

Exeter Civic Society



Newsletter - Autumn 2018

Founded in 1961

From the Chairman, Peter Wadham

Let me start with what I consider is good news that £1,000,000 is being spent by the City Council on updating and repairing the Pyramids swimming pool, good news for Swimmers and Swimming Competitions, an all-around good move I feel. The Pool is due close for some weeks in December until February so that the roof over the main pool can be Replaced. It had been planned for this only to happen when Riverside was up and running again, and sadly this hasn't happened yet! "So what happened to healthier more active Exeter" one of our members asks.

Also at long last the Royal Clarence Hotel is being rebuilt, the long delay has been painful for the adjoining shops and made this corner of Cathedral Close very unattractive and depressing to visit. We are promised that the Hotel exterior will look as it did before the fire destroyed the building, the interior will be something else with the loss of the fine and historic function rooms on the first floor, the largest, the Clarence Room, which was for two hundred years used for so many varied events from public meetings, wedding breakfasts to auctions and dances, this large space will be left void and called an atrium, the idea to let light into the building----- I personally don't remember the old place being dark.

The Bus Users Group have been doing a fine job looking at what is proposed and more to the point not happening at the Bus Station.

The basic structure the Surveyors tell us would repair cheaply with new offices around it to give a fine new Bus Station, the retail trade and its customers in Exeter need a bigger Bus Station not a smaller one as the City Council proposes to give us, this is in fact a land grab to offer more shop space to a developer and that developer (Crown Estates) ironically doesn't want it any more. While retail trading remains rocky for the large stores nationally, it is refreshing to see the number of small privately run shops in Exeter looking bright and busy with business and in fact the City is very short of smaller shop units with many entrepreneurs chasing the few that come available.

The large area of Sidwell St/Paris St. and the Bus station site ear marked to be redeveloped could (and should) be re-developed as the true Exeter City centre with a market hall/events building something we haven't got yet but many feel the City needs, a focal point if fact.

At the moment the Bus Station is a sad sight and is very dirty, no point painting the place up but a good wash would make it passable in the short term.

What a bad impression the City gives our visitors as they arrive, hopefully the next twelve months will see some fresh thoughts from the Developers and City Council.

On a positive note Exeter Civic Society has given our Cathedral £350 pounds towards the restoration of the memorial to Dr Peter Hennis (hero of the Cholera epidemic of 1832) which is in the south nave aisle.

It's an attractive 1830s marble Plaque was unreadable, the cleaning and new lettering is now complete and on inspection looks good. You will remember that the Society put up one of our Blue plaques not long ago on the gateway to St Sidwell's church close to Dr Hennis's grave.

The next twelve months should see many changes to the City, let's hope they are good, Exeter Civic Society will be watching.

Chairman

From Keith Lewis, our Vice Chairman

Greater Exeter Strategic Plan.

I reported last month that the four Councils developing this over-arching plan had deferred publishing additional information until 2019, but in August this year East Devon, Teignbridge and Exeter all submitted papers to committee to approve an additional consultation document entitled 'Our new vision and how we make it real'. I don't believe this new document provides much more information than the original consultation document in spring 2017, and certainly lacks detail. Teignbridge District Council approved the consultation document, but East Devon District councillors rejected saying it was not fit for purpose and lacked detail. Following this Exeter City Council withdrew their paper from discussion.

Having read the committee papers for the three councils I was pleased to see that East Devon Councillors were provided with a summary of where development may take place, which is in stark contrast to Exeter and Teignbridge Councils which provided no information to their councillors. This situation will now delay consultation which was due to take place this autumn, but if East Devon Council force the inclusion of more detail that can only be a good thing.

The Plan is being developed by the four local councils because economic growth in the area is focused on Exeter, but in reality, the city has run out of land so expansion must be in the areas of the three neighbouring councils. It has come to light that across the four district council areas 2,600 homes need to be planned for and built up to the year 2040, which is roughly the same as current plans. For Exeter the target figure is 627 homes a year, but it is difficult to know where land will be found within the city. East Devon is expected to build 844 homes a year (less than currently) but their councillors realise that a significant number of the homes that Exeter must build could be built in their area. I just wish Exeter City Council would be more forthcoming about where development may take place, and realistically the only land available in the city is to the north on hilly terrain. East Devon want to see proposals for high quality sports facilities and an entertainment venue included for the area, which will presumably be located on the edge of Exeter. They have also highlighted a need to mitigate and reduce the need to travel in an endeavour to reduce congestion. I hope to give you an update in January when I expect the consultation document will be published. Further information can be found on the GESP website <https://www.gesp.org.uk/>.

