

BRANDING THE CITY CENTRE

Many will have read in the Express & Echo the article highlighting our Planning Sub-Committee's objection to the extensive signage proposed by Land Securities for the Princesshay shopping centre in their planning application to the City Council. Much of the signage is to promote Princesshay as a brand, a destination, and much of the perimeter signage is intended to be illuminated. Whilst most people may think of Princesshay as the shopping street itself, including Bedford Square and Roman Walk, Land Securities

control most of the area, buildings and roads ringed by the High Street, Paris Street and Southernhay, and including St Catherine Street / Square. Their proposed signage includes 'Princesshay' branding on the facade of buildings on the High Street which is considered a step too far. At the time of Princesshay being developed two of our planning sub-committee members worked hard to ensure there would be no delineation between the new shopping area and the rest of the city centre. The existing signage is subtle enough to let people know where the centre is without being overbearing, but it is considered that the proposed signage imposes a delineation that is not in accordance with the spirit of the original planning discussions. We believe that a planning decision will be taken by the city council using delegated powers (perhaps appropriate for signage planning application), that is by officers and councillors, so we can only hope that they will refuse signage which is brash and unnecessary.



There is a principle here about how far branding should go in the city centre. If the perimeter signage is approved for Princesshay will it open the floodgates for similar branding for the Guildhall Shopping Centre, Cathedral Green, or the future shopping centre to be built on the bus and coach station site? Signage for individual premises is clearly acceptable in a commercial environment, although we have seen some poor quality shop signage erected in recent years. Whilst Exeter must move with the times, there is a heritage that must be maintained if the City is to retain its attractiveness, so subtle and respectful development should be expected

except where good architecture can bring modernity that will add to the City's streetscape.

We have had another 4 months of successful events, including our summer social, and can look forward to the next 4 months with our Saturday meetings / talks and at least one other event each month. We always need new ideas and venues for talks, activities and visits, so if you have any suggestions please either contact Ruth McLeish or Pamela Coleman (see back page).

As the article 'Branding the City Centre' highlights, the Civic Society appears to be the only organisation monitoring development across the city, with the sub-committee's objection being the only representation received by the City Council, other than the Council's own environmental officer. This shows the importance of our monitoring of planning applications, with the general public not realising how seemingly innocuous proposals can have a detrimental impact. I am sure the work of both the River, Canal & Quayside sub-committee and the Highways & Transport sub-committee will soon result in questioning and challenge to the authorities that are responsible for overseeing the public realm of the city.

One of the significant issues being investigated is the increasing levels of traffic congestion, and how the construction of about 23,000 homes in Exeter and its neighbouring parishes will see even greater congestion in the 2020's and beyond. The Highways & Transport sub-committee believe that the County Council's plans to address congestion fall far short of reducing the impact of the inevitable growth in car movements, particularly along the main arterial roads, major junctions such as Countess Wear roundabout and Exe Bridges, and in the city centre. Trevor Preist, chairman of the sub-committee, gave a detailed account of his research at the 20 September Open Morning, and I hope that we will soon publish this on our website.

Whilst there is a lot of good development happening in the city and on our borders, and historical events being uncovered and researched, there is still more that the Society can do to support and challenge development, and undertake research to highlight our historical past.

Our AGM will be held on 29th October, in the DEI as usual. Papers for nominations will be sent to all members soon. We do still need more active participation in the Society's activities so if you feel you wish to join the main committee please complete a nomination form, or if you wish to discuss involvement ring me on 07964219153.

Visit to the Printworks Student Accommodation - by Hazel Harvey

James Townsend and Son, printers, ran one of Exeter's longest established businesses, founded in the city centre in 1866. When the inner bypass was built the workshop and trade counter moved to larger premises on Western Way.



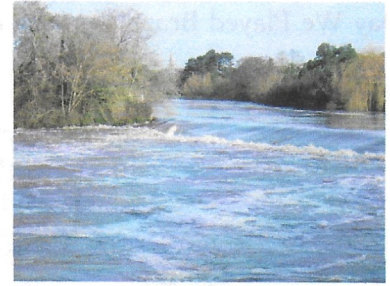
This building has now given way to student accommodation, and it is pleasing that its name The Printworks commemorates the history of the site. The development is enormous, forming part of the 82,000 beds supplied by the developers' company in Britain. Unusual pointed wings frame the entrance on Western Way. Dark red brick walls loom cliff-like at the rear on Verney Street. Accommodation for 492 students fills several blocks, separated by courtyards.

