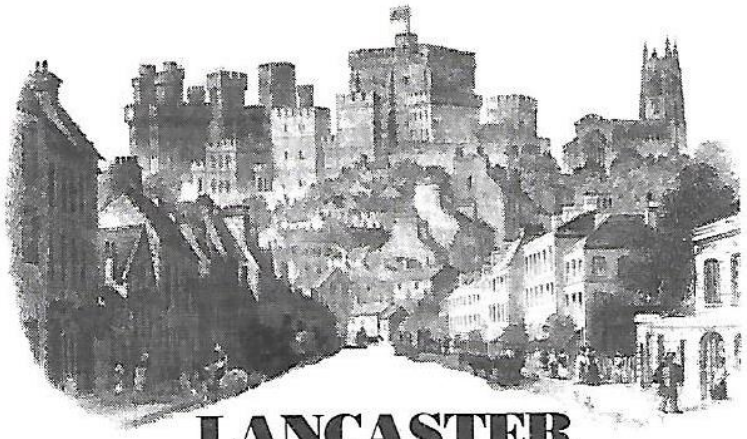


A HISTORY OF LANCASTER CIVIC SOCIETY

THE FIRST 40 YEARS

1967 – 2007

By Malcolm B Taylor
2009

Serialization – part 7

Territorial Boundaries

This may seem a superfluous title for an eponymous society, so a few words of explanation are thought necessary. The Society's sometime reluctance to expand its interests beyond the city boundary has not prevented a more elastic approach when the situation demands it. Indeed it is not true that the Society has never been prepared to look beyond the City boundary. As early as 1971 the committee expressed a wish that the Society might be a pivotal player in the formation of amenity bodies in the surrounding districts. It was resolved to ask Sir Frank Pearson to address the Society on the issue, although there is no record that he did so.

When the Society was formed, and, even before that for its predecessor, there would have been no reason to doubt that the then City boundary would also be the Society's boundary. It was to be an urban society with urban values about an urban environment. However, such an obvious logic cannot entirely define the part of the city which over the years has dominated the Society's attentions. This, in simple terms might be described as the city's historic centre – comprising largely the present Conservation Areas. But the boundaries of this area must be more fluid than a simple local government boundary or the Civic Amenities Act. We may perhaps start to come to terms with definitions by mentioning some buildings of great importance to Lancaster both visually and strategically which have largely escaped the Society's attentions. The **University** is the most obvious example, which because of its size and importance is debated in more detail below.

Perhaps the next most important example should be The **Lancaster Royal Infirmary.** For many years it was widely accepted that Paley and Austin's Victorian buildings with their non-vernacular Dutch gables had passed their sell by date, and their replacement and expansion into a large general hospital was inevitable. The Women's Unit, in a completely new architectural style, would be the first warning of what was to come. But the big statement would be the Centenary Building, by Tom Mellor, architecturally bland, perhaps, but no worse than many of its contemporaries. A motley cluster of other departments have filled the spaces. There were further new substantial buildings at the rear, not visible from Ashton Road. The latest building, the replaced Education Centre, single storey, pitched roof, greedy in its occupation of valuable land (there would seem to be little room left for further expansion), represents the latest feature of an architecturally unconnected ribbon development along a substantial stretch of Ashton Road. What, then is the purpose of this tour of architectural folly? Simply that the Society seemed unaware of what was happening. Protest might have achieved nothing, but it has had to come to terms with many failures in its history. Crown exemption from planning regulations for hospitals cannot be the whole answer.

White Cross is another example of a large and important mass of buildings about which there is little material in the Society's archives. The City has proved very resourceful at finding uses for its abandoned mills from the Victorian era – probably more successfully than many of the Lancashire mill towns. However, the re-birth of White Cross, headquarters of the Storey empire was not one of the City's initiatives, being developed by Lancashire Enterprises, a commercial arm of the County Council. This complex has been skilfully converted into the Open College, small manufacturing and commercial units and offices. There is (rarely) a new waterside pub. Although to some extent it is tucked away from the historic city, its frontages along the canal corridor and

Ashton Road add substantially to the civic scene. And a stroll between the buildings is a pleasant experience. Although, unlike the RLI it is a successfully integrated design solution for a group of buildings which could so easily have sunk into dereliction, like RLI it is surprising that the Society found it unnecessary to comment on the scheme.

While the outlying rural areas may have needed a civic focus, it would be a rather different focus, and attract different emphases and membership. That principle is as true today as it was then. Lunesdale was a neighbour having its own society, which in 1997 on the point of collapse, asked the Society to absorb it. The Society felt it had to refuse, as the interests of the two societies were not compatible. However, these arguments cannot apply to Morecambe, which was, and is an urban environment and a practically joined-on neighbour. So it is fair to ask why, at the outset, Morecambe was not included and continues to stay virtually excluded. There have also been numerous local initiatives in promoting civic awareness, to which the Society has responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm. One should not forget the Civic Trust itself acting as a focus for civic societies. Over the course of its history, the Society has responded to all of these connective interests, so it would be unfair to accuse it of insularity.

