

Exeter Civic Society



SPRING NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 2020

Founded in 1961

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The controversial new buildings proposed for the Harlequin Centre site in Paul Street must bring to a head planning policy for Central Exeter. I believe we need a height restriction on new buildings within the old City Walls.

In the 1950s much of our blitzed City Was redesigned for the motor vehicle, Bedford Street and Paris Street were completely new, now more and more Roads are being closed to through traffic, with no plans of how to use these wide Streets, the pedestrian is King now not the motor vehicle in central Exeter but the battle isn't over.

The trouble is we don't seem to have a master plan as the City did in 1945.

Retail stores have to get their goods delivered and shoppers need to get into High Street, but it gets more difficult for both to do so. The City needs its shoppers and commuters from out of Town, but life is made difficult for them with inconvenient Bus Stops for Country Buses and a planned reduced size Bus Station.

The day of the large store in the centre of Towns and Cities is over, to thrive Exeter should be encouraging small retail units and living accommodation in its centre.

Developers will continue to try to get planning permission for bigger and taller buildings to get more money out of every development site, I believe it's now time for a stronger policy and restrictions on how Exeter should develop, especially the historic centre area.

Exeter needs a Town Planner that can take lessons from the many places across Europe and North America that have suffered the same problems with their old shopping areas and High Streets that we have here in Exeter before it's too late."

Our Monthly Talks continue to be well received and attendance has now grown to 40 members at each event; it is pleasing to sign up one or two new members at each talk.

Ruth McLeish has found us some fine speakers on a great variety of subjects —all with Exeter or Devon subjects and connections.

We had an extra Talk on December 7th from the distinguished Archaeologist John Salvatore, his talk on the Roman Fort found on the St Loyes site on Topsham Road was outstanding. After John's fine talk we had our Christmas Lunch (with a record attendance) much enjoyed at the Clifton Inn.

The St Sidwell's Point Swimming Pool development progresses and we are told it will be finished in twelve months. Close by, where archaeologists have been working hard digging up part of the Bus Station forecourt, they have

uncovered the defensive ditches of another Roman fort of a similar design to the one John Salvatore discovered and told us about on Topsham Road. It seems the buildings these ditches defended are under the present (soon to be knocked down) Bus Station - Exeter's Roman story has more to be discovered.

I personally find Exeter's new buildings mostly rather forbidding, but I live in hope that we may (and should) get something better if only a really good architect were employed. The rebuilt Sidwell Street could be and should be something beautiful as well as a functional and a financial success; the neglect of Crown Estates to develop the area they own in Sidwell Street and Paris Street is, I think, a disgrace to our city.

The Society continues to put pressure on developers and Exeter City Council about these areas and the sad ruin (now over three years) of the Royal Clarence Hotel in Cathedral Yard.

Please note meetings of the committee and all sub-committees are open to all members to attend by contacting the chair of the committee members wish to attend.

Peter Wadham,

Chairman

VICE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Harlequins Centre Redevelopment, Paul Street



Many of you will have seen the proposal for this site in the Express & Echo which is the subject of a current planning application to Exeter City Council. The development has been promoted as 'exciting', an opportunity to 'replace the ugly and under-used Harlequins Centre' and to 'improve Paul Street'. Because this is a significant planning application we held a consultation meeting in December with 21 members on 14 December where we heard from residents of Northernhay Street, their local councillor and a planning consultant. This helped us to formulate our response to the

planning application.

The Society has submitted an objection to the planning application because the proposed buildings are too high; they do not fit in with any characteristics of the area; do not take account of the conservation area management plans, or city centre vision; are over-bearing for those who live in the vicinity; and the size and quality of the co-living accommodation is poor.

We sincerely hope that the application is refused and that the applicants will return with much improved proposals because it would be good to see an improvement to the environment of Paul Street which has suffered from the brutal architecture of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and the externally unimaginative design of the Harlequins Centre. Proposals to add planting, wider pavements and a cycle path to Paul Street are welcome and we must hope that these remain in any new application.

