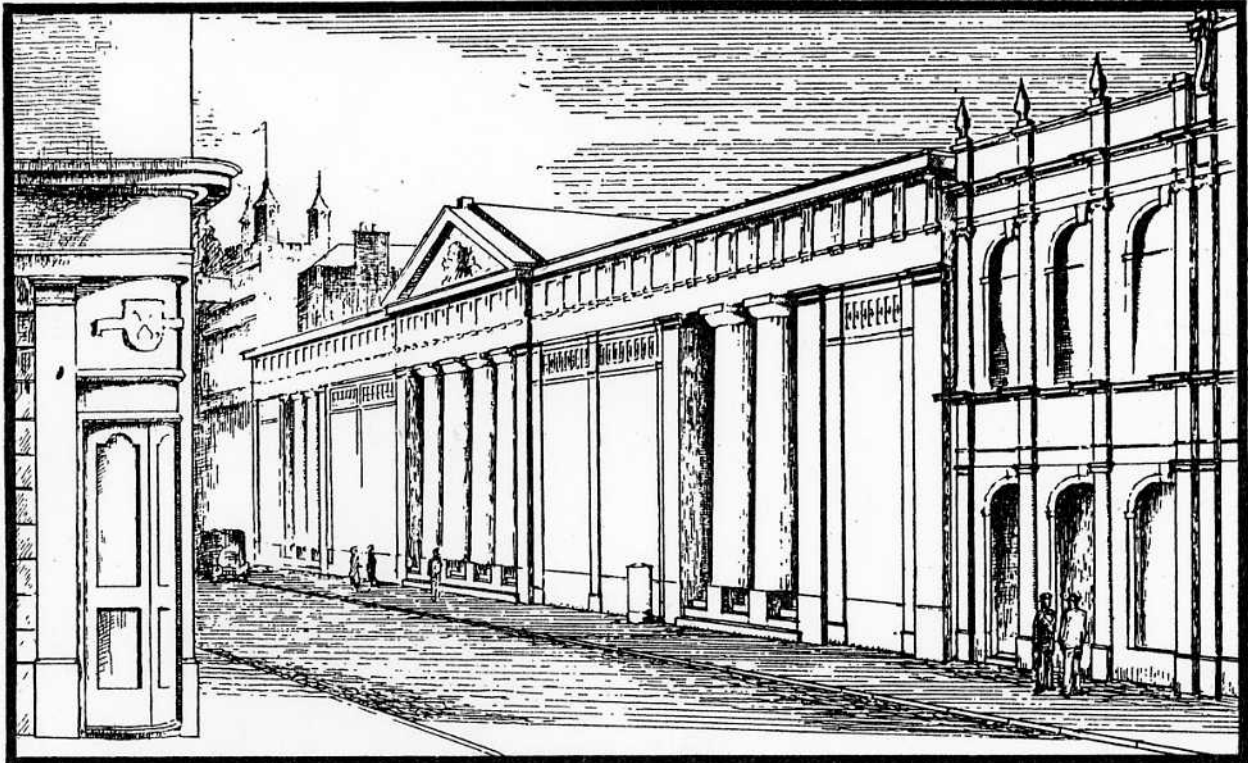


EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

<i>President :</i>	The Right Rev. W. A. E. Westall, Lord Bishop of Crediton.
<i>Vice-President :</i>	Dr. C. J. Fuller.
<i>Chairman :</i>	Dr. W. G. Hoskins.
<i>Hon. Secretary :</i>	Roger Gray, Esq., The Flat, 4, Spicer Road, Exeter.
<i>Hon. Treasurer :</i>	L. G. Loveys, Esq., National Provincial Bank Ltd., Exeter.



THE HIGHER MARKET

This noble classical building, opened in 1838, is marked down for demolition in the official plan for the re-development of the central area of Exeter as prepared by the Norwich Union Assurance Company. It has already been closed down, for no good reason, by the City Council, riding roughshod once more over all expressions of public opinion. A great number of housewives have been deliberately deprived of admirable shopping facilities, and a number of market traders deprived of their livelihood. Nearly 9,000 people signed a petition against the closure of the Market. Even this remarkable demonstration of public opinion was casually brushed aside by the majority party on the Council. One wonders exactly how many signatures are required by the City Council before they take the slightest notice of the people whom they are supposed to represent.