The Society has in fact reviewed the area of its attentions. In 1973 on the eve of government intention to merge Lancaster and Morecambe, the Society formally resolved not to extend its boundaries beyond the present city, but to keep in contact with adjoining societies. This policy was largely confirmed at an executive committee meeting in 2003. It was resolved then that the Society's geographical area of interest should be the LA1 postal district, but the Society would continue to comment on significant schemes in other parts of the Lancaster (local authority defined) District. With the exception of significant schemes, including the Design Awards, the Society would not involve itself in the civic affairs of the rural areas (on the slightly suspect grounds that they had parish councils, and the city did not).

Finally, and certainly not last, we come to Morecambe and the University. The university has played such a pivotal part in the City's and the Society's fortunes that it merits its own section. However, all of these contiguous interests must now be reviewed in detail.

The University of Lancaster (Gown *and* Town…?)

(The author is indebted to Marion McClintock, via her landmark book *University of Lancaster: Quest for Innovation (a history of the first ten years),* for much of the historical detail)

The urban North West grew and flourished during the industrial revolution, then slowly declined. Competition from the Far East's cheap labour in the manufacture of textiles after the second world war hastened collapse of its industrial base. The richer south, nearer to the growing trade with the continent, familiar with and able to benefit from the new services industries, appeared to have turned its back on the region. Lancaster, although on its northern edge and never primarily dependent on the textile industry, was also an industrial town and had suffered similar decline. By the 1960s, Williamsons, who had been the City's largest employers had been sold to Nairn and what was left of the manufacture of linoleum transferred to Kirkcaldy. Storeys, as the other major employer were similarly faltering. Waring and Gillow also sold out, and the manufacture of furniture in Lancaster ceased. Continued employment in health care in the area through the existence of the large mental health complexes at the Moor and Royal Albert

Hospital dropped as mental health care began to be dispersed within the community. Lancaster as the county's traditional centre for the dispensation of justice faltered, with the transfer of its Crown Court to a new building in Preston. However, it has (so far) managed to retain its Magistrate's Court. Fortunately the Royal Lancaster Infirmary has become the primary general hospital for the area, and St. Martins has become a nationally recognised teacher training college, soon to become the founding college of the University of Cumbria. Strenuous attempts were made to establish alternative industries at Lune Mills (ex Williamsons), White Lund Industrial Estate and White Cross (ex Storeys), but they could not replace the employment base which had existed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

This was the precarious position in the early 1960s, when a new university was proposed for the North West. Britain's universities can be recognised by the era in which they were founded. Oxford and Cambridge were medieval foundations, endowed by the church, royalty or the nobility. The next generation arose from the frenetic enterprise of the Victorians fuelled by the industrial revolution and their pride in education. They were very much local products, sometimes known as the "red brick" universities. The third generation (the "new" universities), one of which was Lancaster, were products of the Wilson government, the "white heat" of Britain's attempt to re-establish itself as one of the great nations. This wander through the history of tertiary education in Britain is not entirely irrelevant to this story, because it might help to explain how the City, University and Civic Society developed. Of great importance to these relationships was the fact that the universities started in the 60s were a total product of central government, which decided their academic base, how many there should be, what size they should be and where they should be built. They were almost entirely financed centrally. This base of patronage became of profound significance to the counties, towns and cities to which they were to become "attached". The host town was encouraged to associate itself with "its" university ("the University **of** Lancaster"), yet could have little reason to claim the affinity which had existed for the earlier foundations.

As early as 1947 Lancaster had lobbied central government for a university and Quernmore Park and the Royal Albert Hospital were considered as possible sites. However, it was not until 1960 that any serious chance arose. Government thought that regeneration of the North West would be helped if it had one of the new universities, so the lobbying began for a suitable location. It had to be some distance from Manchester and Liverpool who already had their universities. Lancashire County Council took a keen interest and Blackpool made a pre-emptive strike. They were told to keep quiet until other claimants were able to make their case. In the end, only Lancaster and Blackpool were serious contenders. Availability of Bailrigg Estate and its splendid topography probably tipped the balance: Blackpool's Stanley Park would have to come with some baggage. So Lancashire put forward Lancaster as the preferred site. In November, a statement to the House of Commons announced that Lancaster had won.

