

CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

Parmoor House, 13 Lypiatt Terrace, Cheltenham GL50 2SX



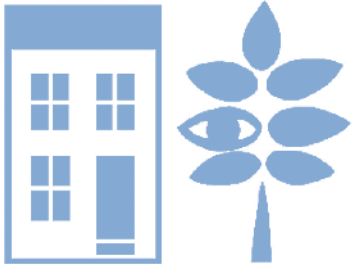
NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2013



The Wilson Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

www.cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

For the conservation of the architectural and historical features of the town and its immediate surroundings and the promotion of high standards of design in new developments. Affiliated to Civic Voice. Registered Charity No. 234749



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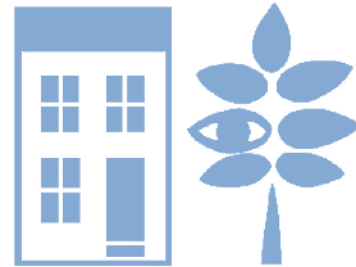
Front Cover



The Wilson Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

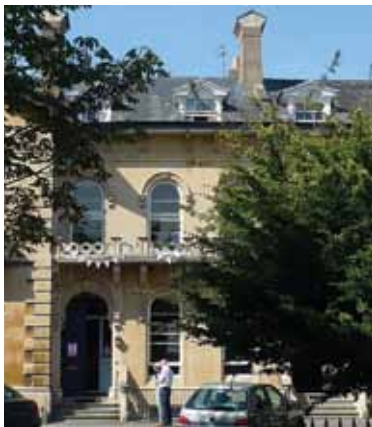
On 5 October 2013, Cheltenham's Mayor, Cllr Wendy Flynn opened the newly named **The Wilson** Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum following a £6 million major new build and fit-out development.

Designed by architects Berman Guedes Stretton, winners of the RIBA architectural competition, the four new floors will house a gallery dedicated to the art gallery & museum's extensive fine art collection, space to discover more about local heroes, including Edward Wilson, a re-interpreted Arts and Crafts gallery, and two temporary exhibition galleries. The new development will also include the Tourist Information Centre and a ground floor café-bistro. The Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen now has a retail outlet, **Guild at 51**, and the art gallery & museum will be working with the University of Gloucestershire in co-hosting national touring shows in the new galleries.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Looking to the Future



Parmoor House

In recent months, the Executive Committee has been actively engaged on a number of fronts. It has been our policy, every ten years or so, to review the Society's activities and assess our actual performance in relation to our aims and aspirations, primarily as laid out in the constitution. This very useful exercise has been embarked upon once more and two sub-groups have been set up to undertake the task. All members will have received a questionnaire, which I hope you will have been able to complete and return - your input is invaluable. As part of this exercise we are bound to assess whether we are fulfilling our obligations, not only as laid out in our constitution but also to Lord Parmoor, who bequeathed 13 Lypiatt Terrace to us. Parmoor House is a magnificent architectural asset but nevertheless, we cannot take it for granted that we will always be able to support it and operate in a manner that addresses our aims and obligations. Hence the question *'should we sell Parmoor House?'* However, I would stress that at present there is no cause for concern and we will be sharing the outcome of our various deliberations with you in due course.

Also under review is the future of the Civic Awards Scheme which up until now we have managed for Cheltenham Borough Council. We are currently engaged in discussions with Senior Council Officers as to how the scheme should be updated and restructured. Your support in attending both the awards ceremony and lecture are invaluable to us.

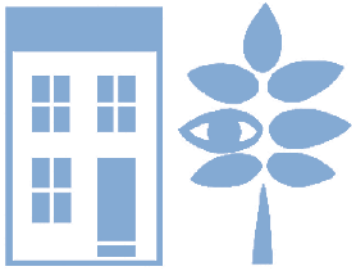
Joint Core Strategy

Yet another consultation over the draft proposals for a joint core strategy to provide for the projected housing needs within the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury area. Your Executive Committee will be revisiting their previous comments and submitting a refreshed statement. As you are no doubt aware, until all differences are ironed out between the three authorities and an agreement reached, signed and sealed, developers will seize every opportunity to gain permission to develop as and where they think fit; particularly vulnerable being green field areas where the profits are greater. So the sooner we have a binding strategy the better. John Henry, Planning Forum Chairman, fully explains the significance of the Joint Core Strategy in his Planning Report and I would urge you to study his article and respond.