The manager showed a dozen Civic Society members around on 16th July 2014. We saw the community room

with pool table, the exercise machines in the gym, the rather small room for quiet study, the corridors where 'clusters' of six study-bedrooms share a kitchen (with TV) and slightly larger studio apartments with their wall of kitchen appliances.

Only students are permitted by the council to live here but there is no shortage of takers. Sixty per cent from abroad this year; seventy per cent in the coming year, many from Asia. There is basement storage for a large number of bicycles but we were also told that some students take taxis to their classes on campus! Students generate much local trade stocking their rooms, but at the end of the summer term many of those leaving their courses leave their bulky duvets behind which are passed on to St Petrock's and other charities. Other beneficiaries are the storage firms who undercut the Printworks' own charges for storing belongings, collecting and then delivering for the new term.

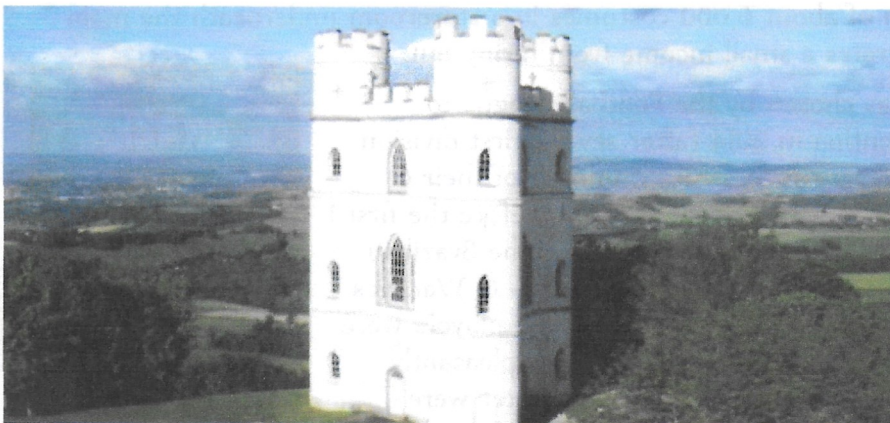
The weir is located about half a mile south of Trew's Weir at the bottom of Salmonpool Lane, and adjacent to the footbridge to Duck's Marsh. It is not easily viewed, but its condition has been brought to the attention of the Society's River Canal & Quayside sub-committee. In short, it is deteriorating at an alarming rate and some large areas of eroded stones can be seen on its western face. The Environment Agency has written a report highlighting a number of options for repair, but also including its collapse – letting nature take its course. A major stumbling block to its repair is identifying the owners of the weir, and at present that remains unknown. The sub-committee will make representations for its repair to the City Council, County Council and Environment Agency, and it is hoped that the spring newsletter will have an update.



The weir was built to create a leat to mills that operated in the old village of Countess Wear, and in recent years the leat is part of an attractive footpath along the east side of the river. Should St James's Weir be allowed to collapse it will result in the leat drying up because the river level will be too low to feed it. In addition, the stretch of river up to Trew's Weir will see its level drop with possible consequences for the base of Trew's Weir and the riverbank along that stretch.

Guided Tour of the Haldon Belvedere/Lawrence Castle - by Barbara Bligh

The triangular tower was built in 1785 by Sir Robert Palk in memory of his friend Sir Stringer Lawrence. in the 11,000 acre estate of nearby Haldon House (the remnants of which are now the Lord Haldon Hotel). Palk came from a humble Ashburton family, but went to Oxford, became a curate in Cornwall, then joined the navy as a chaplain and went to India. There he renounced his holy orders and became prominent in the East India Company, growing very wealthy, mainly through the lucrative deals passed to him by Maj. Gen. Lawrence, 'Father of the Indian Army', with whom he formed a life-long friendship.



The Devon Historic Buildings Trust came to the rescue of the 26 metre-high tower in 1992 after it had fallen into disrepair following various changes of ownership and neglect through lack of money. The windows had blown in, the roof leaked, and the render on the exterior walls was falling off. The trust spent £500,000 beautifully restoring the building, though

with many problems in finding suitable materials. They installed modern facilities and a penthouse apartment which is let to holidaymakers.

