major topic of that time. Since then the subject has gone very quiet. Even the closure of the existing bus station, then imminently scheduled for mid-February, has not been carried out; possibly due to our protests but with a strong (welcome) admixture of procrastination. As readers of the local press will know the subject has only just come to the fore again with a new application to add a few necessities to the existing plans. The application is so recently listed that only three of us have studied it so far, but we will be discussing it on Tuesday 12 June. It shouldn't take long as it includes only a bin store, temporary gates, and a gentle ramp giving easy access from Bampfylde Street to Street C, which is the wide walkway in Crown Estates original layout which was intended to run from Paris Street [opposite Top Shop] to serve all their restaurants cum retail and eventually the Bus Station, arena and leisure centre area. Of course the extra Princesshay part of that will not now happen, Bampfylde Street will remain, and the 'temporary gates' will prevent pedestrians from straying on to the area designated for the leisure centre, while giving access to the bus station concourse, having passed the bin store, which was originally intended to be embedded with the bins of the Crown Estates development in the retail/restaurant area. In a way this is a tidying up application but I feel it also makes clear that the proposed bus station is still exactly as in the approved plans and that the Council has not (yet) found developers keen to take on the area which was to have been an extension of Princesshay.

Just the other side of Cheeke Street from the bus station the student accommodation under construction is now moving quickly and the developers, now with the name Graduation Exeter, have added to the site, being at last able to buy the Auto Centre and the closed Transport Club on Summerland Street. Their current Phase 2 application proposes to extend the building, connecting on all floors with the large Phase 1 already under construction and adding 111 study bedrooms and extra facilities. We are happy to see ground floor shops fronting Summerland Street as do those in Phase 1 which will improve the liveliness of the street scene along Belgrave Road and Bampfylde Street but we find the elevation intimidatingly massive and have asked for some reconsideration. I think we are hankering after replication of the gables which will be an attractive feature of the long sides of Phase 1.

When the current developers of the approved PBSA at the City Football Club at St James proposed to add another 24 bedrooms while altering access and losing some amenity space for the twenty four and those in 'existing' rooms we objected strongly and were glad that the new application was refused. Later we were happy when a further proposal explaining the intention to improve bike storage and amenities in that area but without adding any more student rooms gained approval. By the way members sometimes wonder how many purpose built accommodations for students there are in the City, already in use, under construction or with approval. I understand that there are twenty three, owned by thirteen providers. This does not of course include the University who itself houses

nearly twice as many students on its own campuses as does the private sector in the rest of Exeter; and still many more students live in individually rented houses.

That's quite enough about student housing. In fact Planning sub-committee spends more time studying and discussing a great variety of applications, from railings to retail centres. This spring the railings proposal was for re-instatement of railings across the road from the houses of Colleton Crescent, replacing those taken as metal for the war effort in early 1940s and not needed until recent years when late-night drunkenness and drug-taking and -trading has been so frequent that the residents need to put in well-designed railings to close the grassed area which they had been generously willing to share with all of us. Below the grass, but quite unconnectedly, another application was a retrospective one for replacement doors to the entrance of one of the Quay Cellars. This entailed much visiting, discussions with the case officer and with the Quay River Canal group. The massive wooden doors were deemed acceptable; all of the cellar doors differ slightly. Planning sub-committee suggested that the work should be completed with addition of domed-headed screws to the long-strap hinges, which we were assured will be done and that the Council should ensure that all cellar tenants knew the standards which would be required if repairs to these listed buildings were needed.

Earlier this spring we objected to an application for an overbearing dormer addition at the rear of 1 Fairpark Close extending the full width of the house, rising higher than the existing ridge and being very visible from Fairpark Road and Close despite the applicant's claim it would not. We were glad to see it refused and in May welcomed a lesser replacement proposal which was much more sympathetic to the character of the house and its location and so was permitted.

Those three satisfactory examples do contribute to the way we see Exeter although each is small, but there are two large applications, as yet undecided, to which I probably don't need to draw your attention and which are still undecided. Both are for large retail centres near the Honiton Road. We objected strongly to many aspects of the one the north of the road just west of the Premier Inn , including its lack of post office and shops useful to the local area and its huge carpark, clearly intended to draw traffic from the whole of Exeter and east Devon. The centre proposed for the WPD site has a better mix of retailers and a reasonable treatment of its boundaries to Honiton Road and Moor Lane, but could be improved. The rumoured retail development at Middlemoor has as yet no new application. We recommended on both that the Council should be arranging a full expert review of retail provision in the East of Exeter area and this, I believe, they already have (maybe even had) in hand. Perhaps this is what is delaying any further news of the two.