Many wanted a city university, arguing, probably with some truth that Bailrigg was just that bit too far from the City, that they would not integrate (this point was proved when, later it became clear that a three mile walk along the busy A6 was just too much for most people). One cannot imagine how constraining it would have been, not to mention the parking and traffic problems, if a city site had been chosen. Even the possibility of expanding into the canal (Eastern Relief Road) corridor would have been small beer compared with Bailrigg's space for expansion. Experience in other towns which have universities in their midst has shown that they have to expand into detached cells: there is rarely a centre. However, the effect on the civic scene of the decision not to have a city university remains a tantalising speculation to this day. The sadness of the early students who had started in the temporary accommodation in the City Centre, then had to be moved to the Bailrigg campus is another cause for regret.

The formative master plan by Shepheard and Epstein and the distinctive architectural discipline which they laid down set the shape of the rapidly expanding site until the end of the millennium.

Thus we come to interaction between University and the Society. If we are to debate the contribution made by the Society over the years, it is necessary to make clear at the outset that the University's master architects were appointed four years before the Society was formed and a great deal of the university we see now was either designed or built by 1967. But that still left a great deal of the University's building stock to be completed. Moreover some of the later buildings were by architects other than Shepheard and Epstein – buildings with the individual stamp of their creators or sponsors and sometimes controversially so. Some of these buildings departed from the master plan in both position and architectural treatment. So it is legitimate to explore the extent to which the Society would want to involve itself in the civic ambience of the campus compared with the interest it would have shown if the buildings had been proposed for the city centre (see the **Mitre House** and **Market Hall** accounts). Or, conversely, would the University want to involve the Society? In fact, there is little evidence to indicate any involvement at all up to the turn of the millennium. Even more surprisingly, not one of the Society's winter lecture programmes has included a subject even distantly related to the development of the University, until we come to the Vice Chancellor's presentation in 2005 on his thoughts for the next 40 years. One might even speculate that had there not been university staff on the society's committees from time to time, there would have been even less input. Was the quality of design and building so good as not to stimulate the Society into a wish to comment? Could the Society have been accused of a bunker mentality during this period when a new village practically touching the City's boundary was rapidly growing into a sizeable town? Or was the Society simply being true to its origins by limiting its activities to within the City boundary?

In seeking the answers to some of these questions, let us look in a little more detail at the evidence. McClintock describes in detail the many links which both City and University were initially anxious to set up, in creating the closeness they both desired. The Society seems to have had no place in these processes, although again, it may be necessary to repeat that it did not exist when these links were being created and to add that many of them seem to have withered in later years. It was stated in **Section B - Beginnings** that, unlike the Amenity Society which preceded the Society, there has never been any intention to have University "representation" within the Society's committees: members of the University who have joined the Society have always joined because as individuals they were interested in furthering the work of the Society. Until 2002 there is no record that they ever asked the Society to plead any specific case involving the University. It was not until 1977 that the University invited the Society to nominate a representative to the University Court. The Society has continued to be represented until the present. However, until 2002 there is very little on record in the committee's minutes on what transpired which might be relevant to the quality of the University's built environment. (A representative once noted that University Court was good for networking, but was not a decision making body). Neither is there any record over these years of the Society's involvement in the planning process.

Not until the University abandoned its masterplan for the campus in 2002 did the Society awake to the dangers of the current development strategy. The University was about to embark on a massive expansion of its student accommodation, and intended to demolish some of its founding buildings. The abandoned masterplan owed its vernacular to the loosely linked linear building plan, trademark white upper storeys and a mix of multi-function buildings. The new development, in a prominent position at the southernmost point of the campus was to create an

entirely new design language, with its repetitively bland tightly packed multi-storey residence blocks, unrelieved by buildings with other functions. The Society's committee reacted with alarm, noting that the University's 10 year estates plan proposed major demolition, new buildings, yet barely acknowledged the need for good design. Its representative on the University Court reminded the Court of the University's obligations to consult, and of Government commitment to good design. The Society's president followed this by a robustly worded letter to CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, formerly the Royal fine Art Commission) informing them of the University's intentions and the Society's response.

The Society then prepared a substantial report to the University, City Council, English Heritage and CABE on the University's proposals, criticizing the lack of a masterplan, that the University had not consulted its students, reminding them of the quality of the abandoned masterplan, an unimaginative design, proposals to use cheap and nasty materials. Representatives of the Society met the University, CABE supported the Society's report and went further by writing to the City, warning that if they approved the outline proposals, they would limit their power to influence the developing design. There is no evidence that either University or City were influenced at all by these protests. The development, now complete, presents a wall of bland and dominant residences to the traveller approaching from the south. Unless he took the trouble to drive round the entire campus, this view would be his lasting impression of the University of Lancaster.

It would be wrong, and a great disservice to the University to end its part of our story at this low point. The influence of the University on City and Society, of course extends much more deeply than the quality of its building stock. There is no doubt that the arrival of the University saved the City from what may have been a terminal decline in its civic presence. Not only has its contribution to the city finances made an enormous contribution to what prosperity the City has enjoyed, but traders have directly benefited. Thus, the street scene presents visitor and resident with shops and businesses able to respond to such initiatives as the Society's shop front design leaflet, a bustle and buzz with not too many empty shops.