The ground floor is dominated by a statue of Lawrence, made of Coade stone (an artificial material invented by Eleanor Coade of Exeter, about 1770). On the walls are three eulogy boards extolling Lawrence's victories, virtues and accomplishments. From here, 33 steps up the elegant cantilevered spiral staircase lead to the Palk Room, where weddings, etc can be held. Then more steps lead to the beautiful apartment, which the current tenants kindly allowed us to inspect – round kitchen in one turret, bathroom in another, and wonderful potential views from all windows – and then up to the roof 99 steps in all.

Unfortunately our view was restricted by mist, but we should have been able to see the Jurassic Coast, Wellington Monument, Exmoor, Dartmoor and Torquay. A visit on a clear Sunday or Bank Holiday Monday is strongly recommended, though the cream tea with which our visit ended won't necessarily be available.

Our tour back stage of the theatre was preceded by a viewing of the Northcott's production of 'The Day We Played Brazil' – more about that later.



During the interval the Theatre's Director, Kate Tyrrell, talked to us about professional theatre in Exeter. She believes it is thriving with the Northcott now hosting a broad range of shows with good audiences, the Bikeshed Theatre producing new cutting edge theatre and Kalieder Theatre, based at the University, producing experimental venue based theatre. Kate discussed the possibility of a larger city centre theatre which the Northcott would like to be a part of, but she is aware that both the capital and revenue support will be difficult to raise.

After the show Kate took us on a tour of the theatre. The stage for the current show has been set-up 'in the round' by extending the stage over the music pit, and she hopes to have more shows in-the-round as the Northcott's auditorium was designed for this arrangement. The stage area had been stripped back for this performance and it was surprisingly small. Behind the scenes was a jumble of equipment, cables, lights, staging and a huge amount of paraphernalia, of which we had no clue to its use. Immediately behind the stage is the loading bay with doors the height of the stage proscenium. Stairs descend either side of the stage to the changing rooms underneath, but it has not been modernised since the theatre's opening in 1967. It was quite impressive how such a compact back-stage area can support the larger performances at the theatre.

The Theatre receives about £400,000 in grants from the Arts Council, Exeter City Council and the University of Exeter, a significant fall from about £700,000 a decade ago. It operates with a shoestring staff of 13 and hires-in additional staff when needed. Whilst the Northcott produces very few performances it still has a collection of about 6,000 costumes in a storeroom underneath the main auditorium, and from which it generates a small income from hiring out.

Back to the show: Exeter City FC was chosen by the Football League to represent England on a tour of Argentina in 2014 (after several first division teams declined to travel). They were very successful, winning 4 of their 6 matches despite the first choice goalkeeper breaking his wrist before the first match! The manager then secured an additional match against the Brazilian national team before setting sail for home, but were beaten 2 – 0. War was declared whilst the team was away and upon their return all the players were conscripted, and miraculously they all returned home. We were pleasantly surprised how the current day, 1914 south America and 1914 Exeter were interwoven, thoroughly entertaining and something for Exeter to be proud of.



Uncovering the Roman Bath House

The Chairman and members of our planning sub-committee visited the Cathedral's Dean on 29th September to find out more about these proposals. He told us that this is part of the cathedral's strategic plan to improve its income generation which is necessary to maintain the cathedral. They hope to develop a new visitor centre and shop, allow the cathedral to be used for a broader range of functions, and provide much needed facilities for the many staff and volunteers that help run the cathedral. As widely publicised, the Roman and Anglo Saxon ruins will be viewed in an underground building, although the ground to the south of the processional way will need to be raised. Designs for the buildings above ground are still being developed, but with the need to raise significant funding to make all this possible, it is unlikely that anything will be completed until about 2018.

A lovely summer's day saw 11 of us eagerly awaiting our tour of the Priory with guide Peter Edwards a former Red Coat guide. The Priory was built in 1160 and was one of 38 only 30 of which were for nuns, the other two being the Augustine order, this was the only Benedictine. The priory was founded by William Brewer who was Forester to King Henry II. A mile and a half outside the City it had extensive grounds which the nuns farmed. Surprisingly, only 12 nuns (and the prioress) lived here at any given time.



end demolished in Tudor times. The build, but had no windows and was intended for quiet contemplation and study (also no longer existing).

