

Visits and Social Events

In spite of the financial climate and the ill health of some members, the Social Section are able to report that they produced a very good and varied programme over the year which has been well supported. The introduction of "Talk, soup and sandwiches" on Saturday mornings once a month through the colder months has proved very popular with the speakers being very different and entertaining and have been well supported by members.

The year started with visits to Burton Farm House where we made very welcome; to Highcliffe Castle where we saw behind the scenes; to Deans Court House and garden; to Athelhampton; Greywell Hill House and the Bournemouth Natural Science Society premises in Christchurch Road. The last we tend to take for granted but was a real eye-opener when visited. The amount of material stored here is exceptional but this was overshadowed by the nesting Blue Tits with the nest just outside the dining room. The nest was being filmed and the pictures shown on a large television set on one of the tables. Other places visited were Wolfeton House, the Manor House at Hinton St Mary, Clayesmore School and Serles House. At each place we were made very welcome. The coach trip this time was to Chelsea to visit the Army Museum and Pensioners Hospital. Lack of support meant we had to reduce the size of the coach twice. This was disappointing as the visit was both interesting and well arranged. The Army Museum had recently been upgraded with tableaux which could be touched, making the place feel very modern. We were very fortunate that the guide in the Pensioners Hospital was very enthusiastic both about the building and his life there. Some ladies wanted to smuggle him back to Bournemouth.

June found us busy with Civic Day followed by Civic Week. Four days of local walks were organised but lack of support forced us to cancel them.. But Ken arranged walks on Civic Day through Throop which ended at Throop Mill Cottage where food was available. The Cottage is owned by two of our members Dr James Fisher and his wife. Dr Fisher escorted members around the very attractive garden explaining all the work that had been done over the years to the garden and his thatched cottage. Ken gave an illustrated talk about Throop village on three occasions. Many learned a lot that day. All were sustained by fresh food served from the thatched summer house. The garden parties took place at lovely venues during beautiful sunny weather.

Although one venue for the Lunch Club was poorly attended due to holidays and illness among our members. Another visit to the same venue saw the numbers restored to the normal level. Many new places were tried and proved good choices. For the coming year a comment of whether it has been visited before is appended to the venue.

Both Keith and Beryl find it hard to arrange a good and interesting programme for everyone as both are still far from well. Help would be appreciated if anyone feels able to lend a hand or failing that making suggestions of places to visit. A coach trip is not planned for the coming year but will be included in the 2013 programme if members indicate they want one. Although in general the weather was kind to us the trip to the Durlston Country Park and tour of the newly restored castle was cancelled due to bad weather. The trip will be arranged for the coming programme so that we can all enjoy it. Please support us in what we put on, remember all the committee are voluntary and we all work hard with you in mind.

Beryl and Keith

The editor congratulates both on their efforts and endorses their plea for help. They deserve it.

Gypsy and Traveller Sites

Proposals for a number of sites for use by gypsies and travellers to stay permanently and temporarily have been put out for public consultation by Dorset Councils. In Bournemouth sites have been identified in the semi-rural Throop and Muscliffe green belt conservation areas and in Lansdowne Road near the Railway station but close to the busy commercial and residential communities. We have completed the on-line consultation that continues until February and recorded our objections to all the Bournemouth sites. All are unsuitable due to the status of their locations - green belt, conservation area, proximity to services and communities. We have suggested that rather than force each and every Council to find sites within their boundaries, a better solution for South-East Dorset would be for Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch and East Dorset to work together and create a small number of larger but better located sites in outlying but more appropriate, accessible and suitable hinterlands.

Contacts

Chairman	Ken Mantock	Tel: 420199
Deputy Chairman	Jean Bird	Tel: 757051
Activities	Beryl Parker	Tel: 512717
	Keith Barnes	Tel: 397073
Newsletter Editor	John Barker	Tel: 292871
Website Manager	Alan Brown	Tel: 763318



The views of contributors are not necessarily those of the Society.



