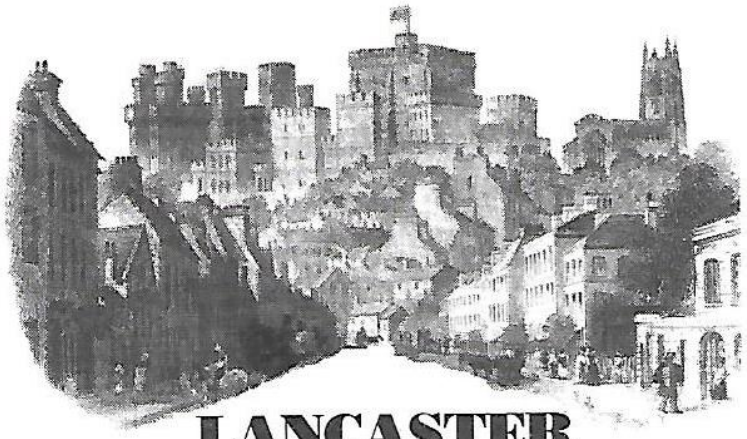


A HISTORY OF LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY

THE FIRST 40 YEARS

1967 – 2007

By Malcolm B Taylor
2009

Serialization – part 6

Annual General Meetings

Annual General Meetings have always been a highlight in the Society's calendar and are usually well attended. While, ostensibly the purpose of an AGM under a society's constitution is to elect officers and a committee for the year ahead, the Society has never allowed such a small detail to get in the way of the real purposes of the meeting: the chairman's report for the past year and an account of the Town Hall's civic activities for the year given by a senior officer. This used to be the City Architect, later to be Director of Development and Tourism. Then on his retirement, the Chief Planning Officer reported. It is rare for an officer of a local authority to risk appearing at such meetings, still less usual to offer himself as a hostage to fortune by volunteering to submit to questions on some often politically hot subjects. Members (and the public who are always invited to attend) take full advantage of this opportunity. It is disappointing that the local press have rarely in recent years used this opportunity to refresh municipal gossip.

AGMs have been held at St. Martin's College, and the Shire Hall. But most of the meetings in the Society's history used to be held in the rather grand banqueting chamber of the Town Hall, a fitting civic ambience for such occasions, for which the Society has always been grateful to the City Council. However, in recent years, although the Town Hall has remained available, the Society has wished to support St John's, Lancaster's glorious Georgian Church, in any way it could (there is a separate note about the Society's activities in supporting **St John's**). One of the ways is to hold AGMs there. It is not as comfortable as the banqueting chamber, nor is its acoustic as good, but holding an AGM there is an opportunity for members to experience this remarkable building.

A brief mention of the subjects discussed, where records survive, is given in Appendix 2. Readers should make due allowance for the brevity of some of the items: reproduction depends very much on the variable quality of the reporting, but it was felt worthwhile to leave them almost verbatim. It is hoped that this account will serve to capture the flavour of the diverse activities the Society has been involved with over the years. Some of them will induce a strange sense of *déjà vu*: many have dropped out of sight, others are only now, 30 years on, coming to some kind of resolution. Some of the subjects mentioned appear again in greater detail elsewhere in the book.

One aspect of the pattern revealed by this rather breathless whistle stop tour of the AGMs is worth a mention. Is it coincidence that the low and high points of the Society's activities seemed to follow the active and inactive periods of Town Hall activity? The importance of key Society officers as reasons for the ebb and flow of enthusiasm comes through clearly, and perhaps unsurprisingly.

Appendix 2

Annual General Meetings

Brief descriptions of content of Chairman's and City Official's reports at Annual General Meetings (see **Annual General Meetings** for context)

1967

Chairman (JL Spencer): Three working groups have been set up, as agreed at an earlier general meeting: Planning, Research, Works. Works Group (Mr Barton) reported on the Church Street scheme (inherited from the Amenity Society). Planning Group (Mr Mawson) - studies of the Buchanan proposals, parking in the city, and development of the river frontage. Research Group – Civic Theatre Survey (Town Clerk said there was a possible site – presumably St Anne's Church- later to be the Dukes Playhouse), Leisure Survey.

1968

Chairman (JL Spencer). Reported progress by the 3 groups (above), plus a fourth, a Buildings Group. Church Street scheme was proceeding, a Civic Theatre report had been published, and a photographic survey of city centre buildings had started. Progress in Operation Spring Clean was disappointing. The Society was organising Operation Watchdog to assist City to apply new legislation. Questions were raised about the future of the Music Room. City Architect was non committal, but said City had plans for a public open space adjacent.