Inside the panelling is a replica of the original which is safely housed in the Guildhall where it was moved in 1934. Upstairs we were shown into the Prioress's room and told about one Juliana de Bruton who apparently still haunts the place though is said to be very likeable. There was also a guardrobe and a piscine for washing of hands.

During King Henry VIII's reign the property was surrendered to the Crown, valued at under £165. In 1726 Mr Parker bought the site and rented out the land (17 acres) for farming. The Trout family was the last to farm the land until 1932, he had a Dairy on the High Street. Mr Sellick the last tenant in 1933 was a sign writer.

After our tour of the Priory we were taken on a guided walk through Mincinglake Valley Park which would have been part of the land belonging to the Priory. In particular we were shown their orchard which is now maintained by the Council. Further up we were shown the Weir which the nuns had dammed in order to provide a better supply of water to their mill and also to give them a supply of fish.

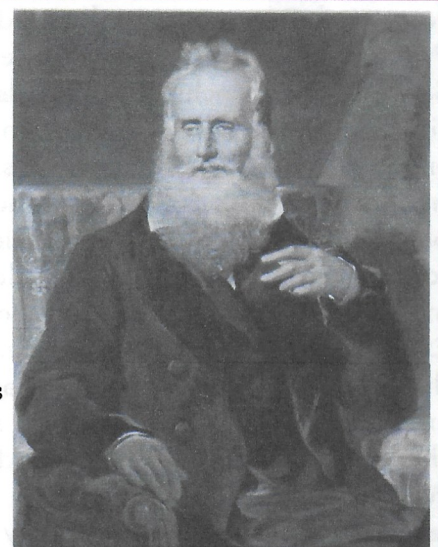
The site was abandoned and neglected eventually being bought for demolition by Mr Bradbeer of the Western Brick & Tile Company. It was only thanks to the campaign by Mr Everett and Miss Weeks to "Save the Priory" that it passed into the hands of Exeter City Council. With a large grant from the Council and the expertise of English Heritage the Priory was restored. Subsequently it was offered to current tenants Stoke Hill Community Association in 1981.

To round off the visit Mrs. Edwards plied us with tea and cakes. It appears they were volunteer caretakers of the site and moreover, our sprightly guide was an impressive 91 years of age!

James Baptiste Holman (1787-1857)

A portrait that hung for half a century in the Devon and Exeter Institution was identified as the wrong person until the mistake was spotted by member Nerina Frampton who was undertaking research into James Holman for a Blue Plaque. His remarkable life and achievements are, unfortunately, now little known. His accounts of his travels and discoveries, all made despite being totally blind, ensured he was a celebrity in his day, but these were sadly lost after his death. From being a uniquely famous world traveller and writer, poor James's memory sank into obscurity, so much so that his portrait hanging for 50 years at the foot of the stairs of The Devon & Exeter Institution was for all that time identified as someone else. The Society hopes to erect a plaque at his former home in the High Street in the near future.

The full story of James Holman and Nerina's research will be available on the Civic Society website.



This report must begin with a paragraph on the same subject which opened the May one, that is an up-date on the progress of the City's Delivery Plan Document, which with the incorporation of the Core Strategy document adopted in December 2012 and of data from the 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will guide Exeter's development for many years. You will remember that the Draft document had elicited a great number of replies, from groups, from individuals, and from developers recovering from recession and keen to have more land available. This has made a great deal of work for the very capable Planning Officer working on it, but the work is welcome as it so much more satisfactory for the planners to feel that the people of Exeter have responded to the Consultation and so are involved in the decisions that are made. The final document is currently being written and is aiming for publication in late Autumn and, after six weeks for public scrutiny and endorsement by the City Council, will be submitted in January or February to the government's Planning Directorate. If all goes well, and it certainly should, it could be approved for adoption by July or at least by August. As it will embody the guiding principles of Exeter's development for at least the next decade it is of major interest. Planning sub-committee will monitor its progress and I hope it will not bore you if I report briefly on this in the next two issues of Civic Society News. Hopefully in next September's issue I can report that is successfully adopted.

