



BOURNEMOUTH CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Mid-Summer 2016

Committee Matters

The fact that the Society has until very recently had an up to date web site is due to the debt we owe to Andre Thomas who took over the operation of the site when there was no local enthusiast to keep it going. Unfortunately (as I know to my cost) computer companies update their equipment without much warning so unless you are completely au-fait with the latest thoughts it is difficult to master all the changes taking place. Andre considers that the time has come to divorce himself from the changes that need to be made. Our Chairman invited him to remain on the committee but he modestly declined saying he thought it time for new blood. We shall miss him, particularly for his gentle sense of humour.

But fortunately a new comer has come along, James Weir, an Oxford Graduate, who has specialised in the “conservation of old buildings”. This is a branch of knowledge which we need as a conservation Society and will be invaluable. Welcome aboard James.

Three of the present Committee are incapacitated. Beryl Parker (Activities) is due for major heart surgery in August, Keith Barnes her partner for Activities is in hospital in Dorchester, Our Vice Chairwoman, Jean Bird, has broken a bone in her neck and is confined to a collar for a few weeks. We hope they will all respond to treatment and return to us in good health soon.

The Future

One problem that faces many society's like ours is the lack of new members to take on the important and ongoing roles and tasks necessary to keep the Society running efficiently. We need to recruit more members to ensure our future so please consider either volunteering to come on the Committee or persuade family and friends to become members.

Shared Space

Although the “shared space” concept is designed to make travelling across road junctions easier by abolishing the idea of the “right of way” for a particular class of traveller whether a motorist, pedestrian, cyclist, roller-blader or skater, each user must be aware of other road users and cross each junction carefully and safely. But in a holiday town like Bournemouth the probability of encountering a road user unused to the “shared space” concept must be high and we remain concerned with the shared spaces in Bosombe and at Horseshoe Common.

James Weir's Jottings

It is with pleasure that I write the first of what I hope to be many pieces in the Newsletter and my first since taking a place on the Committee as the Heritage and Conservation Officer in April 2016.

By way of introduction, I am a Historic Buildings Consultant and though I live in Bournemouth, I work over most of the South. My main activities include carrying out Heritage statements, Historic Building Appraisals and Building Surveys on the fullest range of historic buildings, listed or not. I sit on the Guardians Committee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and I am also a member of their Casebook Panel. I am also a member of the RICS Building Conservation Forum.

As part of the Committee, I hope to achieve two things: first to provide sound advice as to heritage matters to the committee and any Society members and secondly to ensure that our wonderful stock of historic buildings, among which we have some fine Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco/Moderne examples, are protected and our Conservation Areas are looked after and managed in accordance with national policy and best practice.

It has certainly been an eventful few months since April, but I should like to bring up just a few cases here.

First, many of you will by now be aware of the tragic loss of St Peter's Hall (H.E.Hawker, 1908) in Hinton Road. Despite robust objection to the planning application, the Council did not refuse demolition and go against a Planning Inspectorate decision of 2010, which decreed that the building was a negative contributor to

the Conservation Area; this was despite recent removal of ugly ground floor cladding (present at the time of the Inspector's decision) which revealed that the facade was substantially original and only in need of repair. There are stark lessons here about the vulnerability of unlisted buildings in the town's Conservation Areas, and we shall be encouraging future planning decisions to be based on objective Heritage Statements and Assessments of significance.

There remains uncertainty about the future of the Odeon and ABC cinemas in Westover Road which are now owned by a property developer. No pre-application or planning application has yet been submitted but we understand there are behind-doors discussions with the Council and they are working up a scheme. In April I wrote to Cllr Beesley, who had publicly championed a facadism in the local press last year and was assured that these buildings are "notable landmarks in the town" and the Odeon's status as a locally listed building is 'clearly an important planning consideration'. We have welcomed this statement and have expressed our interest in reading a thorough Heritage Statement.

It was announced in May that Zaha Hadid Architects, a firm of international success had been appointed to design a new "Pavilion Gardens" building as part of the Council's "cultural quarter". We understand that the scheme has been shown to councillors and although we have yet to see it we will be monitoring any effect on the setting of the Grade II listed Pavilion and the Royal Bath Hotel as well as the setting of the locally listed Odeon and Premier Inn.

Westover Road Cinemas

The fate of the Odeon and the ABC cinemas in Westover Road is still uncertain. Both have been sold and are still operating but what happens once the new multiplexes open who knows? The Society has continued to press for them to be included in the Old Christchurch Road Conservation Area which is overdue a review of its boundaries and a Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan.

John Soane's Latest Book

Many of you will be aware that John Soane has been working very hard on producing a book about aspects of European architecture. You will be pleased to know that Manchester University Press have agreed to publish it. It should be available by Christmas this year. Congratulations, John.