The fate of the Higher Market is an entirely non-political matter, or it should be. We believe that a few Conservative councillors are as uneasy as the rest of us at the way things are done in this city, at the secrecy which surrounds the whole subject of the re-planning of the central area. But they are bound by their party rules, and only massive public opinion is therefore likely to change the nasty picture which we have before us.

On another page we print the opinions of three of the most distinguished authorities in the country on the quality of the Higher Market and the case for saving it. It is refreshing to read considered judgments of this kind instead of the crude abuse of the local barbarians with their inevitable remarks about "fake", "eyesore", "pile of stones", and so on and so forth. A number of eminent societies are also mobilising to the defence of the building—notably the Victorian Society, the Georgian Society, The Ancient Monuments Society, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The opinion of all the learned architectural societies is unanimous about the importance of this building.

The Higher Market is scheduled by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government as a building of architectural and historic importance, and is given the high grading of 2*. It is therefore recognized by all civilised people as one of the major buildings of the West of England.

The City Council cannot demolish it or even alter it substantially without the express consent of the Ministry. This consent has not yet been asked for. Why, then, close the Market at this juncture? What happens if this consent is refused by the Ministry? We have asked these pointed questions in the Press, and Answer came there None. Is this just wild mismanagement, or is it something even worse—a low cunning which hopes by leaving the building empty for a couple of years to strengthen the case for its removal? This is an old dodge. Let a building rot with disuse, and then seek to pull it down. But the Ministry is not likely to be deceived by miserable tactics of this kind.

We are not defending just an ancient monument, however fine it may be. The Higher Market was a living institution, a great amenity for thousands of customers, an asset for the whole city. It has a life of another couple of hundred years in front of it. Members will already have received copies of the article written by the Chairman of the Society showing how the building could be given a new life and used for the benefit of the city as a whole. **We are not interested in selling the empty site of a fine building in order to swell the private profits of a handful of unknown people either in Exeter or in London.**

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From Sir Albert Richardson, Past-President of the Royal Academy and a distinguished architect:
"I was glad to have a talk with you on the telephone this morning regarding the future of the Higher Market in Exeter. This I consider to be one of Charles Fowler's finest works. It seemed to me better to change the interior into an arcade which would encourage various Exeter trades people to open branches of their various businesses within. Similar arcades can be seen in Florence, Turin, Rome, and Paris, and we have the celebrated arcade in Piccadilly and numerous other covered thoroughfares can be cited. With suitable shops of two stories the Higher Market could have a new spell of life. I have done an impression which I enclose to show the possibilities. If the Higher Market could be saved, Exeter would be spared additional rating and would have the finest shopping centre in the West of England."

From Sir John Summerson, Fellow of the British Academy, Curator of the Soane Museum in London, and the leading architectural historian in this country:

"In early Victorian England there were a few engineer-architects—John Rennie and Charles Fowler among them—who, with an equal understanding of Greek architecture and the principles of structure, produced works of high intellectual excellence. Serene and precise rather than picturesque, these buildings have never been much photographed. Exeter once had two splendid specimens of this kind of building. Fowler's Lower Market went in the blitz and I can think of no sadder casualty outside London. The Higher Market (either by Fowler or some other of the school) is now one of the best surviving examples in the country. It certainly ought to be preserved—and not only preserved but cleaned and restored and put back into lively currency for the people of Exeter and their visitors.

Any modern-minded architect will see that this can be done and done well. Rightly handled, the Higher Market would be one of the most interesting things in Exeter."

From Sir William Holford, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Member of the Royal Fine Arts Commission, Professor of Town Planning in the University of London, and planning consultant to the City of London:

"I have always thought of the Higher Market building at Exeter as one of the firm and abiding structures in your historic city. The advent of war damage has made it stand out still further as a building of character which the City could ill afford to lose.

I would not feel personally that a complete re-arrangement of its internal functions would be either impracticable or detrimental to its architectural value. . . I believe the Higher Market could be modernised successfully within its present shell."