1969

Chairman (JL Spencer): activities have included Music Room (the architect, Edward Mason has appeared on TV), the proposed civic theatre, cleaning public buildings, eyesores removed via Operation Watchdog. LCS is now a registered charity.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): Music Room is now in a Conservation Area, Greyhound Bridge conversion will start in 1970, Eastern Relief Road to start in 1973 (…!), new Fire Station start imminent, tenders in shortly for Dukes Playhouse (work to start 1970), Green Ayre to become a riverside park if City can acquire the land, intention to improve canal at Aldcliffe Road, Operation Watchdog to continue, Weights & Measures Offices Dalton Square to become TIC.

1970

Chairman (JL Spencer): 3 Newsletters had been circulated, and evening tour of the city, consultation with City Engineer and police on litter followed by an article in Lancaster Guardian, city centre tree study with TPOs proposed, report to City on directional signs, an archaeology group formed, pamphlet prepared for building owners on stone preservation, following concern at poor quality painting.
City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): Landmark Trust will acquire Music Room if government grant available, City will clear approaches.

1971

Chairman (Rev H Kellett): Future of Music Room of considerable concern, Mitre Yard proposals, survey of signs in shop windows, membership numbers disappointing.

City Architect's Department (Austin Chard): Landmark Trust negotiating purchase of Music Room with owner, architects have estimated £30,000 for restoration and conversion of top floor to holiday let, despite unsatisfactory plans for Mitre Yard, City had passed them – County have attempted to improve - modified plan will be advertised and submitted to RFAC (Society has condemned plans and written letters to all public bodies which might influence events), City proposals for riverside park (Green Ayre) displayed.

1972

Chairman (Rev H Kellett) (LG reported Col Darlington chairing): Mitre Yard proposals, pedestrianisation, successful summer walks.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): fruitful exchanges between his department and the Society, Whitfield designed scheme][for Mitre Yard accepted by City and RFAC, consent given for Hornsea Pottery factory on Wyresdale Road, Queen Street buildings re-furbished as planning office, Greyhound Bridge to be opened shortly, new circulatory system and pedestrianisation may start in a year's time, Castle, Dalton Square, St George's Quay now Conservation Areas, extensive inspection of city centre trees revealed that half defective, Green Ayre has been acquired by the City – landscape scheme by TH Mawson.* Frustration that the coal supply railway line from Green Ayre to a non-operative power station is preventing landscaping proceeding. City have made allocation for clearance around Music Room.

1973

Chairman (Rev H Kellett): Much attention to planning applications, a first meeting of a Junior Civic Society, a public meeting on proposals for Castle Hill.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): Tree Planting Year – 3000 trees planted, Operation Eyesore – improvements to Aldcliffe Road canal frontage – Newlands Park – Priory Churchyard – Dukes Playhouse and Ruxton's House (exteriors cleaned) – land adjoining Long Marsh Lane, problems with supply of stone and steel to Mitre Yard – 6 weeks behind, Music Room acquired by Landmark Trust – surrounding area to be acquired soon, pedestrianisation to start soon, changes in Local Government structures will improve planning process – County to produce a structure plan, Eastern Relief Road not dead – but no programme or finance for a starting date.

1974

Vice Chairman (Edward Mason): there are plans for the future of Aldcliffe Road canalside, Castle Hill Cottages, the Music Room, pedestrianisation and relief roads

City Architect's Department (Austin Chard): there are plans for the future of Green Ayre, Middle Street housing, repairs to St John's: discussion included pressure to retrieve the Castle for public use after vacation as a prison.

1975

Chairman (Abbott Bryning): The principal event had been the well attended public meeting on the Eastern Relief Road: there had been a robust debate.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): Local Plans, Heritage Year Awards, Mitre House, Riverside Park, pedestrianisation, Bath Mill site, there is to be a new survey for Eastern Relief Road.

1976

Chairman (Abbott Bryning): there has been a visit from Skipton Civic Society, a concert in Ashton Memorial, a town trail, a tree preservation survey: mentioned - Music Room: pedestrianisation: dilapidated state of Trades Hall.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): There are Local Plans for Lancaster, Glasson, Carnforth: the Music Room is to be complete in time for HM Queen's visit, there is to be a Lancaster Market Mural: mentioned - Midland Hotel Morecambe: Mitre House completion: schemes for the Ruxton house and County Cinema (Palatine Hall): new Law Courts have been postponed

1977

Chairman (Abbott Bryning): HM Queen's Jubilee visit: concert and buffet Ashton Memorial: Society offered use of 9 Castle Hill: Society influence on planning decisions.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): Castle Hill developments: Market Square pedestrianisation: Trades Hall: Assembly Rooms: County Cinema (Palatine Hall): Bath Mill housing: Tree Preservation Orders: traffic survey: Conservation Areas: Winter Gardens Morecambe: Riverside Park: Local Structure Plan.

