



Newsletter December 2017



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OUR HERITAGE AT RISK

Each Year Historic England (HE) publishes a register of important buildings and monuments that are 'At Risk' due to deterioration. This year Peterborough Unitary Authority area has four such buildings and 19 Scheduled Monuments.

It is of special concern when no solution is in sight, and this applies to two structures in the Cathedral Precincts - the Precinct wall and Laurel Court, No 22 Precincts. HE state that repair to those parts of the Precinct wall within the control of the Dean and Chapter have been progressed, but other parts remain in poor condition and with no solution agreed. Laurel Court is suffering from structural problems and failure of its modern flat roof. HE says it is occupied and maintained but in need of comprehensive structural and other repairs. Discussions continue as to how to fund this and use the repaired building.



More encouraging are the other two buildings, close to Wothorpe Towers, Wothorpe Farmhouse and its barn and stables. Here the buildings should soon be removed from the register since a repair scheme is in progress.

Heading the list of monuments is the important Saxon cross in St Margaret's Church (Fletton) which continues to weather. For the remaining 18 most - especially barrows - are particularly vulnerable to arable ploughing, and presumably where HE does not have the funds to enter into a management agreement with the owner. But the list includes Flag Fen's Bronze Age post alignment either side of Northey Road where the threat is from dewatering and drainage.

REFORMATION IN LONGTHORPE (continued)

The controversial scheme of 'reordering' St Botolph's Church Longthorpe (i.e. an extensive scheme including destruction of some Victorian and later fittings and features, pew removal and floor levelling) was reported in our April newsletter. At that time an approval (a Faculty in C of E language) had been recommended by the Diocesan Advisory Committee and granted by the Chancellor for the Diocese. This despite unusually strong objections from Historic England, the national Victorian Society and others. The Chancellor is Mr David Pittaway QC.

The arcane process of the so-called Ecclesiastical Exemption (the process whereby the Church of England grants itself permission for internal alterations) then continued, with an attempted appeal by the Victorian Society in the Consistory Court. Leave to appeal was refused (by the same person who proposed grant of the original application for Faculty, Mr Pittaway QC).

The Victorian Society then took the matter to the Arches Court of Canterbury, where a different QC, the Dean of Arches, Charles George QC, allowed appeal on grounds of inadequate reasoning on specific points, but refused permission to appeal of most of them. The Court of Arches is scheduled to meet in Longthorpe Church on December 11th unless the remaining points are to be decided by written representations. It looks very much as if the Longthorpe Parochial Church Council will be allowed to carry out extensive alterations despite the strong objections of the national statutory consultees whose opinions would normally be respected as quite capable of giving proper balanced weight to both the architectural and historic importance of a church and to its need to meet current worship practice.

RETURN OF THE BROADWAY THEATRE

With events being held again at the Broadway, did you ever wonder what happened to the application to, in effect, demolish the theatre and create around 60 apartments? In a word, it was quietly refused by the City Council on 8th August, as a decision delegated to officers. The officer's report, on the Council's web site (reference 16/02096/FUL), makes interesting reading. The main refusal reason was the applicant's failure to demonstrate that the Broadway was "not viable as a cultural/entertainment/leisure venue".

Peterborough people came out in force to fight for the theatre. 214 individual letters of objection were submitted and an on-line petition had 1787 'signatures'. Over 80 separate points were made. And some of the most revealing came from outside the city, especially from the national bodies, the Theatres Trust and the Cinema Theatre Association (see our newsletter of December last year). Did we really know that "The Broadway auditorium is now one of the finest remaining Odeon interiors in the country"?



But the key argument came down to the one of viability. The recent Bill Kenwright seasons had demonstrated that the theatre could stage major shows, draw an audience from a wide area and make a profit. But the theatre "had never been managed by an experienced theatre operator ...or been properly put out to tender to find an experienced theatre operator of the type required to programme a 1200 seat receiving theatre" (Theatres Trust).

So is the theatre saved for good? On page 18 of the August report we are told that since the application was submitted the owner had signed an agreement with the Peter Dawe Charitable Trust to lease the property for three years, though with various clauses to terminate, extend or purchase at different timescales. "The Trust has sublet the premises to an operator who is preparing a programme to use the property as a bar and for live events. The agent has advised that the owner has decided to take one last opportunity to see if the facility can operate as a viable concern. Although the lease is for three years it is expected that viability can be proven in the next twelve months. It has been agreed with the agent that the Council will refuse the current application rather than this being withdrawn."

It is not unusual for owners of property to withdraw applications heading for refusal to avoid a refusal appearing in the records. In this case a refusal helps to give some confidence to the theatre operator of the owner's good intentions. Whether it reduces the high expectations of the redevelopment value of the site is less certain. Lets hope that the programme is popular and that the owner, the lessee and operator all stay the course. It's certainly a varied programme and good to see it extending throughout the coming 12 months. Let's buy some tickets.