The creation of a large base of home owners from University staff has had a beneficial effect on the City's housing stock. The students themselves have contributed to a better civic scene through University policy of a mix of off and on campus accommodation. Thus warehouses in Moor Lane have been splendidly converted (in fact for St Martin's College, for a time a part of the University), there are residences (Chancellor's Wharf overlooking the canal basin), and private initiative has built some high quality apartments.

Cultural life for the City's residents has been enriched by the many functions and events designed primarily for University life, but readily shared – notably concerts, exhibitions, public lectures, the Ruskin Library, the Nuffield Theatre, courses, sports and leisure activities.

Finally, of course are the University staff who have played such an active part in the life of the Society. It may be politically risky to say this, but members of a university tend to be those who actively seek to preserve the civic scene.
Their influence extends deeply into the Society's persona – many of the Society's current and past movers, liveliness of meetings, quality of debate when arguing a contentious point. The Society owes a great debt to the University, even though it may not forgive it the current building horrors.

Morecambe

The extent to which the Society should venture beyond the Lancaster and Morecambe College frontier post has always been a point of some contention within the membership. There are those who say that Morecambe needs the Society's support, yet it lacks the application, and there are others who say that there is nothing in Morecambe worth the Society's attention so best to keep away. As always with such polarised attitudes, the truth may lie elsewhere. We have to go back to the pre - 1974 political boundaries and remind ourselves that the Society was founded firmly on an urban environment, an historic city coming to terms with the remains of an industrial past. Morecambe was a seaside resort founded in another age. The Society drew its membership from the citizens of a City politically worlds away from Morecambe. Political fusion of the two towns was an arranged marriage, which to this day has not produced total harmony between the two. Such harmony as does exist as a basis for integration of civic values still eludes them and may explain why we still have a Lancaster Civic Society, rather than a Lancaster and Morecambe Civic Society

However, the Society's attitude to Morecambe is far from insular. Whenever a matter arises which needs the support of a civic society, the Society is there. It has supported and continues to support the fragile attempts to revive the Winter Gardens. As early as 1978, the Society opposed plans by the Town Hall to demolish the Winter Gardens. It has supported the massive sea defence scheme and the City's heroic efforts into getting some design quality into it. It has praised the now nationally recognised and witty TERN sea front project which has produced a pleasurable and visitor attractive promenade. Over the whole of the Midland Hotel's decline, the Society has lobbied the various interests to save this precious asset, and it is gratifying that Morecambe is on the threshold of the restoration of the one icon which might make re-invention of Morecambe possible.

Nor should the reader forget the Winter meetings programmes which have often featured Morecambe. There is also a noticeable Morecambe lobby at meetings, which is not slow to defend the town. So, watch this space?

Winter Lecture Programmes

Winter programmes of lectures and visual presentations have always been an important component of the Society's activities. The public and press are usually invited (there is now a nominal charge for the public, but meetings are valuable opportunities to publicise the Society's activities to the community and attract new members).

Committees have always aimed to provide one meeting per month during the autumn, winter and spring seasons. Appendix 3 vividly illustrates the wide-ranging topics which committees have thought appropriate.

The town hall banqueting chamber has always provided a splendid setting for meetings, always the right size, however few or many turn up. Attendance has fluctuated greatly, but in recent years, one has needed to arrive at least 20 minutes early to get a good seat. Question sessions after a presentation are nearly always lively, with rescue of the speaker by the chairman after prolonged questions often becoming necessary.

The chairman often has to conduct Society business at these meetings. Successive chairmen deserve praise for keeping it to a minimum and controlling the meetings well. The rather archaic ritual of the vote of thanks seems to be dying out, being replaced by the chairman's thanks.

The festive season has been recognised over the years by mince pies, mulled wine and quizzes. In fact the quiz has always been a popular device sometimes lighthearted, sometimes more intellectually challenging, sometimes a feature in an exhibition. In 1972 there was a quiz competition devised (as usual) by Edward Mason between the professionals comprising Tyson, Chard, Carter (not CF), Stansfield: and the amateurs- Mawson, Argles, Carter (Mrs). It was in two parts: recognising buildings, and deliberate mistakes. The professionals won. In recent years these have been set by Michael Quinton and Michael Shafe.

Appendix 3

Winter Lectures

NB: Source material for some of the lectures from 1968 to 1974 is patchy and may not be entirely reliable.