On a cheerful note you will know that work on the Royal Clarence is going well and you will be glad to hear that at the rear of 43-45 High Street which backs on to it a recent application provides for restoration of the roof, wall and windows and some interior work; all very well researched and with skilled attention by the heritage officer and many others which will result in structure more like that long before the fire. And you can clearly see that the corner of Catherine Street and Martin's Lane is beautifully restored.

Pamela Wootton

CIVIC SOCIETY GUIDED WALK – 26 May 2018

It was billed as 'Oddities, Curiosities and the Catacomb' and certainly lived up to expectations. Mike Richards led a dozen members from the West front of the Cathedral, across the carfax of North/South St and down Mary Arches St to the Catacombs. All the while telling us the history of the area and weaving stories of conspiracy to murder, ladies of the night, an embarrassed Dutch Finance Minister and Tim Martin, the founder of the JD Weatherspoons' chain.

We learnt about how sewage was disposed of, urine being sold to the wool industry, the purpose of sanctuary knockers on church doors, power struggles between the great and the good of the church

and how the design of a lift may have inspired the name of Paternoster House, formerly the home of Cornish's Outfitters where many of us were kitted out with our school uniforms 50 years ago.



The catacomb is in the Lower Cemetery in Bartholomew Street and was a disastrous white elephant, built in 1837 to accommodate around 3,000 bodies only a handful of places were ever sold due to both the cost and the introduction of the Anatomy Act which meant that the risk of grave robbing became almost non-existent. Still owned by the City Council it has variously been used as a temporary morgue after the Theatre Royal fire, an ammunition store, an air raid shelter and is now inhabited by bats, a fascinating place which isn't normally open to the public unless via one of the Red Coat Tours for which Mike was an excellent ambassador.

Wendy Rakestrow

Inside the Catacomb

Sanctuary Knocker



EXETER & DISTRICT

BUS USERS GROUP

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MAY 2018 NEWSLETTER

The Bus Station

As you will probably have heard by now, the Council's latest date for the partial closure of Exeter bus station is Sunday June 17th. From this date until the end of 2020, many of our country bus services will operate from stops in Paris Street, Sidwell Street and Cheeke Street, while others will continue

to use what remains of the bus station. Leaflets have been prepared by the City Council showing which services are to be moved; these are available from the Stagecoach Travel Office and we have included a summary overleaf. We also believe that publicity hoardings will be positioned at key points in the area.

Whether the closure actually happens on that day remains to be seen. We understand that the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders have now been approved but, at the time of writing, no further work on the ground has been done and there are only three weeks left to carry out the physical alterations to the road layout and to complete installing the bus and coach shelters.

From June until November, while advance works (see below) are taking place, we gather that buses entering the bus station will approach it along Bampfylde Street from the Cheeke Street end and then perform a sharp U-turn into the forecourt, which puts them in potential conflict with buses leaving the bus station and heading for Paris Street. To achieve this, some alterations will have to be made to the street furniture and signage before Stagecoach can perform a risk assessment. From November, when work on the new buildings begins, buses will both enter and leave the bus station from the Paris Street end.

Quite apart from the changes to country bus services, there will also be some minor alterations to city service stops. Unfortunately, these are not explained in the Council leaflet and so we are told that Stagecoach is planning to issue its own composite guide shortly. The current 'Exeter Bus Map' published last autumn by Devon County Council will soon become out of date, and we are not confident that DCC is being kept aware of all the changes taking place.

Assuming that the closure goes through as planned, contractors will then begin to carry out a programme of advance works in the area around the bus station site in readiness for the new buildings – demolishing the coach waiting room, erecting hoardings around the east end of the site and the lower parking area, carrying out site investigation works and installing new electrical services. The present bus station toilets will remain open, and those in the Shopmobility office in Paris Street will be made available to passengers. We believe that there are toilets in the St Sidwella Centre on Sidwell Street that can also be used by bus passengers.

In the meantime, the Council is inviting tenders for the new bus station and leisure centre, which it hopes will enable construction to start at the end of the year. Despite all the adverse publicity over the redevelopment scheme, the Council is determined to proceed as planned and with the Labour Group's continued domination of the Council after the May elections, it is unlikely they will deviate from this. It will be interesting to see if the tenders come in within budget or whether a further delay will be caused.

These are the temporary stops:-

At the top of **Paris Street**, stop 16 will serve the 5 / 5A / 5B / 5C / 55 / 155 buses and stop 17 will serve the westbound 56 towards St Davids Station, together with the Red P&R service.