BOURNEMOUTH CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

January 2012

Front Wheel Drive

Nowadays, pedal cycling is regarded as the ultimate health-giving activity - in the fresh air, riding a machine geared to conquer mountains, in good company or alone. Older members may remember with less affection cycling to work in the Winter (three gears if you were lucky) clad against the rain and wind in a bright yellow waterproof cape. One always seemed to be going uphill.

However in the late 1940s, in Westbourne of all places, help was at hand. The GYS Engineering Co., of High Clements Yard, R.L.Stevenson Avenue, manufactured a "clip-on" front wheel drive pedal cycle motor. This machine retailed at £21, weighed 14lbs, and was described as a "49cc deflector top engine". Sadly the "forward mounting arrangement" presented major drawbacks. All smoke and noise from the little motor came straight back to the rider, whilst a "seizure at speed" could dramatically lock the engine, dig in the drive roller and pitch the rider over the handlebars onto the road.

Fortunately for the reputation of Westbourne as an area of "quality manufacturing", the cycle motor unit was transferred to the North of England. It would be true to say that the "Cymota", as the engine was called, is now seen as a quirky bygone novelty.

A rear-mounted engine was the answer to the problems of "front wheel drive" and developments in this direction were much more successful. I am pleased to report that much of the fascinating detail is in an account of "Front Wheel Drive" by Mark Daniels (from which these notes derive). Some of the background came from researches by John Barker.

Peter Treleven

Planning Policy - Whatever next?

The Government's proposals to change the national approach to planning by creating a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" as outlined in its Draft National Planning Policy Framework (DNPPF) has given rise to much debate and media comment. Whilst the principle of promoting growth, jobs, affordable homes and well designed development is acceptable if it is tempered by a respect for and the protection of environmental and community imperatives, the proposals in the DNPPF do not have that much needed balance. Hence the likes of the National Trust, CPRE, Civic Voice, Friends of the Earth and a raft of "heritage" and environmental groups have spoken against the proposals that would see thousands of pages of planning knowledge and best practice ripped up and replaced by a single new document that has an apparent bias in favour of development whether really sustainable or not.

In Bournemouth the Society supported the Civic Voice's stance on the need for amendments to the DNPPF and Ken wrote a letter on the matter to the local newspaper, our two MPs and the Department of Communities and Local Government which was also featured in newsletters of the two Boscombe and Pokesdown community groups.

Our Chairman, Ken, also sits on the Council's Local Development Framework Steering Group and this group of Councillors and Bournemouth 2026 Partners was universally concerned that the DNPPF not only would undo all the checks and balances that have been created over the years but also undermine the thrust of what everyone believes Localism and the Big Society to be. Therefore a letter signed by Cllrs Bob Chapman, David Kelsey, Ron Whittaker and Ken was sent to the top man at the "Ministry", Eric Pickles MP, with copies to the two Bournemouth MPs and others who we trust will think carefully before making further decisions that could change the face of our towns, cities and green spaces.

Bournemouth Civic Visit to Israel, November 2011

A 24-strong contingent led by the Mayor and Mayoress of Bournemouth, Councillor Chris Rochester and Mrs Val Rochester, visited Israel from 1st to 9th November 2011 with the main intention of paying our respects to Netanya, our twin town. As well as the Mayor, seven current Town Councillors were included as were four former mayors. Civic Society Chairman Ken Mantock and committee member John Walker were privileged to be invited as part of the contingent. Six nights were spent at Netanya and two in Jerusalem. Visits were made to Roman, Biblical and other historic sites. At the official lunch after the two mayors exchanged gifts, Ken presented the Mayor of Netanya with a copy of the main Bournemouth bicentenary book, "Bournemouth 1810-2010 From Smugglers to Surfers", on behalf of the Civic Society saying that many Society members had contributed to the production of the publication. John was then pleased to present Mayor Miriam Fierberg with a copy of his own book, "Bournemouth 1810-2010, a Bicentenary Celebration". Ken and John found it all a memorable and rewarding visit thanks to its main organiser, Councillor Anne Filer.