It is entitled '*The Transformation of European Civic Tradition Since C1800*' and here John gives us an overview: "The work is in the form of a polemic and attempts to show how the organic traditions of European urban culture have survived the manifold assaults of the industrial and post-industrial eras to the present day.

"The first part of the book explains the way the ancient structure of Europe was increasingly affected by the dramatic social and spatial changes of the Industrial Revolution. I show how in an attempt to balance the requirements of historic tradition and modern utility; the inevitable radical replanning and extension of European metropoli was greatly influenced by the general revival of an historic perspective that had a significant impact on both the form and appearance of the new townscapes.

"In the central section I deal with the growing polarisation between the upholders of organic townscape design and advocates of International Moderne as Europe entered a period of exponential urban growth at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. I follow the worsening politicisation of this conflict by observing how irreconcilable cultural and material aims of traditionalists (the Third Reich) and

modernists (Western Europe) became one of the fundamental contributing factors that led to the catastrophic destruction of much of the historic architectural heritage of Europe during World War Two.

"The last part of the book is concerned with the protracted attempts over the previous 70 years to create a modus vivendi for both old and new forms of urban design that is compatible with present day life styles across the European Continent. It shows how the sharp conflict between historicist and contemporary planning philosophies which continued during the era of post war reconstruction gradually abated during the 1970's with the simultaneous decline in the popularity of International Moderne and the general revival of the building conservation movement.

"The impact of better planned city centres in Western Europe - which were now much influenced by the New Urbanity Movement - played a considerable part in facilitating the collapse of the Communist Empire in Eastern Europe. An event that was to initiate the unprecedented impetus for the rehabilitation of debilitated/destroyed venerable towns and cities; firstly across East Central Europe and later across the rest of the continent."

John concludes by observing that the resulting synthesis of vernacular/modernist/reconstruction planning philosophies has now become an essential bulwark in the defence of European Civic Tradition against the deadening spatial banalities of high rise Globalisation.

Richmond Hill Pedestrianisation

The proposal is to close Yelverton Road and Albert Roads to through traffic. At the moment it is possible to turn off of Albert Road down to Beales, the main town centre banks and St Peter's Church and return to Richmond Hill. Closing this loop will make access to the town centre for the elderly and disabled much more difficult. We know the town is being re-targetted to the young but there is still an older generation which enjoys an easier access to the town centre.

BH2 - New Cinemas on Exeter Road

It does seem extraordinary to produce buildings that back on to the Lower Gardens and do not acknowledge the Gardens are there by ignoring them and erecting blank walls on the boundary. One effect perhaps is to cut off low setting sun illuminating the Gardens which are one of the major attractions of the of the town. Whether these multiple cinemas will attract the numbers of film fans must be questionable when a number of recent surveys suggest that the major audience of the under 25-year-olds prefer to access films on the tiny screens available on their mobile devices.

Since writing the above Eileen and I had coffee in the upstairs restaurant of Dingles which overlooks the Lower Gardens. We were dismayed to see the mish-mash of ill-connected roofs seen from above although a walk around the complex shows that the scheme will partly be screened by trees so we look forward to them growing quickly.

Our Chairman was on the Council and on Planning Board when this scheme was first mooted and voted for it. However Ken, like many others though, is disappointed with the roofline and elevations especially as he recalls much pressure was brought to bear on the developers to improve the appearance and conditions were applied to attempt to safeguard these aspects. Several subsequent applications were made for the development and at one time the Council were considering acquiring the site but negotiations/legal action proved very difficult.

Glimpses of the Past

“Incomparable, beautiful Bournemouth” wrote an admirer in the '*Whitehall Review*' in the 1890's. “Who that has ever visited it will recall with rapture its stretch of sandy sea front, its balmy pine-scented air, the grandeur of its chines and its healthful surroundings combine to make it the most attractive and healthy of our popular sea-side towns”.

The “Iford Estate” is situate between Bournemouth and Christchurch, commencing at the summit of Pokesdown Hill (within 500 yards of the Station) and extends to Iford Bridge. In view of the rapid and almost complete development of the Eastern extremity of the Borough of Bournemouth, this Estate must gradually come into maturity for building operations. It is obviously the only freehold estate (of any appreciable extent) on the main road between Poole and Christchurch remaining undeveloped as a building estate.

In addition to the main road frontages, there are other portions of the estate having good road frontages, ripe for building. It is believed that valuable beds of gravel underlie portions of the estate.

Iford Farm is from an Agricultural point of view one of the best farmed in South Hants, the excellence of its crops invariably unsurpassed.

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