1978

Chairman (Leslie Rigg); 9 Castle Hill has been acquired for Society: there is to be a public meeting on proposed Heysham power station: a meeting is being planned on future of the Castle.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall); Castle Hill phase 1 is complete: mentioned Brunton's Warehouse: Friar Street/Moor Lane: pedestrianisation of Penny Street, New Street: he asked Society to report on worsening condition of some buildings: there is pressure by superstores. He vigorously resisted a suggestion that the town hall stonework be cleaned.

1979

Chairman (Leslie Rigg): membership and attendance at meetings are up: there has been a joint meeting with Halflife (an anti-nuclear pressure group), and Friends of the Earth: there has been a concert in the Shire Hall: much attention has been given to planning matters: future of Castle is a priority.

City Architect (Allan Heppenstall): the Castle will be expensive to maintain if it is relinquished as a prison: Castle Hill, Middle Street, Arndale Centre and Pye's warehouse are cause for architectural concern: there are proposals to convert St Anne's Church into a civic theatre: mentioned Queen Square and more on pedestrianiation, Sir Simon's Arcade: Aldcliffe Road Canal frontage, establishment of stone bank from demolished Bath Mill (City can now afford to re-build in sensitive locations in stone), Market Hall repairs including new mural: Music Room is a success now some neighbouring buildings have been removed. There were questions from the audience alleging City Council feet dragging on promised Eastern Relief Road traffic survey.

1980

Chairman (Leslie Rigg): Good relationship has been established with new City Architect: 9 Castle Hill has been officially opened as Society's "HQ".

City Architect (Charles Wilson): he encouraged the Society to be the City's civic watchdog. It should be "vigilant and provocative": cutbacks by central government had slowed down environmental improvements: there had been an urban forum study by Planning Department: there are too many derelict properties, there has been a £12m structural survey of Williamson Monument: derelict land on Ashton Road has been designated for housing association and sheltered housing: he gave news on new Magistrates' Court and programme for completion of pedestrianisation.*

1981

Chairman absent (Marion McClintock in the chair).

City Architect (Charles Wilson): A gloomy prospect. High unemployment, poor housing stock, struggles for control between local and central government, unbalanced age structure: more positively: proposals by Sainsbury, WH Smith, new offices for City Architect's and Planning Department Palatine House, re-furbished Co-op: New Street/Church Street: pressure to carry out New Street pedestrianisation: He again encouraged Society to be provocative and active – he hadn't heard much from it during the previous year.

1982

Chairman (Geoffrey Burnstone): the Society had mounted two exhibitions – Ashton Memorial and the Language of Architecture.

Principal Planning Officer (Vic Crumley): Magistrates' Court and Post House Hotel: housing in High Street and Cable Street are nearing completion: Sulyard Street Methodist Church is being converted into flats: impact of new Asda (Morecambe) is being monitored: the appeal against allowing B&Q to build on Aldclffe Road has been lost: discussion with Sainsburys continues: Scotforth Square is complete: there have been post demolition improvements on Lansil site: a Maritime Museum is proposed: a report was given on developments for Ashton Memorial (Society contribution commended): the City Architect is again urging a greater impact by the Society – could it work alongside Chamber of Trade?

1983

Chairman (Geoffrey Burnstone): A defiant address. He is concerned at poor attendances at meetings: the Society has started a fund raising campaign for work on the Ashton Memorial to correct severe structural problems: the Society is involved jointly with the City and Sainsburys on architectural treatment to proposed superstore on Cable Street: 9 Castle Hill is proving unattractive.

City Architect (Charles Wilson): St George's Quay, Lady's Walk are complete: the City is acquiring Moor Lane Mills and Lansil site: mentioned landscaping to Magistrates' Square: Maritime Museum conversion of Custom House is about to start: New Street pedestrianisation is almost complete, it is intended to start more of Penny Street next year: Local Plan preparation is becoming a major task: the latest proposals for Eastern Relief Road "had not had a fair hearing".

1984

Chairman and most of the committee absent (meeting chaired by Keith Ingham): there has been little committee activity during the year: the Society's initiative to raise funds for the Ashton Memorial has been "absorbed" within the Lord Lieutenant's Steering Group: the 9 Castle Hill dilemma continues - the Society is prepared to abandon it: the future of Market Hall post the fire will dominate the future of the city centre.