Durlston Castle

Fredrick Treves described the castle as "A stronghold of the Bank Holiday period". It was designed by George Crickmay for the Swanage builder and developer George Burt and built in the 1880s. In recent years it has been in a poor condition but has now been restored and John Soane has visited since it opened in November. Below are his impressions of the result.

The "New" Durlston Castle: A different interpretation of the built past?

In November the restored Durlston Castle, the late 19th century fantasy creation of the building entrepreneur George Burt, opened to the general public. Except for the lovely location, the building is not exceptionally outstanding - being in reality an elaborate gazebo for afternoon tea. What is special is the unique way the improvements have been funded and the remarkable plurality of uses to which the building will be put. Financial resources were provided from a combination of Government lottery money, the Dorset County Council and various charitable trusts. However a great deal of the hard work both in the castle and the adjacent grounds has been contributed in a voluntary capacity by the Friends of Durlston.

The enhancement of the architectural and landscape significance of the building is only one of the future attractions planned. The castle will also contain up-to-date displays explaining the variety of fauna and flora of the Durlston National Nature Reserve and in particular the origins of the present natural structure of the adjacent World Heritage Jurassic Coast. The approach to the main entrance is through a series of standing stones representing the different ages of the rocks of the earth.

Quite apart from a projected series of lectures and guided walks on all matters of local interest in conjunction with a new learning centre for school children, a new astronomy dome will be available.

Refreshments of a high quality will be provided in a new cafeteria in the heart of the building. An upper banqueting room, disused for years, will cater for functions such as wedding receptions. Indeed the appeal of the castle for all kinds of activities will be further improved by the provision near the cliff top of a new gallery showing temporary exhibitions of artistic and scientific works in association with a studio for an artist in residence.

The main significance of all these activities is that - given the historic low level of financial support by British governments for the restoration of historic buildings - and the additional impact of the national austerity programme, the only practical way in which many near derelict monuments around the country can be saved is by the bringing together a large number of financial sources and a considerable expansion of the varied uses to which such places could be put.

In future therefore, conservationists will not only just need to ask what are the architectural and scenic qualities of a particular structure but what facilities could be established there that would be of direct social and educational benefit to the community at large. Would such resources guarantee the continued functioning of new attractions as a viable economic proposition and most important of all, would the granting of a new lease of life to the restored building result in the general enhancement of the cultural appreciation of their surroundings by a fair proportion of the entire local population.

Monthly Planning Digest

Each month John Soane visits the Planning Department and views current planning applications that have caught our attention. He then prepares a Digest on the more important ones. These are discussed by our committee before they are sent to the Council Planning Office and members of the Planning Board so they know the Society's views and can consider them before making a decision. Recent Digests have included comments on the Tesco redevelopment in Kinson, retail and housing plans in Southbourne Grove, a block of student flats in Bath Road, older persons accommodation in Southbourne, shops and housing in Boscombe and Pokesdown and hotel/mixed use schemes on the East and West Cliffs. The digests together with specific letters on major Town Centre scheme such as a new Hotel Training School next to the BIC and revised plans for the Pavilion featuring cinemas rather than a casino, make sure our views on these plans are known by the decision-makers at the Town Hall.

Civic Voice

We are active members of Civic Voice, the national campaigning group for Civic Societies across the UK and the successor to The Civic Trust. We maintain good links with its Director, Tony Burton (formerly of CPRE) and its ever busy and helpful Administrator Ian Harvey. Copies of Civic Voice, e-newsletters and campaign updates can be found on the Society's website - together with information on planning and environmental issues and social activities. In September Ken, Jean and David Bird, and Beryl attended the Civic Voice AGM 2011 in Sheffield. It ran over two interesting days. Our delegates paid all the costs themselves so it was not a jolly on the Society!