1968/69

Fielden, Prof Ward, JD Marshall, Fleetwood Hesketh

1969/70

Buildings of N. Lancashire: conflict old and new: R Booth (County Architect)

Newly found slides of old Lancaster: C Craig

Joiny symposium with LAWSA on Lancaster Canal: Biddle, Mawson, Marshall and Mrs Bunker

1970/71

Duchy of Lancaster: Mrs Purvis

Railways of Lancaster: Mr Pearsall

War or Peace – Architects and the Civic Trust: T Mellor

Pedestrians in Norwich: A Wood

1971/72

G Ashworth (Civic Trust)

Lancaster Churches: TW Pennington

Forum on Lancaster

Symposium on Roman Archaeology

1972/73

Quiz evening: Local schemes and buildings

Caring for a stately home: Robin Bagot (Levens Hall)

Exeter after Phoenix: Ewart Johns

Mitre Yard Scheme: William Whitfield

1973/4

Civic Trust film

Son et Lumiere: GK Seed (Building Design Partnership)

Members' slides evening
Meeting with other civic societies

Plasterwork/architecture: G Beard

1974/75

Slides of Old Lancaster: Edith Tyson, Andrew White

Are Relief Roads Necessary? (Public meeting)

Members' Slide Evening

The Work of the Landmark trust: Mr Dulake

Son et Lumiere – The Magic of Place: Kenneth Seed (building Design Partnership)

Urban Roads: Sid Tasker (Building Design Partnership)

1975/76

Forum: 5 speakers on Canal, Rivers and Sea: Eddie Hibberd, John Casson, Sam Baxter, Sam Sherry, Phillip Lathom

Members' Slide Evening: Michael Argles (USA and Canada), Ted Lindesay (National Trust Properties), Colin Stansfield (Greenside)

Tourist opportunities in Lancaster and Morecambe: John Wardle, Director NW Tourist Board

Conservation – Lancaster's problems and potential: Eric Hart (Deputy City Architect)

1976/77

Coffee evening – Lancaster Castle, Castle Hill – Exhibition: Castle Hill Cottages, Mitre House, "Controversial" Eastern Relief Road, Music Room, Film: Europa Nostra, Competition to identify local buildings.

Future of the Past – Victorian Society: Jane Fawcett

Archaeological Excavations on Castle Hill including uncovering Roman Bath House: R Bellis

Green Thoughts in a Green Shade: G Summerhayes (Parks and Cemeteries Officer)

Writer's View of the Town: David Pownall (came with Century Theatre in 1970), wrote local plays for Duke's Playhouse, including "Buck Ruxton", "Lile Jimmy Williamson"

Evolution of Lancaster's Street Pattern: Geoffrey Boulton

Rebuilding of the Music Room: Edward Mason

1977/78

Early Lancaster documents from the County records Office: K Bishop (County Archivist)

Work of Georgian Group – HJ Austin: P Browning

Passenger Traffic on the Lancaster Canal: Tom Mawson

A View from the County Hall: Roger Booth (County Architect)

1978/79

North Lancashire Vernacular Architecture Survey: Jonathan Ratter

Industrial Archaeology of Lancaster and District: Jim Price

Housing at Bath Mill: John Angell (architect for the scheme – BDP)

19th Century Lancaster: Elizabeth Roberts

Local Planning in Lancaster: Vic Crumley (Principal Planner, City Architect's Department)

1979/80

Behind the Scenes: Miss KA Watson

Lancaster's Public Buildings and Their Benefactors: W Hosfield

Conservation and Development: John Champness

A subject of his own choice: Edward Mason

1980/81

Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan: A Ingham, C Grimshaw

Friarage Development: Colin Stansfield

Achieving Good Urban Design: Keith Ingham

Lancaster Canal: David Slater

Son et Lumiere: Ken Seed (BDP)

Judges' Lodgings: R Langhorne, R Hasted

1981/82

Urban Housing in England 1000-1750 AD: D Leach

Employment in Lancaster: W Pearson, D Higgins, J Whitelegg

Daily Life in Preston and Lancaster at the turn of the century: Elizabeth Roberts

Shopping Centre Development in Historic Cities: Keith Scott (BDP)

Lancaster's Theatrical Heritage – two centuries of the Grand Theatre: Alan Betjeman

Lancaster's Urban Fringe: Charles Wilson

1982/83

Film Show and Coffee Evening

History of the Quaker Movement in Lancaster: Michael Mullett

Early Development of Lancaster: Stephen Penney

Lancaster Castle

Housing Policy

Steamtown and Steam on British Rail

Ashton Memorial Spectacular: Alistair Service and Ken Seed (son et Lumiere)