Town Clerk (Bill Pearson): he reviewed the City's last 10 years: success of pedestrianisation: circulatory traffic: restoration of Judges' Lodgings: Magistrates' Courts, Aalborg Square completion: Custom House conversion to Maritime Museum completion: City Architect's Department Palatine Hall completion: Ashton Memorial fund raising is going well: the Local Plan is proceeding: the future of the Castle remains in doubt.

1985

Acting Chairman (Leslie Rigg: election of new chairman not yet made): he read out a summary of notes by retiring chairman (Geoffrey Burnstone) reviewing the last 10 years.

City Architect (Charles Wilson): the Home Office lease from the Duchy of Lancaster of the prison ends in 1991. It would be handed to the City: work on the Ashton Memorial has started: there is commercial pressure by multiples to develop in the City: the City are preparing reports on the economic future and shopping needs: Sainsbury's store will make a substantial civic contribution: Thomas Harrison's Skerton Bridge building is to become a restaurant: St John's Church has been re-furbished: he welcomed the Society's design award scheme: the Local Plan is not yet ready: Market development is on hold until the shopping report (above) has been issued: White Cross conversion is

going well (ex Storey's site, being converted by a County quango into an Open College and small industrial/office units).

1986

Chairman (Martin Widden): the Society has a new logo and membership/programme card: the design award scheme (in conjunction with City, Chamber of Commerce, Lancaster Guardian) is going well: 9 awards and commendations have been made: 9 Castle Hill has been abandoned: the Newsletter is now quarterly (and regular): publication of draft Local Plan and proposals for retail development have resulted in much healthy discussion – there have been strong views on the future location of the Market: there are imminent and controversial applications for retail space in city centre – the Society will try to ensure high design standards: there is a need for debate to start in earnest on future of the Castle.

City Architect (Charles Wilson): he is pleased that the Society is using St John's Church for the first time: there were 1200 planning applications last year – the Society still has to raise its profile in commenting: he mentioned flood measures for St George's Quay and progress on Ashton Memorial – a possible coincidence of its re-opening with the Society's 20th anniversary?

1987

Chairman (Martin Widden): the country house visit was to Belle Isle:it is intended to celebrate Society's 20th anniversary with re-opening of Ashton Hall - a concert and supper will be arranged by the Society: The Society has objected to the Local Plan - it falls short on conservation (the chairman will represent the Society at the Enquiry): mentioned regeneration of Luneside: shopping developments: the Society sub-committee now meets at Palatine Hall fortnightly to inspect planning applications.

City Architect (Charles Wilson): discussion on Local Plan for Market Hall development will not be possible until after the Local Plan enquiry: major coastal protection measures are planned for Morecambe: the Lansil site is going well – it includes a car production unit (the later abandoned plywood Afrikar): permission has been given for a Youth Custody Centre, Moor: the Ashton Memorial and Butterfly House are complete: ex wharfage land opposite Waterwitch public house is under review. (Objections to the Local Plan were aired after he had left the meeting, despite his opposition to discussion now).

1988

Chairman (Martin Widden): the design awards for the year are in progress: the Local Plan enquiry has finished: Martin had represented the Society. The inspector had accepted the Local Plan largely unaltered, although he had criticised central area redevelopment proposals: the

City had interviewed potential developers, only one of which – ARC who were chosen - was sensitive to Lancaster's character.

City Architect (Charles Wilson): Moor Lane Mills (which the City had purchased – above) were to be student housing: the Castle Lease to the Home Office had been extended to 1996: George Fox school was to close: the Storey Institute needs a new user: Luneside proposals are for a 600 house village: he praised the design awards scheme: the City was in discussion with British Waterways Board over vacant wharfage land on Aldcliffe Road: he thought trees and landscaping would be better than a hotel.

1989

Chairman (Martin Widden): membership is increasing: help is needed in examining planning applications (see City Architect, below): the Society were challenging the need for a Western Bypass (officially one of the Heysham-M6 link options): re-issued Belcher postcards, originally produced as part of the fund-raising for the Ashton Memorial, were on sale.