Developments within the City.

You will know from travelling around the city that there is on-going development, although much of it is for additional student accommodation which won't be completed until next year. Proposals to redevelop the South Street area were reported to the city council's scrutiny committee in September and will now be considered by the council's executive in October. The street is seen as unloved but also as a gateway between the city centre and the quay area. The suggestions for the street include extensive pedestrianisation and limits upon traffic. The ideas are welcome but there are significant concerns about alternative routes for traffic. Whilst I am sure that we would all like to see less traffic on our roads we do need to accept that vehicles do need to move around the city. Is it really possible to re-route buses travelling south from the city centre away from South Street, and what route will delivery vehicles delivering to the Guildhall Centre take? What access will there be to North Street and Cathedral Close – how will guests get to the rebuilt Royal Clarence Hotel with their luggage, or those requiring a taxi get to Mecca bingo? There is a lot of work needed by the Highway Authority to resolve such matters. One proposal not reported in the paper was for a pedestrian crossing on Western Way linking the two parts of Coombe Street and avoiding the unpleasant underpass. This will give priority to pedestrian and cyclists rather than cars. One forgotten aspect of the South Street regeneration is consultation for a new entertainment venue (1,200 seat auditorium) focused on replacing the Corn Exchange. The consultation closed at the end of July so I expect there will be a report to councillors in the autumn. Lease for the businesses around the Corn Exchange expire in 2020 so the whole block could be up for redevelopment if proposals for a theatre are supported. It has seen the announcement that Heavitree Police Station is up for sale, with the policing function moving to the Civic Centre, and the custody element of work moving to new facilities at

Middlemoor, as you may have seen reported in the Express & Echo. The sales particulars say that high density residential use and other proposals will be supported by the city council and the site will be sold via a two stage bidding process. The sale does not include the ambulance station on Gladstone Road or the Magistrates Court, although it has just been announced that the Magistrate courts will now be sold and cases will be heard at the County Court off Southernhay. It is easy to see that with proximity to the university site opposite that student accommodation could be built here. Earlier this year the city council announced that they are to investigate building on or developing several of the city centre car parks for alternative uses, which could include building multi-storey car parks on surface car parks. A draft report should be presented to the Council in November, but it is not clear whether this will be available to the public. A final report will be considered in 2019.

When is a Local Shopping Centre an Out of Town Centre?

This was a question that councillors considered at a special planning committee to consider a retail led outline planning application for land off Honiton Road at Sowton, and next to the Premier Inn, known as Moor Exchange. Although the applicant was only seeking approval for means of access, the proposal included an indicative layout showing several large retail stores, two drive-through restaurants, and over 400 parking spaces. But the Council's Masterplan for the area called for a mixed-use Local Shopping Centre to support hundreds of new homes being built in the area and people working in the Sowton area. The Society had objected to the application because it did not accord with the Local Plan or Masterplan, and I spoke against the application at the planning meeting. I was also required to speak on behalf of the consortium building Cranbrook because they believe that the proposals would have a negative impact upon their ability to develop a town centre there. After two hours of presentations, discussions and deliberations councillors unanimously rejected the proposals because they did not propose outlets which they expect for a Local Centre. The same developers have quickly submitted a new application with a reduced retail floor area, a post office, chemist/dispensary, a few small shop units and a gym. Most of the large retail units remain, but some do have the capacity to provide what local people may want. So what should a modern Local Shopping Centre include and should there be so much car parking? These are issues that planning sub-committee and our main committee now have to consider in formulating our response to the new proposal.

Exeter Bus and Coach Station Redevelopment Update.