1983/84

Industrial Archaeology of the Iron Industry in the North West: Jim Price

Lancaster as a Port: Edith Tyson

Morecambe Bat: Cedric Robinson

Paley and Austin: T Waring Pennington

Local Plan: Vic Crumley

The Landmark Trust: Christopher Crook

Georgian Lancaster: John Champness

1984/85

The Moor Hospital in Victorian Times; J Walton

Son et Lumiere – Elgar's Worcester: Kenneth Seed

The Yards and Courts of Lancaster: Andrew White

Sharpe, Paley and Austin – A Neglected Architectural Practice: Jim Price

TH Mawson of Lancaster – Landscape Architect and Town Planner: D Mawson

Lancashire – the Civic Society Scene: Mrs K Fishwick

An Update on the Local Plan: Charles Wilson

1985/86

An Illustrated History of the Development of Railways in Lancaster and Morecambe: JM Strange

New Architecture in Old Cities: PB Jones

The Re-Utilisation of Historic Buildings: Charles Wilson

Lord Ashton: P Gooderson

A Slice of Lancaster: K Martin

Lancaster Projects: C Whitehead

1986/87

North West Buildings Preservation Trust: Norman Bilsborough

Restoration of York Minster: Ken Stevens

Country Houses of Lunesdale: John Martin Robinson

The Work of the National Trust: Winifred Briggs

The Gillows: Edith Tyson

1987/88

Lancashire Country Homes: John Champness

Carnforth Steamtown: Richard Hinchcliffe

Viking Museum, York: PV Addyman

Architecture of the Arts and Crafts in Northern England: Alan Jones

Lancaster Shopping Centre: David Cash (architect for the scheme – BDP)

1988/89

Lancaster Castle: A Grant

Eric Gill – sculptor, typographer: Jeremy Greenwood

The Settle and Carlisle Railway: P Robinson

Water in our Environment: NWWA

Vernacular Architecture Around Lancaster: Jonathan Ratter

Archaeological dig on the Brewery site: Jon Williams

1989/90

Shopping Development in Lancaster in the Sixties: E Alan Heppenstall (former City Architect)
The Arts and Crafts Movement in Cumbria: P Dalziel

History of Gas in Dolphinholme Worsted Mill: Sid Bennett

The Georgian Buildings of Lancaster: Andrew White

The Social History of Fish and Chips: John Walton

Lancaster Canal Past and Future: John Strange and Tony Horan

Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass: David O'Connor

1990/91

The Legacy of the Middle Ages in the North West: Angus Winchester

Cinema in the North West: Tony Moss

The Royal Mail in Lancaster: Peter Sherringham

Cobblestones and Pebble Mosaics: Maggie Howarth

Urban Design Ideas and Development: Tony Meats

The Barton Embroideries in Lancaster Priory: David and Dorothy Widdess

1991/92

Roman Lancaster: Rachel Newman

Public Health in Lancaster: JV Dyer

The Judges' Lodgings: Stephen Sartin

Trees in Lancaster: Alec Peel

Conservation in the City of Bath: David McLoughlin

The Work of the Landmark Trust: John Bucknell

1992/93

The History of the Manchester Ship Canal: AJ Dickenson

Buses Mean Business: T Knowles

Design in Historic Towns: Roy Robinson (BDP)
Lancashire Dialect: Bob Dobson

History of the Royal Albert Hospital: J Alston

A New History of Lancaster: Michael Mullett, Andrew White, Michael Winstanley, Steve Constantine

Lancashire Green Audit: David Taylor

Lancaster and the Slave Trade: Melinda Elder

1993/94

The Work of the Building Preservation Trust: Maria Perks

Light Rapid Transport Systems: Tony Young

The Works of the RSPB in Morecambe Bay: John Wilson

Green Buildings with the Middlewood Trust: Rod Everett

Tree Planting and Tree Wardens in Lancaster: John Keen

In Praise of Modern Architecture: Forum of Modern Architects

1994/95

The Life and Works of Paley and Austin: Jim Price

Gas Pipe Line Laying in the Lune Valley: David Oates

The Lancashire Witches: Michael Mullett

Old Maps of Lancashire: Ian Saunders

The Old Pubs of Lancaster: Keith and Jenny Greenhalgh

Environmental Problems & Their Effects on Lancaster: Murray McQuillan

1995/6

The West Coast Main-Line Railway: Denise Brown

The Revival of Gothic Architecture: Frank Roberts (BDP)

The Work of the Countryside Management Service: Ian Henderson

Courting in the Recent Past: Elizabeth Roberts

The New Local Plan for Lancaster: Reg Haslam

The History of Swarthmoor Hall and Ulverston: Stephen Deeming

1996/97
:

The Life and Work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Daniel Robbins