Deputy Planning Officer (Vic Crumley): drawings of revised proposals for Central Area Redevelopment were displayed, and the new Damside Street fire station: ancient pedestrian links are to be maintained: plans for Brewery Site have been improved: work would start shortly on the Cottams Farm industrial "park": St Nicholas Square has been roofed in: an application for developing Lune Village has been refused – traffic problems and land contamination: the failed Hornsea Pottery site in Wyresdale Road has applied for permission to become a garden centre, leisure park and hotel, the factory to become a crafts centre: the Local Plan for Morecambe is in hand which aims for "quality": there has been a 30% increase in planning applications: the City Council is being re-structured: the future of Kingsway (site of old bus station and public baths) is becoming a problem: the Western Bypass is an expensive option compared with the Northern Link.

1990

Chairman (Martin Widden): the Chester Civic Trust had visited Lancaster and the Society had returned the visit: award scheme awards had been made: the Society is now concentrating on identifying and protesting about derelict sites: school pupils had surveyed cobbled areas (a rare example of participation by youth in the Society's history: author): the first "Ugly Walk" had taken place – 50 eyesores were noted and owners notified – the Society had hired a crane, funded by the City, to reach shrubs growing out of gutters and chimneys: the Society had had a stall in Market Square for Environment Week, had invited comments from the public, most of whom complained of litter.

Former City Architect (Charles Wilson): the City Council is now reorganised into "management groupings". Charles is now "Director of Development and Tourism". There is now a Chief Planning Officer: Reebok will occupy one of the Moor Lane Mills as their HQ: the Civic Trust have awarded commendations to St George's Quay and Ashton Memorial: numbers of planning applications continue to increase: it is a difficult time for the retail world – Lancaster is awaiting the Secretary of State's decision on the central area redevelopment (Market Hall site): there are delays also on St Nicholas

Square uplift: there is strong private developer interest in infill sites for housing: the canal corridor from White Cross to Bath Mill has been transformed: White Cross now employs more than it did when it was a Storey factory – it is a complex of education, leisure, manufacturing and housing: the packet boat dock Aldcliffe Road is due for a face lift: it is likely that the long running saga of the Eastern Relief Road will end when it is built over – County have given priority to Heysham-M6 link.*

1991

Nothing on files - NB Surely someone has notes on what was said

1992

Chairman (Martin Widden): This year is the Society's 25th anniversary: the Society have visited Kendal and Bolton, and have received visits from Halifax and Whitehaven. Penrith is expected shortly, with whom we are exchanging on their equivalent to Nightingale Hall Farm: the Society's plans for clearing embankment opposite Train Station have been frustrated by bureaucracy: the Ugly Walks continue to succeed and the City is responsive: the Chief Planning Officer is organising the next design awards: the Society has spent much time commenting on Market Hall scheme.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): Boundary changes will happen soon which the Society should comment on: Heysham-M6 Relief Road is becoming a major issue: major expansions are planned at the University and St Martins – half of the students are to be housed in the City – parking at St Martins is a difficult problem: the University contributes £30m annually to local economy: there is a new TIC on Castle Hill: more landscaping for Morecambe promenade and a new road: there is a further initiative to save the Winter Gardens: Centreville is the new developer in waiting for the Market Hall (ARC had withdrawn). It is out to tender shortly: the Society's suggestions for hidden roof parking have been incorporated: there is no news yet on prison relinquishing Castle – still on track for 95/96: The Storey Institute is now in University ownership: There is to be a court case soon on the Eric Gill bas reliefs at the Midland Hotel

1993

Chairman (Martin Widden): the 1992 design awards have been well received: the Society had hosted three mediatory meetings to try to bring City and traders together over controversial plans for the new Market Hall. He was disappointed that the traders had not involved themselves in influencing the design; the Society are being neutral over the Heysham/M6 battle.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): the Western option of the link road would not solve the City's traffic problem but the Northern option was of interest: detailed plans for the new Market Hall complex were nearly complete: Mitchells' old brewery site behind Church Street was commercially active again: the University has a major impact on the city, with student-numbers now in excess of 9000. It is expected to expand further: the Winter Gardens continue to cause concern: Morecambe coastal protection continues: the future of the Royal Albert and Moor sites are under discussion: the possibility of cleaning the Museum has been raised, and repulsed again: Skerton Bridge House is in the hands of receivers, Kingsway baths are nearing the end of their life, with a new sports centre/baths to be built at Green Ayre: high quality student flats are to be built at the canal basin, Aldcliffe Road.

1994

Chairman (Martin Widden): Windows leaflet published.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): the Market Hall site now a big hole in the ground: pedestrianisation of Upper Penny Street had been difficult. Art and sculpture for Stone Jetty will include a statue of Eric Morecambe. Happy Mount Park will have Mr Blobby.