A start in development is getting closer. Despite many complaints about the suitability of the Leisure Centre for serious swimmers and the £32m cost of building it, the City Council seems determined to press on. They have announced that Kier Construction are their preferred contractor and hope to conclude negotiations this autumn with a start in the New Year. There are a few matters that should be completed before signing any contract to build the centre, namely a new business case to support the Council's claims that the centre will make money; new plans and elevations for the western elevations because The Crown Estate are no longer building up to the centre; and vehicular access to the service lay-by in Paris Street (there are currently no plans for traffic to be able to travel down Paris Street other than that leaving city centre car parks).

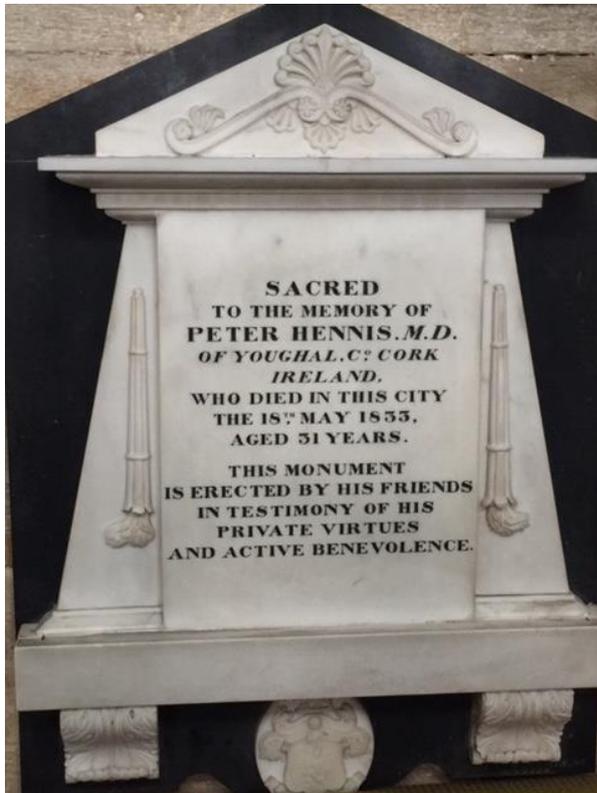
Negotiations with Kier also include the building of a new smaller bus station, but despite there now being an opportunity to build a larger bus station, as recommended by the Exeter Bus User Group, the Council are again proceeding with their previous plans. And there are concerns in the media about Keir Construction's financial stability with the company carrying £350m of debt, and some investors betting on the company collapsing like Carillion did earlier this year. We can only hope that the City Council undertakes financial checks to ensure the company will be able to complete building work.

And there is some positive news regarding the shops in Paris Street and Sidwell Street. We understand that The Crown Estate are preparing plans to demolish the shops in Paris Street and build shop units, this will include building up to the cut-through by the former QS shop. And we are also pleased to hear that they are formulating plans to get their tenants in Sidwell Street to improve the exterior of the premises they lease. We hope that proposals will be put forward for consultation at the turn of the year.

This then leaves the remaining half of the bus station and the Bampfylde Street car park to be developed, so we can only hope that the City Council who own these sites are seeking developers to build something there.

From the Membership Secretary, Christo Skelton

Thank you to all members who have renewed their memberships already. Those who have not yet renewed will receive follow-ups. If you do not intend to renew, please leave a message on 01392 668 085 so I don't waste your time chasing you.



The Refurbished Peter Hennis Memorial

River, Canal and Quayside Group

Peter Nickol

On September 20 members of the RCQ group, together with Pamela Wotton, chair of the Planning Sub-committee, met with Exeter City Council officers to discuss the Council's proposals for replacing the 'Mallison' bridge: the humped wooden bridge which crosses the mill leat adjacent to the Transit Shed on the Quay. The bridge is in poor condition and needs replacing.

The Council's idea is to replace the bridge with a wider, flatter one, which then would continue onto a boardwalk higher than the current concreted path (where the swans tend to gather, or used to) and onward to Cricklepit Bridge, with a ramp beyond that leading down to the riverside path.

RCQ members had a mixed bag of opinions about the Council's proposal, and deferred to Planning Sub-committee when it came to writing a letter of objection. However, it was very useful to be able to meet the Council officers, learn about the factors that led to the proposed design, and share our thoughts about it in some detail. This area is at the heart of Exeter's historic industrial riverside, and is a Conservation Area; any changes need to be carefully considered.