In the last few months Planning sub-committee has studied the usual variety of applications, some prominent some almost obscure. One which will be noticed by anyone shopping in the centre of Exeter was submitted by Ravenseft Properties, the operational manifestation of Land Securities, and includes proposals for additional signage and redesign of existing signs at all entrance points to the Princesshay area, for treatment of walls and floor surfaces and for new planters/windbreaks. Having previously been glad to see that the Land Securities development had integrated so well into the shopping area of Exeter we were slightly concerned that the new displays proclaim Princesshay as an exclusive area, a separate enclosure which seeks to attract shoppers and coffee-drinkers and to keep them. We objected that we find some of the signage rather too obtrusive particularly at the access points from High Street and, from recent

discussion with the case officer, we are glad to know that the planners, although minded to approve the application under Delegated Powers, intend that the impact of the more elaborate sign displays will be reduced. We were interested to realise that the colour and form of the lettering appealed more to the female members of the sub-committee than to the male and wonder if this is an intended subtlety. No doubt there are many such that we are never consciously aware of.

An example of an 'obscure' proposal was that for a large array of photovoltaic cells on the roof of a building, as yet unbuilt, behind Dean Clarke House, which might be visible from windows of the luxury apartments at the rear of Dean Clarke House but would not, we assume, be noticed by the rest of Exeter.

For three applications, one off Retreat Drive (just beyond the motorway bridge over Topsham Road), one west of Pilton Lane and one adjacent to Sandrocks, Pinn Lane we combined our concerns in one letter as all were for groups of new housing in which we consider that the design does not incorporate energy provision and conservation sufficiently, or indeed to the high standards which the City Council demands of its own recent housing. Howard Smith, a senior project officer, promptly answered explaining [not unexpectedly] that forthcoming government policy is to give developers greater laxity in requirements and providing information on the government intentions. At the next meeting Pl s-c agreed that we, like the Council planners, have to accept this although deploring it and feeling sympathy for the Exeter planners whose standards are higher. I have conveyed that sympathy to Howard.

We and many others had been wondering when an application would be made for the creation, at the empty St Margaret's School, of the apartments which had been advertised at the entrance on Magdalen Road for several months. In June we were glad to study the proposals for forty one apartments which would be created in the seven Listed buildings and the more recent Music department, and including the addition of a large and a small block on the Heavitree Road side of the site. We were amused that within the listed buildings the apartments were said to have 'designed themselves', so easily did they re-adapt to residential use, but we suggested that slightly fewer new apartments would be preferable and that a clause should be included in the approval making it clear that residents would not be able to

apply for on-street parking permits, which they might otherwise hope to do as each apartment was only allowed one car space within the complex. A conversation with the case officer reassured us that he is minded to include such a clause and that the developers had decided to provide fifty five parking spaces. We are not surprised that there will not be a reduction in the number of apartments.

As you know members of Planning sub-committee had seen an early presentation of the Exeter Water Sports Association's aspirations for development of the currently very limited facilities on the west edge of the Canal Basin and had variously welcomed these; their opinions varying from delighted to reasonably impressed. Eventually we were glad to study and to agree with the plans for the first phase of the development which will mainly provide boat storage and launch facilities and we look forward to seeing phase two when funding is available. Nigel Grainge, the enthusiastic architect of the Water Sports complex and of the Activities Centre built over two years ago at the east side of the Basin, would be delighted to show his designs to a Civic Society audience.

The proposals for the new pavilion and a four-part student residence at the Cricket Club ground which I mentioned in the last News are to go ahead with good improvements to the external design of the student accommodation and careful attention to the brick work, which is good news, as is the withdrawal of the plans for three houses in the grounds of Lord Mamhead Homes in St Leonards, to which we had objected.

As Planning sub-committee met twice in August (you see how devoted we are) our September meeting will not be until late in the month and so to make this newsletter as up to date as possible I will refer to several applications which we will probably have studied very recently before you will read this. In fact so recently that if you wish to offer us your views on any current topic you may well be in time to do so. Among other applications we will certainly be looking at those for: student accommodation in the Old Library, Castle Street; twenty seven additional flats at Rennes House; two houses at Fernleigh Nurseries, Ludwell Lane and alterations to properties in Barley Lane and Lower Argyll Road all of which are in the almost rural fringes of Exeter; a further application for a housing development at the rear of Bricknell's Bungalow in Old Rydon Lane; more

details for Dean Clarke House; one hundred and sixty houses on land North, South and West of the Met Office; the felling and reducing of many trees; and, of course, the Guildhall Shopping and Dining Centre. No doubt we shall manage a few others also.