Peter Lee

SOME RECENT PLANNING MATTERS

Peterborough Local Plan

The Government's new method for calculating housing need led, surprisingly, to the City Council being able to reduce its target housing figures mid way through plan production. And enabled it to delete the Great Kyne scheme north of Castor/Ailsworth from the plan. We welcome the change as we had opposed the development. But other aspects of the plan remain unchanged so we will carry our concerns about these (e.g. refusal of the Council to properly define and safeguard key views to the Cathedral) through to the next stage in the New Year.

A statement at the Gateway to Peterborough or just a lump?

At the intersection of the A1 and the Fletton Parkway is a massive site being prepared for warehousing and other development. It's called, aptly, Peterborough Gateway. A recent application (17/02060/WCPP) proposes to vary the permitted height of a proposed building close to the A1 from the approved height (20m) to 40m. This is similar to the height of the Cathedral West front. Staying with the comparison, the footprint of the building is 330m by 200m and the Cathedral is 140m long by 60m wide. It will stand close to the A1



and have an enormous impact on the approach to Peterborough from the south and west especially. The building will be a regional distribution centre. Your society has argued that any proposal for such a high building should be considered as a fully detailed application demonstrating high architectural quality. This one is simply a proposal to commit to an increase in building height before any details are submitted. Unfortunately the City Council officers decided that they could deal with the application without details. We await the outcome.

Fletton Quays.

A very welcome detailed application (17/01626/FUL) for the conversion of **Whitworth Mill** has been submitted which, in most respects, we support. However, we have expressed concern about the scale and form of an external staircase which is proposed on the prominent west elevation. Amendments have been made to reduce the height but we remain of the opinion that the addition is too dominant. Decision awaited.

A full application for a **hotel** of 160 bedrooms (17/01766/FUL) is under consideration. The great bulk of the proposed nine-storey structure led to us objecting. It is understood that the applicants are considering modifications to introduce more variation in the riverside elevation. Revised plans are on their way.

A clutch of advertisement applications in the City Centre.

The conversion of **No 10 Queen Street** (formerly Clarke's) into a Charles Wells pub, The Queen's Head, transformed a smart Georgian frontage into a dour multi-coloured offering that downgraded the street scene. Our protests are that this was carried out without the necessary listed building consent. This has not led to a prosecution.

The new occupant of **Westgate Church** is a Help Centre for the UCKG (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) a church with its original roots in South America. As a building of local importance it is good to see it remaining in church use. But the UCKG wanted to plant an illuminated box fascia across the central bay covering some good architectural detail. We opposed the scheme and suggested alternatives. Decision awaited.

Again we were pleased to see the **Abbots Gaol building** (formerly Riva, beside the West Gate) back into use. But it has been accompanied by an excessively large sign and insensitive fixings. We have asked the Council (who lease the building) to ensure proper restoration of the stonework at such time as the occupier changes again.

Public art.

It's an exciting time for public art in Peterborough. Bob Dawson's **Bird in Flight** has been relocated from its rather remote site by Morton's Leam, beyond Stanground into Ferry Meadows where, beside the lake, it will be appreciated by far more people.

Buildings close to Cathedral Square will soon have the three figures of Antony Gormley's **Places to Be** on their roofs. And Lower Bridge Street will soon be hosting a new work by the Stephen Broadbent studio called **Voice of the City**, celebrating Peterborough's 18th Century bell-founder Henry Penn. The Civic Society supports these additions to our City. Currently under construction on Fletton Quays is the multi-storey car park which will be the new home for the **Arthur Ayres** sculpture formerly on Bridge House. Another one to look out for.



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 2018

Subscriptions to the Society fall due on 02 January 2018. The new rates are £12.00 for individual membership and £20.00 for joint or family membership. Corporate and school membership rates are currently unchanged.

If paying by cheque, please make your cheque payable to 'Peterborough Civic Society' and forward it to Roger Davis, Hon. Treasurer, 34 The Rookery, Orton Wistow, Peterborough PE2 6YT.

If paying by bank transfer, the Society's account no. at TSB is 01182035, sort code 30-96-60. Please quote the member's name(s) as the reference.

If you pay your subscription by standing order, please update your standing order mandate as soon as possible to reflect the new rates, if you have not already done so. This will avoid the situation arising where your bank pays an incorrect amount based on your old mandate. If in doubt, please contact our treasurer on 01733 235484, or by email at rogerdavis47@btinternet.com

TALKS

Some committee members have prepared talks to give to other groups/Societies. If you know of a group looking for a speaker, do let them know that we are happy to deliver one for a modest fee (£25 for the Society plus the opportunity to sell our book, Peterborough and its Villages in Detail, by Henry Duckett and Peterborough Photographic Society). Available talks are:

- **Peterborough and its Villages in Detail - the story of a book of architectural details**
Henry Mansell Duckett
- **A History of Peterborough and its Villages in 20 architectural details**
Peter Lee
- **The History of Peterborough Civic Society**
Peter Lee
- **Peterborough's Blue Plaque scheme**
Toby Wood

MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR from both me and the Peterborough Civic Society and don't forget ... if you want a copy of Peterborough In Detail for a mere £10 my little committee helpers can deliver it by hand within the Peterborough district for free!!!