North Place/Portland Street Development

It was disappointing to learn of Skanska's withdrawal from the North Place/Portland Street development, which is scheduled to start by the end of the year. Skanska were to develop the housing element of the project, so this now leaves the proposed Morrisons supermarket and multi storey car park that will occupy most of the North Place site. Although we campaigned for a higher standard of architecture than Skanska planned, this news gives us cause for concern and it is to be hoped that another developer will take up the baton without too much delay. As the site is being sold on with full planning permission, this may not prove an opportunity to address the poorer elements of the existing scheme, but if the opportunity arises, our planning forum will press for design improvements.





Welcome Addition to the Executive Committee

I am pleased to report that we have recently co-opted Lloyd Surgenor onto the Executive Committee. Lloyd is known to many of you as a long serving Borough Councillor who has devoted a great deal of his life to the wellbeing of his home town and was for many years both a stalwart and Chairman of the Borough Planning Committee. I am certain that his enthusiasm and knowledge will be a great asset to the Society.

Upgrading Parmoor House

Over recent years the House Committee, now under the excellent leadership of Bob Keevil, has been carrying out a programme of repairing, upgrading and redecorating Parmoor House. I am pleased to

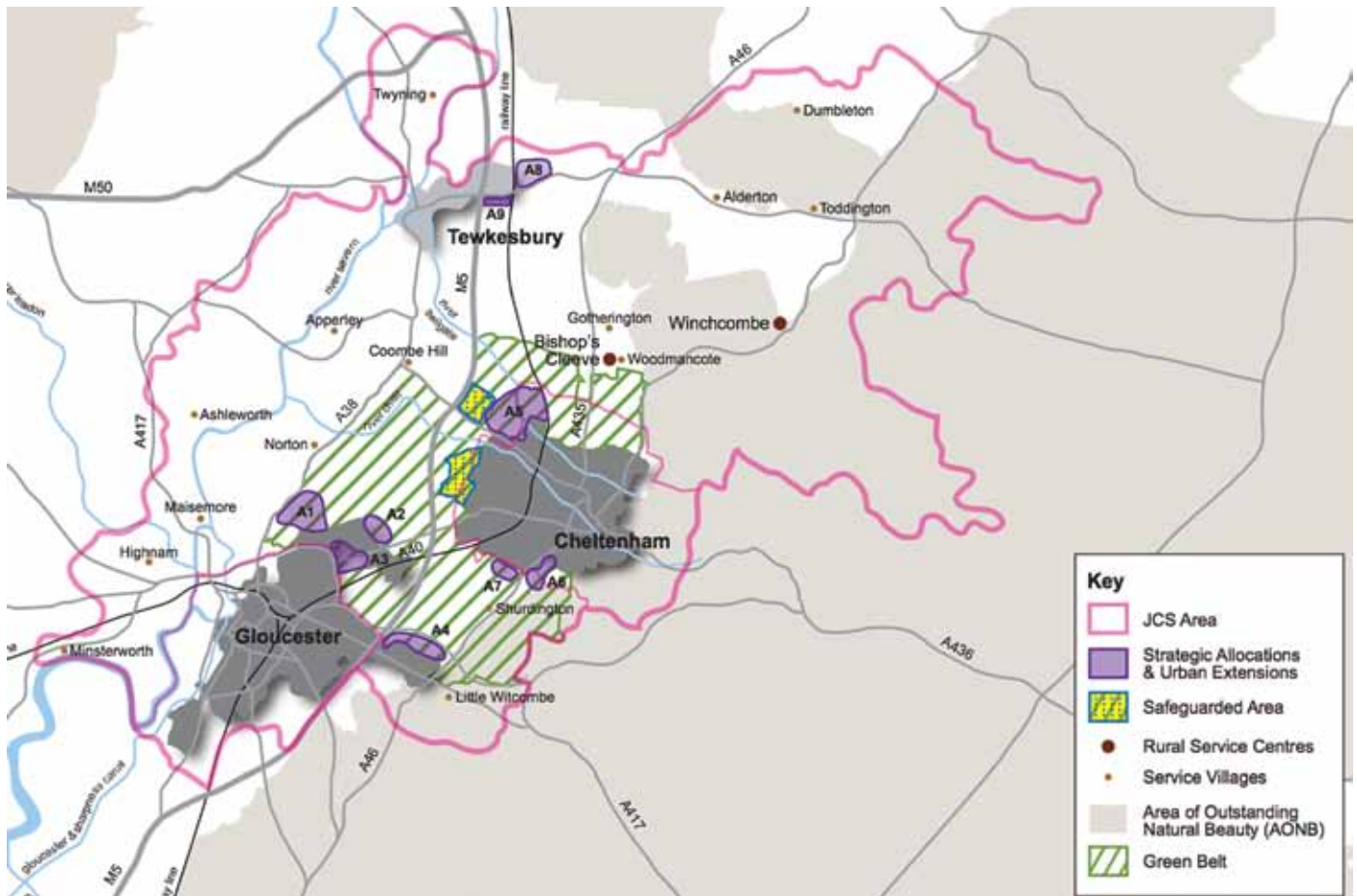
relate that the latest project to bring the property in line with current fire regulations is now complete.