All four present members of Planning s-c intend to continue beyond the AGM but four is not really enough and we would be delighted to welcome new members. If you are enticed by the variety of subjects above or wish to be part of the sub-committee when we discuss the Bus Station do please make contact by telephone or talk to us after the AGM.

By the way it is probable that there may be another and more detailed Public Consultation about the Bus Station site before Christmas..... we can hope.

Monthly Open Mornings

10.30am to 12.00pm

Rougemont Room, Central Library,
Castle Street, Exeter

We have a speaker at 11.00am (subject to change) and sometimes afterwards a discussion on current issues in which you can participate. Visitors and guests are welcome and refreshments available.

Saturday 18th October

Speaker: Dr Sadru Bhanji on William Cooke, a 19th century Exeter-based surgeon, who was the first to be prosecuted for grave robbing.

Saturday 15th November

Speaker: John Harvey, City Centre Manager for Exeter City Council, will talk on 'Exeter City Centre - Keeping Attractive and Competitive'

Saturday 20th December

Speaker: Lianne Harding will talk on St Loye's Foundation, brief history and the work they currently undertake in helping disabled youngsters into work.

Saturday 17th January 2015

Speaker: Philip Kiberd from the Workers' Education Association will talk about his role within the organisation.

If any more events are organised before our next newsletter on 1st February 2015, or there are any changes to speakers or venues they will appear on the website and members will be notified by e-mail.

Dates for Your Diary

BOOKING MAY BE NECESSARY

Saturday 4th October

Guided Tour of Three Heavitree Churches.

Starting promptly at 2.30pm at the Heavitree Roman Catholic Church, followed by the United Reform Church and the Heavitree Evangelical Church. Roger Thorne FSA will lead the tour, which is free to members and £3 for non-members. No booking required for this event.

Friday 10th October

Unveiling of new Blue Plaque to F J Widgery (by invitation only)

This ceremony takes place in the front garden of a private house, so numbers are strictly limited and attendance by invitation only. Details will be on our website after the event and hopefully in the paper.

Monday 20th October

Meet the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall

Exeter Civic Society have been invited to meet the city's Lord Mayor (Cllr Percy Prouse) hear about his work, and have a cup of tea with him in the Guildhall from 3pm to 4pm.

There is no charge for members (£3.00 for non-members) but a contribution to the Lord Mayor's charity (see collecting box in main hall) would be a suitable gesture.

Early booking for this event is essential through Ruth McLeish (details below).

Wednesday 29th October

53rd Annual General Meeting

Devon and Exeter Institution
7 Cathedral Close

6.30pm start followed by supper. Agenda and supper booking form will be sent to all members. Supper booking forms and committee nominations to be sent in by Wednesday 22nd October.

Weds 5th, Thurs 6th, Fri 7th November

WWI Exhibition at the Guildhall

Todd Gray would like volunteers for half day sessions over the three days (10 to 1 or 1 to 4). You will be helping him, mixing with the public and explaining the exhibition. Please contact the Secretary (details below) if you would like to help for a session.

Mon 24th November

Visit to Devon Heritage Centre, Sowton

Brian Carpenter will lead a tour, starting at 2.00pm. There is a charge of £3.50 each (£6.50 for non-members). Please book through Ruth McLeish (details below).

Weds 26th November

'The Architectural History of the Guildhall' by John Allan

From 2.00pm to 4.00pm at the Guildhall.

The Guildhall is the oldest municipal building in the UK still in everyday use for its original purpose. Regular meetings are held there and it is used for the Lord Mayor to welcome visiting royalty and celebrities.

There is no charge for members (£3.00 for non-members). Early booking for this event is essential through Ruth McLeish (details below).

Sat 6th December

Visit to Dissenters' Graveyard

Paul Chant will lead a tour, starting at 2.00pm, explaining their restoration progress. The graveyard is on the corner of Magdalen Street and Bull Meadow Road, There is no charge for members (£3.00 for non-members).

Sat 24th January 2015

Visit to Salvation Army Temple, FriarsWalk

Ruth and Mark Hawker will lead a tour, starting at 2.30pm, followed by tea.

There is no charge for members (£3.00 for non-members) but a donation would be much appreciated. Book through Ruth McLeish.

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