1995

Chairman (Martin Widden): there will be a Christmas social and photo quiz: the annual trip had been to Richmond. For National Heritage weekend three buildings sponsored by the Society: There will be an Ugly Walk in January.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): there was a Civic Trust award for Charter House, Dalton Square: Stone Jetty and TERN are worth visiting but the Winter Gardens are an eyesore: the Market Hall complex is to open in September: The City is concerned about future of Royal Albert building - the University are not interested. The Chancellor's Wharf (student residences, canalside, Aldcliffe Road) architecture is good: the packet boat house is to be restored: City has made a bid for lottery funding for Sports complex Green Ayre: Millennium projects considered include riverside park, cyclists' bridge over the Lune: Society leaflets on windows and stonework are good: he hopes a decision will be made under next local plan for future of Eastern Relief Road corridor. There is no news on the future of Skerton Bridge House, nor on Kingsway Bus Station and Baths site.

1996

Chairman (Martin Widden): Summer visits were to Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, Conishead Priory: Successful Heritage Weekend events included the 4 seater privy

Castle Hill: there have been another Ugly Walk: and a tree walk to highlight the plight of urban trees: the design awards are being organised by the Society this year: the Society has helped to clear churchyard gravestones, St John's Church.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): housing activity in city centre is buoyant: repaving around the Castle and Covell Cross is good: Strategic Regeneration Board funding is available for major work in Morecambe, including Winter Gardens: Bids are in the pipeline for re-surfacing Dalton Square and upgrading Williamson Park: The Local Plan will demand much new housing; there will be a public enquiry in 1998; there is to be no new building in centre of city (he gave a non committal answer to a question about the Eastern Relief Road): there is no immediate prospect of a new bus station.

1997

Chairman (Martin Widden): Heritage Days theme this year is memorial art, e.g. cemeteries: design awards included Morecambe Town Hall: attendances at winter lectures had been impressive and were still rising: there has been another Ugly Walk: St Johns churchyard has been adopted as a Society project – trees felled, railing reinstated: the Society will be commenting on the Local Plan – too many houses for employment levels – Lancaster is becoming a dormitory town – increase in traffic – the Local Plan is supposed to be encouraging public transport. (A questioner asked why Society persists in supporting the Eastern relief Road – against all Town Hall intentions – chairman said its purpose was to reduce city centre traffic): Lunesdale Civic Society was wound up – they had asked the Society to incorporate them, but it was too big an area and had different interests.

Director of Development and Tourism (Charles Wilson): there has been considerable response to the Local Plan - a controversial inclusion of 8300 houses – 4000 immediately. Developers want to build on green field sites but the City will insist on brown field sites wherever possible: there is to be a public enquiry in 1998: the City hope to improve the existing bus station: Church Street has been pedestrianised (end of programme): Kingsway Baths site is to become car parking; there are many Lottery funding successes – Ruskin Building (University), Salt Ayre Sports complex, Williamson Park, S Martins, Dalton Square: Riverside park has reached the final stage. Its key will be the Millennium Bridge.
Afterwards a slide presentation of the bridge was given by Whitby Bird, the winning designers.

1998

Chairman (Judith Clarke): Heritage weekend coincided with bi-centenary of Lancaster Canal. The Society mounted an exhibition and tours in restored Packet Boat House: there was a good Christmas social. There were visits to Burnley and Gawthorpe Hall: there has been a hiatus on the Society project in St John's Churchyard . The Priory Church has intervened. The Society had decided to concentrate instead on transport aspects of the Local Plan: membership is still increasing: exhibitions and walks:

lectures ranged from castles on the Rhine to Blackwell Arts and Crafts house. Changes in the constitution were agreed to get more movement in membership of committees, and spread of responsibilities; much activity on Local Plan.

Director of Development and Tourism - now also Town Clerk (Charles Wilson): there were four subjects: the Local Plan, Conservation, National Lottery initiatives, Millennium Projects. The public enquiry on the Local Plan is to start in January 1999, modified late 1999 and adopted in 2000.There have been many objections, especially to the housing proposed for south Lancaster, and the Heysham-M6 link. Housing will effectively kill the Eastern Relief Road. Objectors have largely comprised the Society. The County Council will defend their case for the Western Bypass option of the link road at the enquiry. Conservation: money from Lottery Fund, if granted will enable work to proceed over three years to the Quay, Poulton, Sunderland Point and Heysham. Sulyard Street has been improved, and work around Castle completed. Dalton Square is to be repaved.: Preston got too much National Lottery money, but Williamson Park and Morecambe Platform will get some. TERN hope to expand. Millennium Projects: Riverside Park from Salt Ayre to Halton/Caton. A New hotel is proposed at Fleet Square. Questions included the running sore which is Skerton Bridge House. Resolution is still uncertain.