With regard to the proposed co-living accommodation, we have heard from consultants that the rooms are the same as student accommodation (which was originally proposed at consultation stage), with similar arrangements for people to live in cluster flats. We believe that the size and type of this accommodation is totally unsuitable for working people who may require temporary or secondary accommodation whilst on short-term or temporary contracts. With this type of accommodation not being recognised in government guidance, developers are currently able to propose what they like, but we believe this will set a dangerous precedent for sub-standard accommodation. In addition to objecting to the quality of the accommodation as part of the planning application, we are writing to Exeter City Council to urge them to introduce supplementary planning guidance to set minimum standards for such accommodation. London and Manchester councils are currently consulting on standards to stop sub-standard accommodation being developed.

Moor Exchange Shopping Centre, Sowton



Picture: Devonlive

This is a significant development off Honiton Road near the Premier Inn, which has now received outline planning approval. It was originally conceived by the City Council as a district shopping centre and employment site to support people living and working in the Sowton area, and particularly the new homes being built near the Met Office. Whilst the application was for means of access, it also set out the proposed mix of businesses, and with the original proposals being for large retail units, the council refused two previous applications.

They finally approved the third application this January after the applicant reduced the number of large retail units in favour of smaller units, including a bank, chemist, a small supermarket and a gym, although it is still not what most of us would consider a district shopping centre. The Society objected to the first application because the large retail units did not provide the district centre proposed, and expressed concerns to the second and third applications that were improved. We now await a detailed planning application to see final designs and what the final mix will look like, but it should not be long before those who live in the area have somewhere to buy a pint of milk and a newspaper.

The Highways and Transport committee needs your help

This is a committee with one permanent member and two members who make contributions, so is in dire need of support. The aim of this group is to consider how development impacts on the city's roads, what can be done to mitigate and reduce car use, and to encourage better public transport. We responded to the first round of consultation in respect of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) and more recently the draft of the Exeter Transport Strategy. And we respond to significant planning applications where traffic movements may have a negative impact on our highways which are already congested at peak times. In 2020 there will be consultation upon proposed development for housing and employment sites to support the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, and in April we expect a revised Exeter Transport Strategy to be published. In addition, we can expect Exeter City Council and Developers to start consultation on proposals for further development on the bus station site, which is likely to propose the closure of Paris Street

Dates of meetings in 2020: 25 February, 10.30 am, 17 March at 10.30 am and 5 May at 10.30 am.

If you wish to find out more or attend any meeting please contact Keith Lewis, keithatecs@gmail.com or telephone 07964 219153.

Keith Lewis, Vice-Chair

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Some time ago we changed our bank from Nat West to CAF Bank (Charities Aid Foundation Bank). We are aware that some of our members did not make the change and as a result their banks attempted to make payments to Nat West. These payments would have been returned to sender.

Could members therefore please check their subscription payment methods and, if you have not made the change to the new bank, please arrange for your subscription to be paid into our CAF bank account.

The account name is: Exeter Civic Society

Address: CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Sort code: 40-52-40

Account number: 00032349

RIVER, CANAL AND QUAYSIDE GROUP

Are you a new or recently-new member of the Society? I would be most pleased to hear from you on any matters that have struck you concerning the Quay, or any aspect of Exeter's waterways. Would you be interested in joining the RCQ Group? We only meet occasionally, but also communicate by email. Contact me at pnickol@phonecoop.coop

Some of you may have seen the fascinating and informative exhibition at Countess Wear Village Hall of the area's industrial heritage. From Roman pottery-making through medieval fulling (cloth processing) to nineteenth century glass-making (hence Glasshouse Lane), shipbuilding and papermaking: an extraordinary range of industrial processes have taken place in this interesting area.

ECS has expressed its frustration at the expenditure of some £470,000 by the Environment Agency on extending the fish pass at Trews Weir. This became necessary following the semi-collapse of St James Weir, half a mile downstream. We have long been pointing out the deteriorating condition of St James Weir and calling for its repair. The City Council have at last expressed their wish to see the weir repaired, and the consequent restoration of the leat to Countess Wear, but need now to find a way of funding the repair, which won't come cheap.

We have also written to the Council in some detail about the mess and air of neglect affecting many aspects of the Quayside and Canal Basin area, following the extended disruption caused by the EA's flood alleviation works.