150 Years of the Furness Railway: Philip Grosse

The Work of the National Rivers Authority: Deryck Major

The Victorian Terraced Houses in Lancaster: Michael Winstanley, Andrew White

A Question of Balance (Lake District National Park): John Nash

The Life and Work of John Ruskin: Michael Wheeler

1997/98

Three Castles Near the Rhine: John Champness

Arts and Crafts Architecture in the North: Peter Williamson

Implementing Local Agenda 21: Gill Booker

The Kings Own Museum: Peter Donnelly

Conserving the Forest of Bowland: Don McKay

Blackwell - a New Future: Cherrie Trelogan

1998/99

Funeral Customs in the North West 1500-1900: Brenda Callaghan

A Development Surveyor's Approach to Conservation: David Taylor

Tourism in Lancaster – Impact and Demand: Ron Sands

The Archaeology of the Medieval Book – Thomas of Lancaster and Douai Psalter: Caroline Hull

Serving Your Community: speaker from North West Water

A History of Wallpaper Manufacture: George Niven

1999/2000

Port of Heysham: Graham Maclean

Morecambe Bay and the EU Bathing Water Directive – Too Many Eggs in the Sewage Basket?: Keith Jones

The Place of Modern Buildings in Historic Surroundings: Toby Johnson of McCormac, Jamieson Pritchard, architects of the Ruskin Library

Stained Glass in the Lancaster District – Medieval to Modern: Arthur Penn

Berlin – the Making of a Capital. A look at the Rebuilding of Germany's New Capital City : Jim Garbett

Heritage on Our Doorstep: Barbara Verhoef and members of the Heysham Heritage Association

2000/01

Lancaster City Centre Strategy: members of the City Council Planning Department

The Vernacular Architecture of Lunesdale: Jonathan Ratter

Bay City Expressway Proposal – a cure for Lancaster's traffic?: Jon Sear, John Whitelegg, David Bousfield

Gilllows of Lancaster: Susan Stuart

Urban Regeneration in Manchester: Eddy Smith

Lancaster Canal – Restoration of Northern Reaches: Reg Phillips

2001/02

The Morecambe Bay Partnership: Rona Arkle

The Work of the Landscape Architect Thomas Mawson - Some lessons for Lancaster: Derek Woolerton and Tom Mawson

The Carnforth Station Project: David Taylor

The Changing Role of English Heritage: Charles Wilson

Lancaster - the Town Transformed 1815-1914: Michael Winstanley

Arthur William Hunt, of Shrigley and Hunt of Lancaster: Bill Waters

Stained Glass Design (joint, with Historical Association)

2002/03

Disappearing Meeting Places in Lancaster: Geoffrey Boulton

The Work of the Churches Conservation Trust: Andrew Pike

New Architecture in Old Towns and Cities: Richard Murphy (joint with LAWSA)

Early History of the Roman Conquest of North Britain: David Shotter (joint with Lancaster Historical Association)

Life and Legacy of Sir Titus Salt: Maria Glot

The City of Preston: at last, or too soon?: John Champness

2003/04

Public Art in Urban Spaces: Maggie Howarth

Winter Gardens Morecambe: Evelyn Archer, Stephen Gardner

Vernacular Architecture in the North West: Nigel Morgan

City of Liverpool: Andrea Titterington

Energy Supplies in the 21st Century: Bob Chaplin, Martin Widden

Flood Prevention Schemes in Morecambe: Bob McKittrick

2004/05

History of Fishing in Morecambe Bay: Jack Manning

Urban Splash and the Midland Hotel: Paul Jones

Old Glass Slides of Sunderland Point: Peter Gilchrist

Lancaster's Current and Future Employment and Business Prospects: Michael Fisher

Blackpool: Regeneration in a Cold Climate: Reg Haslam

Lancaster University in the Next 40 Years: Prof. Paul Wellings (Vice-Chancellor)

2005-06

Lancaster Stained Glass Industry: Margaret Edwards

The Causes and Impacts on Neighbourhood Decline: Carol McKenzie

The Misericords of Lancaster Priory: "Wooden stories telling lives": John Dickinson

Pearson Architecture of Lancaster to 1939: Michael Pearson

The New North-Lancashire Pevsner: Clare Hartwell and Matthew Hyde

Thomas Harrison "of Chester": John Champness

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The Vikings of North West England: Ben Edwards

Canal Corridor Development: David Lewis (Centros Miller), Mark Andrew (architect)

The Lancaster Canal and its influence on Lancaster City: Derrick Hudson

26 Church Street (formerly the Conservative Club): John Regan

9 Castle Hill

Ever since its formation, the Society has benefited from the generosity of its friends for places where meetings could be held: as will be seen elsewhere, the City Council have been the major benefactor, offering the magnificent banqueting chamber in the Town Hall where nearly all meetings for members have taken place. St John's Church is another popular venue, particularly for AGMs. But such grand spaces are hardly suitable for the smaller meetings, chiefly for the committee. However, even from the early days, committees sought a more permanent base. Whether it should be a headquarters, a pied à terre, a door with a carefully designed sign proclaiming a physical presence in the City, was not articulated. But a place for exhibitions and smaller meetings, in particular committee meetings, was considered desirable and within reach.