1999

Chairman (Judith Clarke): The 300th member is expected this year: The Society has been active in planning applications and design awards, Local Plan enquiry. For first time in the Society's history, the Town Hall could not be used for meetings: there was the usual Ugly Walk, and a Summer walk led by Jim Price (Sharpe, Paley, Austin buildings): biennial design awards this year, include the Lancaster Canal sanitary station, Pye's new Feed Mill, Ruskin Library: this year has been dominated by the Local Plan enquiry – Martin Widden and Judith Clarke presented Society case. The Society's Objectives were removal of traffic from gyratory system, supported by Chamber of Commerce and MP Hilton Dawson. The enquiry had proved difficult for ordinary members of the public including the Society to put a case without benefit of legal representation. "It is not a user friendly forum": planning applications causing concern included piecemeal……..and a substantial housing development on Ashton Road, new bus station, Brewery site, Kingsway site - all before enquiry is complete: new plans for bus station were a part success for the Society after critical comment in Newsletter: there were hopes that changes in Town Hall structure (eg cabinets) will not destroy relations between Society and Town Hall: continuation of plans for Society project in St John's churchyard were uncertain following difficulties between Society, Town Hall, and Priory. Funding for railings is available, but a permanent solution elusive: following changes to committee structure agreed at the last AGM, there has been much more welcome movement in membership.

Chief Planning Officer (Vic Crumley) :the year has been dominated by Local Plan processes: There will be a public enquiry, following application by Nightingale Hall Farm for a tall chimney; the Brewery site has been granted permission for a multi-

screen cinema: there is a new design for the Bus Station: there is a new proposal for Kingsway to include retail and a cinema: SRB funding is awaited for Lune Industrial Estate. The former Pye's Mill has a proposal for hotel and there are no immediate alternatives. Millennium Bridge tenders are due in mid July for completion May 2000: TERN: more lottery money has been granted: the Winter Gardens are now weather proofed, but no uses are planned.

2000

Chairman (Judith Clarke): Winter lectures were well supported: the Inspector's report on Local Plan is overdue and still not published. In the meantime, Town Hall and Society have pressed on, using the revised 1997 discussion document on city centre. Thus, the future of Eastern Relief Road remains in contention: the Society has submitted a response to the Lancashire County Council draft Local Transport Plan: the Society now supports Heysham-M6 link without preference for specific route. County preference for Western Route might force the Society to express opinion on the options: the imminent rebuild of bus station was welcomed. The Society is happy that the new design has addressed most of its objections: Pye's Mill and Kingsway sites are suffering from listed buildings syndrome (particularly Kingsway). The railings at St John's Church have finally been completed: during the year, the Society has been represented at several meetings including Lancashire Federation of Civic Societies, English Heritage regional meeting, LCC Transport Forum, Lancaster Canal Northern Reaches Restoration Project, Friends of Carnforth Railway Station restoration, launch of new Seacat service to Belfast: the Ugly Walk comprised the City Centre: Bridge House is now at considerable risk of total collapse : the Newsletter is becoming a focus for opinion.*

(There appears not to have been a report from a City Officer).

2001

The meeting was presided over by the Society's president (Charles Wilson)
Chairman (John Cousins): Lancaster City Centre Strategy has been published for comment: the Society will respond: the Society is urging the City to appoint a city centre manager: there was the usual Society organisation of annual Heritage Days: the Summer visit was to Darlington: the Society has acted as host to Federation of Lancashire Civic Societies at the Platform. It was successful, and included a tour of the Midland Hotel in a sad state: the Local Plan inspector's report has been published. He has supported the western option of the Heysahm-M6 link. The City have responded but have not commented on Bypass. It is all taking far too long: the Society has responded to Lancashire Joint Structure Plan – it sets a framework for implementing the Local Plan: The Society act as "critical friend" to the Town Hall regarding planning applications, which are reviewed weekly. The Town Hall takes the Society comments seriously: three major new additions to built environment are the Bus Station, Millennium Bridge, Warner Multiplex (the multi-screen cinema on the old Brewery site):

there are also brown field site developments: ex Streamline Garage King St, ex Pye's Mill site, between High Street and Dallas Road: the Society has commented successfully on all three: Lancashire Business Park, Cottams Farm is going ahead, but Kingsway is back to the drawing board: the Society has participated in Town Hall proposals to reorganise Museum services – with potential loss of jobs: the Society intends to mount a joint symposium with the Historical Society on the Castle next year: the next Heritage weekend theme to be Lord Ashton's buildings.