The Friends of Exeter Ship Canal are considering the viability of mounting a Canal Carnival. New members and supporters are being actively sought. See www.friendsofexetershipcanal.co.uk or contact John Monks jbmonks@btinternet.com, if interested.

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

June - October 2018

This may be a shorter than usual report, not because we have had few applications of interest but because there have been so many of all sorts needing study and discussion that our appraisal and meetings have been intense including the most recent this week which, together with the necessary follow up telephone calls to invariably helpful case officers, have made me late in starting the piece for the Newsletter. I fear I may even have delayed the Newsletter, for which I apologise.

One site of which all members will be keen to hear progress is the Royal Clarence. A great deal of work goes on behind that enigmatic front and additions were needed in August to the approved plans, to permit demolition or alteration of three elements of the Hotel which have become necessary during rebuilding including demolition of parts of cellar vaulting beneath the Lamb Alley building and of a part of the remaining wall between main building and the Exeter Bank, and new internal elevations to the more open atrium which will make the hotel more welcoming. All essential and showing that progress is being made even though mainly at ground floor level. We will need to be patient for a long time yet but it will be worth it.

The Bus Station plans also had three minor additions; for some re-routing of paths and bin-store, needed because no longer being served by the abandoned Princesshay extension, and for gates to prevent passengers from straying on to construction areas. This made it clear that, at that point at any rate, ECC had no early expectation of development of that area, but it does now sound as if Crown Estate and TIA Henderson may be taking some care of the deteriorating Paris Street shops, so there may be applications in a few months.

As you know from the last Newsletter the developers of Graduation Exeter, which has nearly reached full height, were able to buy the buildings on Summerland Street which will enable them to round off their building, completing the whole area between Belgrave Road and Bampfylde Street and housing 114 more students, connecting at all levels with the original proposal. Unfortunately the massive appearance of the extra part did not accord well with the original and we wrote a letter of objection. The Planning Councillors did not think well of it either and the proposal was withdrawn to be hastily followed by a new one with very little difference to which we this week repeated our objection. I wonder if the slight change will satisfy the Councillors, or possibly the few of the working party to whom the application will probably be presented this time.

The University's own PBSA at East Park on campus which has outline approval has recently put in two further applications, one for Reserve Matters covering the more detailed design of buildings, layout, pathways and so on, and the other for much earth moving and the construction onto and on the site of areas to carry the large construction vehicles and heavy loads. They will strengthen the culvert which carries the water on from the pond to join the outflow from the Lakes on its way down to the Hoopern Valley and in the original application they would have needed need to widen the path which follows the brook down to the pond, but in order to avoid damage to this sensitive area the construction road will now cross a more open area. Not surprisingly they hope to have got all this well underway before the winter has fully set in.

That paragraph became very long as I only heard of the changes while writing, but the next which is no doubt of interest to many more members, can be brief as Keith has dealt with the 'Local shopping center' north of Honiton Road on which he wrote and spoke so well, in agreement with planning sub-

committee. Keith attended the recent pl s-c meeting to discuss the new application, and we agreed that there are improvements, but are they enough?

The City Planning Committee this week deferred, at the developers' request, a decision on a similar proposal for eight retail units, restaurants, a gym and parking space for 417 south of Honiton Road and within the Middlemoor Police grounds. Officers had recommended refusal as the proposed access requiring a fifth arm to/from the Honiton Road roundabout would have severe impact on that already congested main road. The developers will have further discussions with Devon County Council, the Highways Authority and no doubt submit yet another proposal for this recurrent site.

We were glad to know that the application for 48 houses on land at Ringswell Avenue, which itself reaches Honiton Road about 400 yards from the roundabout, had been eventually refused as we, and many local residents, had objected to Ringswell Avenue being the only access point. It seemed logical, and safer for the adjacent school, for cars and pedestrians seeking buses to use a short link to Bramley Avenue and the fact that this short link was held for possible future use by Devon County Council has not been adequately explained. So far no further application has appeared. Do we assume no solution has yet been found?