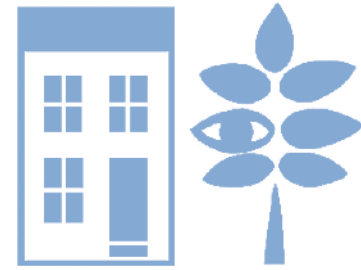
2014 Programme

Executive Member Lesley Whittall has taken on the challenging role of Programme Secretary, a role to which she is no stranger. Lesley has been hard at work putting together next year's programme of lectures and events and the fruits of her labours are to be found included in this mailing. She has produced a stimulating programme which I hope you will all do your very best to support. Put the dates in your diaries without delay!

Douglas S Ogle

Joint Core Strategy Proposals Plan





PLANNING FORUM: JOINT CORE STRATEGY

There have been few major schemes since the last Newsletter, but the most important planning event affecting Cheltenham – and Gloucestershire as a whole – is the public consultation on the Joint Core Strategy. It would be helpful to outline where we are on this, and how the Civic Society proposes to respond.

There has been discussion of the Joint Core Strategy before – most recently in 2012, but for new readers it may be helpful to say that the JCS is a partnership between Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils, and Gloucester City Council, supported by the County Council. It is designed to set out development needs for the County until 2031. It is sensible for the Councils to work together, as the employment and housing provision and associated infrastructure serves the County as a whole. In Cheltenham it is notable that the majority of land identified for future housing development is in Tewkesbury Borough.

The process of getting an accepted strategy is lengthy, and involves working out alternative options and having a public consultation on those options. This happened in 2012, following which the Councils prepared the strategy that is the subject of this public consultation ending on 13 December. The next stage is for the Councils to submit the strategy to central government, after which there will be a hearing by a planning inspector. The inspector will be required to satisfy himself on behalf of the Secretary of State that the proposals are realistic. This means that assumptions about housing numbers must fit with national projections of population growth. Once the strategy is agreed, it will become much more difficult for development to take place in areas not identified for development. As far as Cheltenham is concerned, this will help to protect areas such as Hunting Butts near the Racecourse, considered to be of great landscape value and not suitable for housing.

The Civic Society commented on the options in 2012. In our view there is a need for housing and employment growth in Cheltenham, otherwise it runs the risk of becoming a geriatric dormitory

town, with young people priced out of the area. We agree that the population growth should be concentrated in the three major conurbations, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury.

A lot of the comments on the JCS questioned the population assumptions, and were concerned about the effect on the green belt of putting extra housing there. In response to these concerns, the JCS housing projections for the County have been reduced from 44,000 to just over 33,000 in the current consultation draft. About 10,000 of these would be in or around Cheltenham. The major new areas of housing and employment are shown on the map (opposite). There are three areas around Cheltenham – Uckington (nearly 5,000 houses), and Leckhampton (of which the Kidnapper's Lane planning application is a part) and Up Hatherley Way near Morrisons (nearly 2,000 houses altogether). This is additional to what can be built by higher density development in the town on brownfield sites, etc.