A tempting opportunity arose in 1975. The Castle Hill cottages were being cleaned up under the City's Castle Hill Restoration Scheme. The Society approached the City Architect to ask if space for a permanent display could be found within a restored cottage. The City Architect was sympathetic to the idea of display space, but not in Castle Hill. He had in mind space in an "Architectural Interpretation Centre", an idea which he was developing. However, he noted the Society's continued interest in Castle Hill. This was fortunate, since the interpretation centre idea died, and there could hardly have been a better site for the Society than one of the City's most historical areas, facing the Castle and close to the Tourist Information Office.

Negotiation with the City continued until 1979. In 1977, the Society, on hearing that the City had agreed in principle to grant a tenancy for the cellar of a Georgian town house, carried out detailed costings on electrics, lighting, heating, floor coverings, furniture and insurance. During this period, the majority of the committee supported the venture, but with varying degrees of enthusiasm. It was argued by some members that the Society might have too few resources, both financial and human to sustain the long term commitment that would be required. Membership was falling. Nevertheless, when the time came for a decision the committee resolved by 9 votes to 3 to take a three years' lease, commencing November 1979. Fortunately, the City agreed to waive the full rental and rates.

9 Castle Hill was formally opened by the Mayor in 1980. It was described in the local press as the Society's headquarters and hopes were expressed that it might become a heritage centre. Over the period it was open, several exhibitions were mounted and kindred societies held meetings. Sadly, however, even at its opening, its future was in doubt. Voices of the minority opposition became louder. As Society membership fell, so did its income. The treasurer had to warn the committee that he was not happy. Then there was the damp which the City, as freeholder was never able to cure. Nevertheless, it struggled on for 5 years, being used principally for chilly, uncomfortable and damp committee meetings, the members often looking back fondly to the times when meetings were held in well-lit, warm rooms which someone else maintained.

The lease was finally terminated in July 1986.

National Heritage Weekends

For several years now, the Civic Trust has arranged an annual programme of nationwide visits by the public to buildings and other structures of civic, historical or architectural interest, which are not normally open to the public. This takes place over a weekend in the autumn, and has proved very popular with the public. Each local authority arranges the local itineraries and publicity, normally through its tourist information centre. In Lancaster, the programme has been augmented by themed visits to buildings chosen by the Society. This initiative has resulted in Lancaster being able to boast that for its size, the number of buildings it opens exceeds anywhere else in the county.

Described below are some of the themes the Society has chosen and the buildings it has arranged to be open. The Society also arranged for its own volunteer stewards to be present to answer questions and maintain the security of a building where the owner needs such help. “Brochure” in the following review indicates where the Society issued a brochure or leaflets describing the background to the themes, and history of each building open.

1994 - The Society’s first Heritage Day

The Music Room, the Conservative Club, Church Street, the Rope Walk, Bulk Road.

1995 - Several Buildings and a Privy

Brochure. Cottage Museum Castle Hill, Gazebo Grey Court St Mary’s Parade, Shire Hall Lancaster Castle, Friends’ Meeting House Meeting House Lane, Bell Tower Priory Church and the 4-seater privy at 20 Castle Park

1996 - Memorial Art

Brochure. An ambitious programme primarily to the city’s cemeteries: Quernmore Road (guided tours), Scotforth and Skerton, Moorside Quaker Burial Ground, RC Cathedral Burial Ground. The itinerary also included Lord Ashton interpreting his Victorian monument in Dalton Square, Penny’s Almshouses King Street, Trinity URC Chapel, Quaker Meeting House, Westfield Village, Priory Church, St Lukes Church, St John’s Church. A day requiring some stamina, but helped by a mini bus circuit also provided by the Society

1997 - Lancaster Canal

Brochure. The Society manned an exhibition in the restored Packet Boathouse, Aldcliffe Road, and arranged towing path walks to Bath Mill housing.

1998 - Town Hall, the Board Room, Lancaster Moor Hospital

(Town Hall tours arranged by City, part stewarded by the Society). Notes: Moor Hospital

1999 - Lancaster's Legal Heritage

Brochure: Old Magistrates' Court and Cells (Lancaster Town Hall), the new Magistrates' Courts (Lancaster Courthouse), Lancaster Police Station, the Judges' Lodgings, 16 Castle Park (the offices of a solicitor)

2000 - Lancaster's Theatres and Old Cinema Sites

Grand Theatre and Duke's Playhouse. Guided walks to cinema sites

2001 - Lord Ashton's Buildings

Brochure: Parkfield Greaves, Ryelands House, Ashton Hall, Williamson Park and Ashton Memorial, Lancaster Town Hall, Victoria Memorial, Lune Mills
2003 - Stained Glass Shrigley and Hunt studio and "Factory", Castle Hill

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