Group meetings will take place on Friday 21 February 2020 at 19.30 and 29 April 2020 at 19.30.

Peter Nichol

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

Planning sub-committee meetings take place every 4 weeks at Thornton Hill, and are currently scheduled for 3 March 2020, 31 March 2020, 28 April 2020 and 4-weekly thereafter, though occasionally meeting dates need to be changed if members have other commitments.

Please note there will be a developer's exhibition of the plans for the Clifton Hill Sports Centre on 12 February 3pm – 7pm and 15 February 2020 10am – 2 pm at Belmont Chapel, Western Way, Exeter EX1 2DdB.

The Autumn Planning report ended with favourable comments on the City Council's presentation of its intention to replace an unused care home and out-dated council homes at the Pinhoe Road end of Vaughan Road and with the expectation that Exeter City Council would soon be submitting the application to itself. The application, with supporting documents, soon followed and will be one of four discussed by Councillors at the meeting of the City Planning Committee on 10 February. It is recommended for approval and surely will be approved.

We objected to one of the others which will be discussed; an outline proposal for residential development for up to thirty dwellings on land at the rural part of Pennsylvania Road, which is beyond the currently built -up edge of the city, would be a departure from the City development plan and where the entrance shown would be dangerously opposite that of the View Point park. It is recommended for refusal and we hope that will be so.

There has been a great deal of reasonable controversy about the third application on the Councillors' agenda; originally for PBSA on Blackboy Road by demolishing the Sorry Head pub, a venerable building which contributes well to the street scene, and combining that site and that of the long-demolished MOT test garage to create purpose built student accommodation with some retail at ground level. We objected firmly to the pub's demolition, the height and extent of the new build towards neighbours at the rear, and other features and we were glad that the developer then provided a much amended version which greatly reduces the overlooking and retains the body and appearance of the pub, using the ground floor as entrance and reception area of the student accommodation and replanning the essential space for bikes and bins. We had hoped that the roof line might be altered but made no further objection. The recommendation by the case officer who negotiated the amendments is for approval. By the time you read this we shall know whether the Councillors agree.

Although these paragraphs described applications which will be decided by Councillors most, in fact nearly all, of the sixty or so each month are determined by Delegated Powers, that is by informed agreement of the Planning officers with the Lead Councillor for Planning. It is always interesting to see the result as we will have studied most of them and discussed up to twenty. Many are by families wishing for more space by extending existing houses up down or sideways. An interesting downwards one at the moment would convert the basement of an early nineteenth century house for family living/kitchen/dining space, gaining daylight by excavating several metres of garden and installing glazed doors in the end wall of the basement.

Our hope in the last newsletter that a better development could be proposed than the one to which we had objected in Willeys Avenue was realized when the same developer provided a much better scheme for nine dwellings, no longer as a block of flats, more attractively aligned on the redundant yard and in keeping with the neighbourhood. The case officer is checking with the applicant our one query about a window surround.

Earlier in this Newsletter Keith's clear report on our response to the proposed Harlequins development needs no addition from me. Several years of studying and commenting on the Moor Exchange shopping centre outline applications in their changing form have reached a reasonably satisfactory conclusion and the project no longer needs constant Planning sub-committee attention; at least until the reserved matters application appears!

Recently the sub-committee has conferred with the River, Canal and Quayside group on two applications. On one we jointly query the need for, and the location of, a condenser unit on a listed building on the Quay. On the other, for two parts of Maclaines Warehouse at the head of the Canal Basin, we welcome the reinvigoration as offices of this unused notable listed building and the removal of twentieth century accretions, but we await more complete information on matters such as whether or not they will provide the café at which they hint.

As ever if you find planning interesting, from moving a gatepost to housing hundreds please consider joining us for a meeting or two, either to consider whether you might become a member or just to hear the discussion. A telephone call or email on any planning matter would be very welcome.