The AGM took place on the Saturday but on the Friday there were visits to local city centre and station approach regeneration and conservation projects. The Millennium Winter Gardens was especially impressive. There were tours of the 1950s' Park Hill council estate, now listed and being renovated by Urban Splash. The Botanic Gardens with their early 19th Century Gardenesque layout were particularly attractive and the similarity to Bournemouth's Central and Upper Gardens of the same period was striking.

A reception in the Victorian Town Hall on the Friday enabled our party to renew acquaintances with colleagues from Blackpool, Fleetwood, Brighton, Sheffield and Hunstanton. At the AGM Ken stood for election to the Civic Voice Board but came third of the five standing for the two vacancies.

Civic Voice has helped create a new All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies. Its first meeting was held at Westminster in November. More than 40 MPs have indicated their support and Laura Sandys MP, President of the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies was elected Chair. She is a long standing friend of the Civic movement. We were delighted to see one of Bournemouth's MPs supporting the new Group so have written to Conor Burns MP thanking him for his interest and for taking time to help societies like ours - champions of Big Society and localism!

Remembering Good Friends

With much sadness we note the death of our immediate past President, Hon. Alderman Keith Rawlings. Keith will be known to many through not only his support for the Society but in his wider and extensive involvement with so many voluntary organisations and clubs in Bournemouth. A true Renaissance Man Keith was fascinated by and expert in so many things - the theatre, politics, communities, civics, religion and latterly Humanism. He was a great character, with ever a new story or tit-bit of knowledge to share and always good humoured and entertaining - even if he disagreed with your point of view or you did not agree with him! He served on Bournemouth Council for some twenty years and was mayor in 1998-99. In the last newsletter we reported on the lovely sunny morning spent in the garden of his great friends and fellow Civic Society members Jim and Rosemary Fisher in Throop where we honoured him belatedly with presentation of his Civic Society President's badge - another to go with his famous collection. We remember all the good things Keith did, his infectious good humour and inquisitive mind, his love of Bournemouth and his participation in its affairs. We send heartfelt condolences and our best wishes to his wife Eileen and his family. Ken Mantock.

In the same month another long standing member of the Society passed away. He was Michael Dawney an organist, pianist, composer of hymns, an arranger of Church music, and folk songs with an International reputation. He was for many years an active supporter of the Society's outings until recently, when ill-health curtailed these but even then he helped Keith Barnes in his reconnaissances of possible visits. We shall miss him.

In a more cheerful vein we bade farewell to Jackie de Fonseca who has moved to Kent to be nearer her family. When Eileen and I joined the Society she was the Deputy Chairman. Many will remember her organising a trip to Bruges (her home town) for one of its festivals and being guided around the sites by her sister.

The committee wishes all our members good health and best wishes for the coming year.

Council Communications

Several times each year members of the Society, usually Jean Bird, John Barker, John Walker and Sally McGrath meet informally, Mike Holmes, the Council's Director of Planning and Transportation to discuss and keep up to date with major projects and items of interest. These meetings have been running for many years and along with Ken's membership of the Local Development Framework Steering Group, John Soane's monthly digest and commentary on those planning applications before the Planning Board and a rota that sees one of our Committee members attending each Planning Board as observers keeps us up to date and informed.

The last meeting with Mike Holmes featured some old chestnuts including plans to modify the IMAX building; progress on repairing the Boscombe Surf Reef; news on the revised Pavilion; Terrace Mount and the plans for an Hotel Training School next to the BIC; and the miserably neglected former Cliff End Hotel on the East Cliff. Good ideas included in the Localism Bill were also discussed but the lack of clarity and indeed contradictions in so many of the proposals left all waiting to see what would eventually appear from Government! We expressed our regret at the loss of the Council's Conservation Officer through redundancy and sought reassurances on how this important role would be covered and the town's many conservation areas and listed buildings adequately protected and managed.