The most recent application for multiple housing is for 30 dwellings at Church Hill, Pinhoe, being the first phase of a development of 120 first proposed in November 2013 and with a consequent long planning history which we have followed closely and with appropriate objection. Local objection was vehement and organised, partly based on the awkwardness of the steep Church Hill at rush hours and when running with water which it often is. The Council refused the application but an appeal in October 2014 allowed it, with strong comments by the Inspector about Exeter's short supply of housing in the near future and so a further outline application had inevitably to be approved in June 2017. This new reserved matters application is for details of layout, design of houses, roads and footpaths within the site and with particular regard to flood water routing and an attenuation area in green space at the bottom of this steeply sloping site. In order to avoid traffic on Church Hill only pedestrian pathways reach it, vehicular access being via Bickley Close by removing a section of what may be an established Devon hedge. I have spoken with the case officer about monitoring this and will try to go to look at it, but the need for access is inevitable. No doubt an application for the much larger part of the permitted site lying on the east side of Church Hill will soon follow.

This week's Weekly List has no new housing, no retail centres, no student accommodation, no rail or road works, no Bus Station or Leisure Centre amendments; and so is unusual except of course in being packed with rear and side extensions, replaced windows, garden rooms and conservatories, altered garages, one retrospective dormer, and a tattoo studio. The usual variety in fact. If this or the larger developments interest you enough for you to consider becoming involved the Planning sub-committee would as ever be delighted for you to sit in on a meeting or two and maybe even join us from then on.

Pamela Wootton

Exeter University Campus tour.

On July 7th, in blazing sunshine, Robin Wootton led a group of members around the splendid Streatham campus of the University, focusing on its history and architecture.

A member of the University since 1961, Robin has seen huge changes. He began by outlining the University's development from two small 19th century art and science colleges to its charter in 1955; and the history of the estate, its previous owners, and its purchase in 1922 by W.H.Reed for the new instated University College of the South West - for £8,000.

The walkabout proper began in the Mary Harris Chapel, with its superb painted ceiling by Sir Thomas Monnington. The chapel was the final campus building by E. Vincent Harris, the chosen architect for the University College. Harris followed a rather Lutyens-like style, using hand-made bricks, and established the light reddish brown 'palette' which has been followed by most later architects on the

campus, saving Exeter from the reinforced concrete mediocrity that characterises so much post-war university building. The tour passed two more of his buildings: the Roborough studio, which was the first library, and the long Washington Singer laboratories, originally for the physical sciences and now occupied by Psychology. The walk followed the lake to Reed Hall, the ornate villa of Richard Thornton West who owned the estate until 1878; and then through the ornamental gardens, the Veitch arboretum and across the lawns to Queen's Drive and the series of restrainedly modern buildings by W. Holford and partners for the new University in the 1950s and 1960s: Queens Building (arts), Northcote House (administration), Devonshire House (Guild of Students), the Great Hall, and the Northcott Theatre. Then the 1960s Physics building with its tower and the Geoffrey Pope Building (now Biosciences), both by Basil Spence, architect of Coventry Cathedral. Around these and descending the hill, the products of the 80s, 90s and the new millennium; several by local architects Lacey Hickie Caley, including the low, attractive multipurpose Peter Chalk Centre, and the INTO building, housing overseas student courses.

Large areas of the campus were beyond the reach of a two hour tour, especially in the July heat, and to general relief the walk ended out of the sun in the spectacular new Forum, part of the ambitious, sinuously roofed development by Wilkinson Eyre that links Northcote House, Devonshire House, the Great Hall and the Library; surely the most exciting Exeter building of the new century.

Exeter University has good architecture, and its buildings are immeasurably enhanced by their surroundings; perhaps the most beautiful of any UK campus. We owe a good deal to Alderman Reed.

Robin Wootton

CIVIC SOCIETY TOUR OF MT. DINHAM – JULY 2018

The morning of July 30th was warm and bright when a large group of the Society met at St Michael's



Church where The Archaeologist and Historian Richard Parker first told us the story of the founding of the Mount Dinham Almshouses and then led us into the cool of the Church and a detailed history of the building of this remarkable high Victorian building, it's fine carvings and quality workmanship all paid for by the Gibbs family, originally Exeter merchants best known now for Grade One listed Tyntesfield House (now owned by the National Trust) only the best

was good enough for Mr Gibbs who went on to give large sums to restore Exeter Cathedral. Richard's talk was full of detail and it was clear that he loves St Michael's.