In the face of these eminent opinions, we may now hope that the uninstructed views we have been favoured with so much since the Market was closed will die away. Here are three distinguished men who consider the Higher Market to be of the highest importance architecturally; and who all believe equally strongly that it could be successfully adapted to the sort of uses we envisage in a redeveloped centre.

MR. ROBERT NEWTON

Mr. Robert Newton, who was the first Secretary of the Exeter Civic Society, was elected to the City Council in May last as the Liberal representative for Rougemont Ward. We congratulate him on his election and wish him a successful career in civic affairs. But we have lost an admirable secretary whom it will be extremely difficult to replace adequately. Mr. Newton has had a distinguished career in the Colonial Civil Service and was therefore admirably suited in every way to undertake the important duties of being secretary to a new Society. We are grateful for all that he has done for us during his period of office.

Mr. Newton's election means that the Civic Society now has four members on the City Council. Not, of course, representing the Society as such but at least aware of its existence and its aims and defending those things which the Society exists to defend.

It has sometimes been suggested that the Civic Society ought to sponsor candidates for the City Council under its own name. This is an excellent suggestion, but it would not work in the present system of party politics which is now deeply entrenched in local government. It need hardly be said that the Civic Society is an entirely non-political body. It contains members of all political parties, people who are interested in the good government and the amenities of Exeter irrespective of some party label. In practice any candidate sponsored by the Civic Society would have to be an Independent, if we wished to avoid being involved in one side or the other. But an Independent candidate stands little chance of being elected in these days; and if he were elected under that label he would have to attach himself to one party or the other in order to carry any weight at all. In short, the idea that the Civic Society might run its own candidates with its own programme is just not practical politics nowadays.

MR. ROGER GRAY

Since the above note was written about Mr. Newton's resignation, we have been fortunate to secure the services of Mr. Roger Gray as the new Secretary of the Civic Society. Mr. Gray was one of the earliest members of the Society to join, and we welcome the generous offer of his services. Like all useful people he is already a busy man: but like all busy men he can make the time for yet another task.

THE COUNCIL AND OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

At the first annual general meeting of the Society on 21st June, 1962, the following elections were made:—

Chairman:	Dr. W. G. Hoskins.
Vice-Chairman:	Mr. J. C. Revill.
Hon. Treasurer:	Mr. L. G. Loveys.
Council Members:	Mr. G. W. Butt.
	Mr. A. L. Cornish.
	Mrs. H. G. Godsall.
	Mr. L. J. Lloyd.
	Mr. R. Vyvyan.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL AREA OF EXETER

All members of the Civic Society will be aware of the large-scale plans for the redevelopment of the central area of the city, i.e., the square bounded by High Street, Queen Street, Paul Street, and North Street. Most will already know that the detailed plans and scale models of the new scheme have been exhibited in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, and that the City Council have invited all bodies, and private persons, having views about these proposals to submit them to the Council.

The proposals are massive in scale, and extremely complex. The Civic Society naturally has many things to say on the subject. The Council of the Society met on October 4th last to consider some of the major aspects of the Scheme, and the following letter was sent by the Council to the Town Clerk setting out the first views of the Society:

The Town Clerk,
Guildhall,
EXETER.

10th October, 1962.

Dear Town Clerk,

CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

In accordance with the City Council's expressed wish that all bodies having views about the proposals for the redevelopment of the central area of Exeter should make their views known to the Council, we wish to make the following observations on behalf of the Exeter Civic Society.

The Civic Society is conscious of the fact that much of this part of Exeter is in need of renewal and redevelopment and welcomes in principle the preparation of plans to this end. It has set up a small committee to examine the proposals as regards traffic flow and architectural planning in more detail and hopes to communicate its views to the City Council, through the Council of this Society, in due course. In the meantime, we should like to make the following points on which we are already agreed:

1. The Civic Society presses for the submission of any Plan for redevelopment, after it has been agreed at the local level, to an outside body of consultants of national reputation, possibly nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects, in order to have all the best possible advice for a project which when completed will alter the face, and perhaps the economic life of Exeter for a long time to come. We do not feel this need be any reflection on the skill and labours of the city officials, to whose work we pay tribute. It is simply