Pamela Wootton

RECENT EVENTS

2019 marked the 400th anniversary of the born artist who was, and still is, admired for Among his sitters were Queen Elizabeth I and wealthy and notable people of the time. Last published: "Nicholas Hilliard: Life of an Warwick University. Dr Goldring describes book she shows how Hilliard did much to from that of artisan to gentleman, not only by gentlemanly social skills that made him



COPYRIGHT VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

death of Nicholas Hilliard, the Exeter-the excellence of his portrait miniatures. King James I, as well as many other year a new biography of Hilliard was Artist" by Dr Elizabeth Goldring of him as Britain's first major artist. In her raise the status of painters in this country his artistic skill, but also by acquiring the agreeable to royalty and courtiers.

Exeter Civic Society also marked the anniversary, by putting up a blue plaque to commemorate Hilliard and his connection to St Pancras Church, of which he was once the patron. The plaque was generously funded by the Goldsmith's Company, of which Nicholas Hilliard was a freeman. It is located on a pillar in the Guildhall Shopping Centre, adjacent to one of the information panels about the church, outside Superdrug.

Hilliard was born in Exeter, where his father Richard was a goldsmith. He was apprenticed to Robert Brandon, one of the royal goldsmiths in London, and on completing his apprenticeship he set up his own workshop there in Gutter Lane, premises that he rented from the Goldsmiths' Company. It is not known how he learned to paint, since this was not a normal part of a goldsmith's training, but even before the end of his apprenticeship he had a reputation for skill in painting portrait miniatures, or "limnings", as they were known at the time. He was employed by both Queen Elizabeth I and later by James I. Other sitters of whom miniatures still survive are Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (his patron), Prince Henry (son of James I), Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Thomas Bodley and King Henri III of France. In addition to portrait miniatures, he and his workshop produced other high-quality work including medals, jewels (elaborate settings for miniatures), illuminated manuscripts, full-size oil paintings, and prints. With such a successful career at and around the royal court, it is no surprise that he spent the rest of his life in London.



The plaque was unveiled on October 15th by Dr Goldring, who went on in the afternoon to deliver (twice) a lecture about Hilliard to combined audiences of the Civic Society, Hilliard Society and Friends of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery (FEMAG). From the talk, with its beautiful illustrations, we were able to get some appreciation of the extraordinary craft that went into creating such exquisite but tiny works of art.

After the unveiling, some of us visited the study centre at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum to see some items of silver made by Nicholas' father, Richard Hilliard, and his brother, Jeremy, both of whom were Exeter goldsmiths. It was interesting to learn that there were once silver mines in North Devon, and also, about the dangerous use of mercury in the process of plating silver with gold.

The Goldsmiths' Company was represented at the unveiling by Wayne Meeten, a modern-day Devon goldsmith and current member of the Company. The Society is grateful to the Company for its generosity in sponsoring the plaque.

Hilary Neville and Jeremy Wellens

Exeter Civic Society visit to the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) at Marsh Barton

On 29 January 2020, eight members attended a most interesting presentation and tour of Viridor's facility at Marsh Barton. Most of us will be familiar with the large building, which has replaced the old incinerator, and it was fascinating to see its interior and organisation of the city's black bin waste disposal. It was sobering to be shown how low Exeter's recycling rate is, by comparison with the rest of Devon, but also how effective education presentations to schools can be in raising awareness of what we can all do to reduce waste.

We were shown how the ERF comes at the end of the household six point waste disposal trail, starting with Avoid, Reduce, Reuse and going on to Recycle, Recover, Dispose.

It was also emphasised that part of the problem in the UK is lack of standardisation for waste and recycling policy, so that Devon councils differ in their waste collection systems. Consistency in collections and Enhanced Produce Responsibility (EPR) would help achieve our aim - the virtuous 'Circular Economy', making products that can be recycled, alongside a system for recycling them.

The ERF incinerator is at the end of the Avoid to Dispose trail, and 60.000 tonnes of household black bin waste is burnt annually, producing 24 GWhs of electricity. The temperature in the furnace never falls below 850 degrees centigrade, allowing plastics to be burnt safely without toxic by-products. The flue gasses are then scrubbed and treated, and the resulting fly ash is then converted, using carbon dioxide and water, into manufactured limestone, which can be used in the construction industry.