SUMMER SOCIAL AND TALK ON SIR THOMAS – AUGUST 2018

The Society's annual Summer Social was held on 12th August, at St Stephen's Church, and was well attended by members. To mark the occasion of the replacement of a blue plaque commemorating Sir Thomas Bodley's birthplace at 229 High Street, the social part of the afternoon was preceded by a



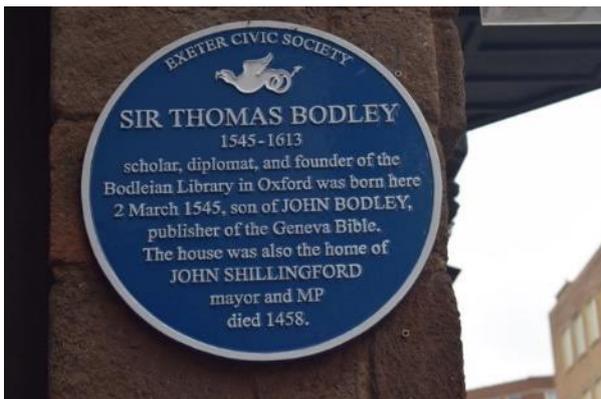
most interesting and informative talk about Sir Thomas' life and work, which was given by Society member Ian Maxted.

Thomas Bodley came from an Exeter protestant family and spent part of his youth in exile in Geneva during the reign of Queen Mary. He was able to return to England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and had a distinguished career as an Oxford academic, a diplomat and an MP. On his retirement from public service he took up the

challenge of restoring the library at the University of Oxford - both the fabric of the building, and the collection housed within it. As well as using some of his considerable wealth, Sir Thomas persuaded others to donate manuscripts or money. As an incentive, he used the modern-sounding device of having a "benefactors' book" on public display in the Library to acknowledge such gifts. His letters and an autobiography have survived, and Ian read us some extracts to show something of Sir Thomas's ideas about running the library. He seems to have been prone to micro-managing the work and life of the University Librarian, even to the point of advising him about marriage! The library was later named the "Bodleian" in his honour.



A significant acquisition for the Bodleian were a number of old manuscripts belonging to Exeter Cathedral, some dating back to the 12th Century. It may have been arranged through a family connection, because Sir Thomas' brother Lawrence was a cleric attached to the Cathedral. Ian's talk was provocatively subtitled "Exeter's Elgin Marbles": is there a case for returning them to the Cathedral now that its library is better resourced? But at the time of their transfer to Oxford, they were in poor condition. Ian brilliantly illustrated his talk with reproductions of pages from the Exeter manuscripts, hung between the pillars of the church, which showed some of the beauty of early manuscript illumination. The images and captions displayed have now been deposited with the Exeter Cathedral Library.



The blue plaque can be seen in the same position as the old one, on one of the pillars at the front of "Urban Outfitters" at the end of Gandy Street. The old plaque had, like the original library at Oxford, become much decayed and was hard to read. Our benefactor for the new plaque is the central Exeter Business Investment District, also known as In Exeter, who made a generous donation towards the cost.

Hilary Neville.