Outside the colonnade on the north side of **Sidwell Street**, the city services currently using stop 19 will transfer to stop 25 and stop 19 will now serve the 57 / 58 buses. Stop 23 will serve the 1 / 1A / 1C buses. We anticipate some congestion in this area, so this arrangement may well change at some point. Further along Sidwell Street, stop 31 will serve National Express and Megabus coaches; we have asked the Council to provide appropriate shelters here for coach passengers and their luggage as the present shelters are totally inadequate. On the south side of Sidwell Street, the shelters erected last year are now redundant.

In **Cheeke Street**, stop 39 will serve the eastbound 56/56A buses.

All other country buses will continue to stop in the bus station.

Other Service Changes

The route of the J service has been amended slightly to take in the new IKEA store at Newcourt Way, which opened on May 10th.

We have recently had confirmation that in the summer Stagecoach are going to link up the ends of the J service between the Tesco supermarket at Digby and Hill Barton Road, making a circular route serving the new housing estate at 'Rougemont Gardens'. We do not yet know if the service will operate in both a clockwise and anticlockwise direction, similar to the inner R/S circular route which serves the Burnthouse Lane / Rifford Rd area.

Exeter Women and the Vote

Julia Neville would very much like to get in touch with the member who came to her talk in March and said she was related to Adelaide Baly, the first woman who ever stood for election to Exeter City Council (1913). The Devon History Society Research Group on-line biographies of suffrage activists are being completed, and Julia would like to check a few family facts. Please email her on j.f.neville@btinternet.com, or ring 01392-461157.

Upcoming Events

Open Mornings

16 th June	Nick Dixon will talk about the Exeter Peregrines at St. Michael's and All Angels in Mount Dinham
21 st Jul	Ian Varndell will speak about the Dissenters Graveyard
15 th Sept	Dr Sadru Bhanji – Caleb Hedgeland's early 19 th Century model of Exeter Cathedral
20 th Oct	Possibility of talk from Street Pastor tbc
17 th Nov	Peter Wingfield-Digby – Bishop Pillpotts and his links to Slavery
15 th Dec	Judy Moss – A Country Boy made good: James Crocker, Victorian architect in Exeter and Devon

Monthly Events

Sat 30 th June	<p>Visit to St. Michael's & All Angels Church, Mount Dinham. EX4 4EB 10.30–11.30</p> <p>Our Guide will be Mr. Richard Parker who is Warden of the Church. Refreshments. No charge but donations welcome to upkeep the property. Limited to 20 people</p>
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Sat 7 th July	<p>Tour of University Gardens Mary Harries Memorial Chapel, Prince of Wales Road, EX4 4PX. 10-30-12.00.</p> <p>Led by Robin Wootton . Small Group size so booking essential.</p>
Aug	Blue Plaque unveiling to Thomas Bodley at St. Stephen's Church
Sept	Possible boat trip on canal - tbc
Sat 13 th Oct	<p>Visit to St. Nicholas's Priory led by Paul Chant. Visit starts at 10.30am and should take approx. 1 ½ hrs. Group size limited to 20, so booking essential. No parking but central so well served by buses. No charge but donations welcome to upkeep the property.</p>
Tues 6 th Nov	<p>Visit to Mosque on York Road led by the Imam. Visit starts at 1pm and should last about 1 hr. Women must wear a head covering and also dress modestly and especially have arms covered. Shoes will need to be removed and left in the lobby and no hand shaking with someone of the opposite gender unless initiated by them. No charge but donations requested.</p>

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

SUMMER SOCIAL EVENT

Saturday 11th August. **Celebrating Sir Thomas Bodley.** Starting at 1.30pm. To be held in St Stephens Church in the High Street, the event is a dedication of the replacement plaque to Sir Thomas Bodley which fell from the wall of 229 High Street last year. The plaque has been redesigned as an Exeter Civic Society blue plaque but, because of its location in the busy High Street, there will not be an unveiling and you will have to admire it individually on the day. At 2.00 Ian Maxted will give a talk on Sir Thomas Bodley and his work in re-establishing the university library in Oxford that bears his name. He will also prepare a pop-up display of pictures of thirty of the illuminated manuscripts that Bodley acquired for his library from the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral in 1602. It is the first time that this lost heritage of Exeter has been seen in the city for more than four centuries. We are grateful to the Bodleian Library for permission to use these images.

Saturday 11th August. **Civic Society Summer Social Event.** Starting at 3.30pm. This year's event will be held in St Stephen's Church in the High Street. Tea and cakes will be available. The event will be preceded by the dedication of the replacement blue plaque to Sir Thomas Bodley. To ensure that sufficient chairs and refreshments are available, please register with [Ruth McLeish](#) stating which of the two events you will be attending.



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