From the viewing platform, we were able to see some of the processes involved, and left the building feeling impressed with its efficiency and the vital importance of reducing our household waste and recycling wherever possible. Exeter City Council's aim of introducing food waste collection across the city will certainly help improve our recycling rate. Our thanks go to Viridor *staff for their hospitality.*

Hilary Astwood

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2020

Committee Meetings

Meetings usually take place in the afternoon in the Garden Room, Southernhay Church, Southernhay East, Exeter EX1 1QD - 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. All members welcome, in particular anyone interested in becoming a member of the Committee is cordially invited to attend. Please contact the Chairman, Peter Wadham: peterwadham77@yahoo.com

DIARY AND EVENTS TO APRIL 2020

Open Morning Talks (see below for details) usually take place on the 3rd Saturday of the month (except August and December) at Belmont Chapel, Western Way, Exeter EX1 2DB, From 10.30 am. New members welcome. Non-members are charged £2 per meeting. Members also welcome at all committee and sub-committee meetings.

PROGRAMME TO MAY 2020

Date	Open Mornings
15 th February 2020	John Jones will talk about "The Workhouse"
27 February 2020	From Museum to University College: charts the development of the museum and adjacent area from 1860s to 1920s. This visit will start at 10.30 am and is led by Dr Julia Neville and Mike Richards, who will take a small number (10) around the Museum, as it will be a working day there. Now fully booked.
20 March 2020	Assemble 14.45 at 15 Southernhay East. If the weather is bad it will be possible to assemble from 1.45 in Southernhay Church Hall next door plaque unveiling to Sabine Baring Gould. Further details below. Members must register as interest is likely to be high from other groups.
21 st Mar 2020	Jon Bell will speak about Exeter Cinemas
24 March 2020	Committee Meeting, Southernhay Church, Garden Room, .14.30-16.30
April 2020 date to be announced	Visit to Hidden Gems in Marsh Barton. Details to be confirmed.
18 th Apr 2020	Robert Guyver will talk about General Buller
16 th May 2020	Lucy Patrick will speak of the work done at St. Petrock's
19 May 2020	Committee Meeting, Southernhay Church, Garden Room 14.30-16.30
21 November 2020	ECS Annual General Meeting, Belmont Chapel, mid-day.

Exeter Civic Society will unveil the next in its series of blue plaques on Friday 20th March at 2.00 pm.

The plaque will be unveiled on the premises of Gilbert Stephens at 15 Southernhay East, formerly Chichester Place, now the premises of Gilbert Stephens solicitors. It will commemorate Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924) a pioneering collector of the folk songs of Devon and Cornwall in the 1880s but also a prolific novelist, travel writer, archaeologist, folklorist, biographer of British saints, theologian, hymn writer and also rector of Lewtrenchard, Devon

where his manor house can still be visited. He was born in Chichester Place, Southernhay on 28 January 1834. If the weather is bad it will be possible to assemble from 1.45 in Southernhay Church Hall next door.

The event will include short speeches/presentations on Sabine Baring-Gould and a recital of folk songs by Wren Music who for many years have worked to keep his heritage alive. There will also be the opportunity to view some of the original folk song manuscripts and other items relating to Baring-Gould which will be brought from the Devon Heritage Centre by the South West Heritage Trust and displays relating to Baring-Gould and his collections. Tea and biscuits will be available in the hall.

There will be no charge for this event but Civic Society members wishing to attend must contact Ruth McLeish to book a place because there will probably be a number of non-members invited as participants or representatives of interested groups - including some descendants from America.

It is intended to badge the event as part of the UNESCO City of Literature programme.

President: Hazel Harvey: tel: 01392 254068

Chairman: Peter Wadham peterwadham77@yahoo.com

Vice Chairrman: Keith Lewis keithatecs@gmail.com

Treasurer: jbmonks@btinternet.com

Secretary: ianabwatt@gmail.com

Membership Secretary: ecs.membership@gmx.com

Newsletter Editor: Sandra Semple semple.elizabeth101@gmail.com

Planning sub-committee: Pamela Wootton p.m.wootton@exeter.ac.uk

Events Co-ordinator: Ruth McLeish ruthmcleish@gmail.com

River, Canal & Quayside Group: Peter Nickol pnickol@phonecoop.ccop