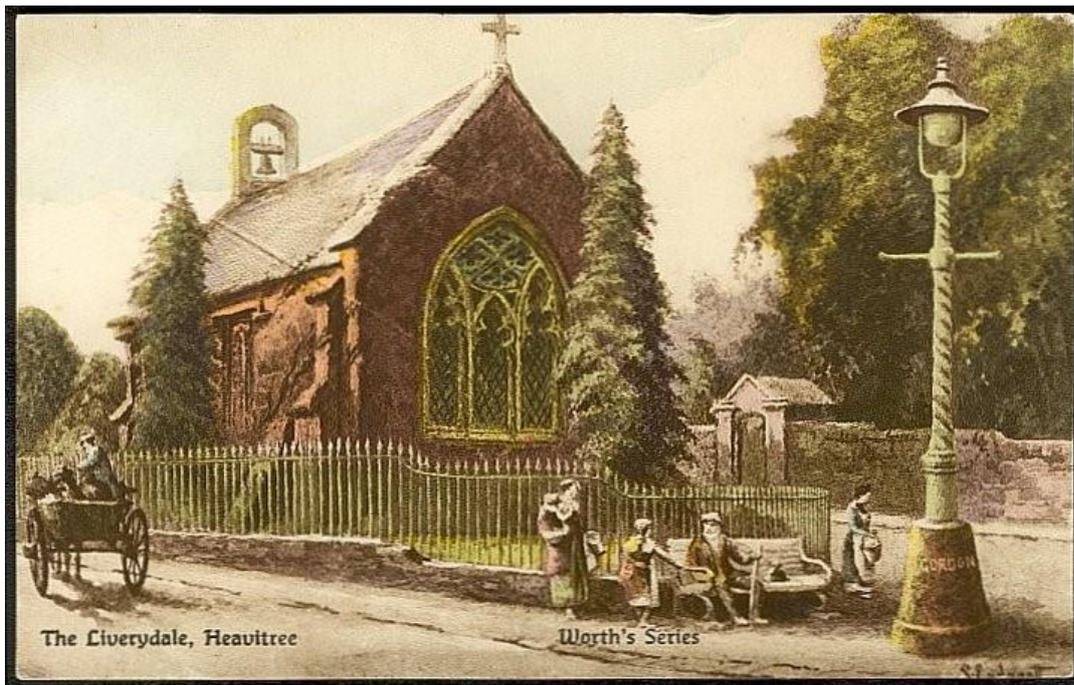
The Gordon Lamp – an update

Major General Gordon also known as Chinese Gordon and Gordon of Khartoum was a British army officer, administrator and National Hero.

He was killed at Khartoum on 26th January 1885. He had many connections to Exeter and Heavitree and the Victorian Public put up this mark of respect at the time.

Exeter Civic Society restored the Memorial Lamp Standard not long ago you will remember. Now Richard Holladay has written to tell us about the Lamp Post itself which was made in Exeter by the well known Company of Garton and King, their name is in fact in raised lettering around the Base of the Lamp Standard.

Mr Holladay goes on to tell us that the firm made thousands of lamp posts and a number can still be seen even today in many parts of Exeter.



The Liverydale, Heavitree

Worth's Series

Upcoming Events

Open Mornings

20 th Oct	At 10.45 our speaker will be David Brassington from the Street Pastors, he will tell us of the work they do in Exeter.
17 th Nov	Annual General Meeting for Civic Society members followed by buffet lunch. Please book your lunch through the Secretary.
15 th Dec	At 10.45 Ms Judy Moss will talk about "A Country Boy made good: James Crocker, Victorian Architect in Exeter and Devon".
19 th Jan	At 10.45 Jayne Leaver will speak about her role as the Co-ordinator of Wellbeing Exeter.
16 th Feb	At 10.45 Rory Cunningham will speak about behaviour on Campus and his role at the University.
16 th Mar	At 10.45 Peter Wingfield-Digby will speak about Bishop Phillpotts and his links to Slavery.

Monthly Events

Sat 13 th Oct	Visit to St. Nicholas's Priory led by David Radstone. 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.
Tue 6 th Nov	A visit to the Islamic Centre for the South West. Please wear appropriate clothing covering arms and heads (for women) as well. Shoes will need to be removed upon entry and we will need to respect the wishes of the organisers that we not make physical contact (i.e. hand shake) with anyone of the opposite gender unless specifically indicated this is admissible.
Sat 8 th Dec	Members might like to visit the Devon and Exeter Institution a hidden gem in the City. Our tour will be conducted by Clare Maudling the Library Assistant.

	There is an Upper Gallery to navigate so might prove tricky for those with mobility issues.
Sat 26 th Jan	Visit to St. Olaves's and St. Martin's Members are invited to visit some of the Central Exeter's smaller parish churches which tend to be over looked in a bustling City. Our tour will be led by the Church Warden Keith Walton.
Sat 23 rd Feb	Visit to St. Pancras' and St. Petroc's To continue our visit of the hidden churches in Central Exeter parish we go to St. Pancras in the Guildhall shopping Centre and St. Petroc's on the High Street. This tour will be led by the Church Warden Keith Walton.
Wed 6 th Mar	A visit to the newly refurbished Almshouses at Mount Dinham led by Rick Williams the Chief Executive of Cornerstones. This is part of a £5million renovation project to transform 44 historic Grade 2 listed almshouses.

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