(There appears not to have been a report from a City Officer).

2002

Chairman (John Cousins): Attendance at recent meetings has never been below 50: Carnforth Station rebuild is well under way: Heritage weekend visited Lord Ashton's buildings: the summer outing was to Port Sunlight: summer walks took the themes Carnforth Station, Thomas Mawson, the Quay and City Centre: The Lancaster Castle Symposium jointly with Lancaster Archeological and Historical was well attended: Housing; there has been significant brown field development including Marton Street Depot, Nelson Street, Streamline Garage, the Quay, Pye Mills, Fenton Street, Moor Hospital. Most have respected vernacular, but Crosby Homes using Stephenson Bell Architects (Marton Street) were commended by showing that good modern design is achievable: we still await outcome of the Local Plan public enquiry, particularly housing south of the city: the Society has commented on City Centre Strategy, Development Briefs for Kingwsay, Canal Corridor (more familiarly known as the Eastern Relief Road): we are optimistic about prospects for the Luneside Urban Village (Quay/Williamson factory site): the continuing empty bulk of multiplex cinema is deplored: the President's Award theme "My Lancaster" drew applications from Skerton, Scotforth, Ripley, LGS schools. They will select a building,* comment on it, produce sketches, drawings, photos and say why it was chosen. Each will have a certificate signed by the president.

Guest Speaker John Donellan, Corporate Director (regeneration) for the City: no report on files)

2003

Chairman (John Cousins): (in his absence, his report presented by Charles Wilson). Considerable change was expected as a result of the Government's new planning regime. Rejection of the large housing development at Whinney Carr and the subsequent emphasis on brown field development was noted.

Andrew Dobson, the recently appointed Head of Building Planning and Control for the City gave the address "Lancaster One Year On".*

2004

Chairman (Martin Widden). An offer had been received and accepted to set up a LCS web site (www.lancastercivicsociety.org.uk). LCS influence on planning applications has been disappointing in the past year in regard to Kingsway Baths and Bus Depot and the Bridge End houses at Skerton Bridge. Of particular concern was that the proposed apartments on the site of the Bus Depot would rise to 11 storeys. English Heritage came in for strong criticism for having approved the scheme without having seen an elevation.

The guest speaker was Stephen Langtree, Chairman, North-West Association of Civic Trust Societies.

2005

Chairman (Martin Widden): The Town Hall has asked the Society to assist with appraisal of Conservation Areas. Members have visited Westfield Village and the Aldcliffe Canal corridor.

Address by John Donellan (Town Hall Director of Regeneration): Cottams Farm, Bailrigg, Carnforth, Midland Hotel Morecambe restoration, Heysham-M6 link.*

2006

Chairman (Martin Widden): LCS has been monitoring Centros Miller (Developer) proposals to develop the northern end of the canal corridor (route of the now abandoned Eastern Relief Road), developments on the Kingsway site, and Luneside East. Address by Andrew Dobson, Head of Planning and Building Control for the City: Greater emphasis on spatial planning by government via replacement of the County Plan by Regional Spatial Strategy was recognition of the effect of planning decisions on other aspects of life in the District. Lancaster was recognised as an historic city: the consequent growth of leisure activities might take some of the pressure off the honeypots.

Recent key developments within the District: Luneside East. Compulsory Purchase Order confirmed to allow development to proceed. Mixed use – commercial, housing. There will be an architectural competition. Access will remain a problem unless there is a further bridge across the Lune. Canal Corridor. Centros Miller proposals present a retail opportunity, but there remains the need for a better balance of land uses. (There

was no reference to the revised Marton Street Housing scheme which had been severely criticised by LCS). Kingsway. The part of the site planned for housing has been in limbo for some time, but early movement is anticipated. Dobson acknowledged that it was a sensitive site which required a landmark building. K Shoe Factory Site. Housing and a hotel have been proposed but there will be no decision until the Centros Miller proposals (above) have been resolved. Centros Miller were working on the traffic implications. Heysham-M6 Link – Northern Route. A number of outstanding issues remained, and the scheme might be called in by the Secretary of State. The Western option now had no chance of success. Morecambe Promenade. The proposals (centred on the restored Midland Hotel) promised exciting architecture. Unitary Authorities. Dobson spoke of a forthcoming government review and the possibility of a unitary authority for Morecambe Bay. This would enable the creation of one building control service for North Lancashire and South Cumbria.

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