The Executive Committee of the Civic Society will be commenting on behalf of the Society before the deadline of 13 December. If you have any comments please them send to planning@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk, or submit them directly.

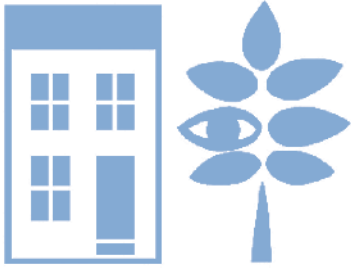
Full details of the consultation documents can be found at www.gct-jcs.org

John Henry

PARMOOR HOUSE

Three well-equipped rooms at Parmoor House are available for private hire.

For bookings, please contact the House Manager on 01242 524632 or email: parmoor@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

This year was another great success for Heritage Open Days in Cheltenham with around 2500 visits to over 30 open buildings, 8 different walks and a couple of fascinating talks over the 4 days from 12 to 15 September. Over the last 3 years the event has grown 4 or 5 fold with both the financial support and active involvement of the Civic Society.

The event was organised by a committee of people from organisations across the town, meeting at the Municipal Offices with assistance and advice from the Conservation and Planning departments and Cheltenham Tourism, and most importantly supported by a great team of enthusiastic volunteers.



Normandy House



St Christopher's Church, Warden Hill

John Dower House, Normandy House, the Municipal Offices, St Christopher's Church, Warden Hill and St Mary Magdalene Church, Elmstone Hardwick were some of the new buildings joining the event this year. Even the Town Crier joined in to help promote the event.

The buildings, walks and talks represented the whole history of the town from its medieval roots through to the present day, with contributions from visitors and volunteers alike. Whilst many of the visitors were local we did have many from all parts of the UK, Europe and Canada with lots of lovely comments about the buildings and events. Judging by the comments back from the buildings' and events' volunteers everyone found it rewarding and great fun.

And now we are thinking about next year, 11 to 14 September 2014, when we would like to reach more people and in particular, stimulate interest in the younger people of the town in their heritage. We have put in a successful bid for £1,000 to the Community Pride fund run by CBC, and we will look at new ways to interest and involve residents and visitors alike in the 2014 event. We hope that more of you will join us next year, perhaps to help us either with a couple of hours on the day or just some ideas so that we can make this an even greater success.

Stephen Clarke





CIVIC SOCIETY WALKS

Visitors to Cheltenham Music Festival aren't here just to listen to music, it seems. They like to limber up between music events and refresh their minds, which is the reason why the Civic Society's guided walks are increasing in popularity. Inaugurated in 2011 the number of walks has now grown to four, with Roger Woodley and Roger Jones sharing the honours evenly.

Roger Woodley takes an architectural perspective on his walks. In his walk entitled *"The Most Elegant Town in the Kingdom"* (a quote from George Rowe), he visited buildings in the town centre mentioned in Rowe's 19th century guidebook.

His second walk took the form of a promenade from the Town Hall via Holst House and Pittville Gates to Pittville Pump Room, *"the great pillar of Cheltenham's fashionable society"* - to quote from George Rowe again. Roger was intrigued to discover that most of the participants on his walks were Cheltenham residents rather than outsiders, and recalls that in the past people had joined the Civic Society as a result of their experiences on Music Festival walks.

Roger Jones' walks normally concentrate on historical people and events. This year the Festival coincided with two important international dates: American Independence Day and Bastille Day. The 4 July walk focused on the United States and in particular the presence of the US Army in Cheltenham during the Second World War. The presence of US troops in town so alarmed Miss Popham, Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, that she confronted the soldiers at the Queen's Hotel and warned them not to speak to her girls. Coincidentally we had a former CLC pupil in the group who had known Miss Popham - but long after the war was over - and confirmed she was a force to be reckoned with.

The "French Connection" walk was biased towards Napoleonic times when several exiled French aristocrats visited the town to enjoy the benefits of the spa; three of them were to become future kings of France. A number of important French prisoners of war including General Lefebvre had been billeted in Cheltenham but managed to escape. On the other

hand, another soldier in Napoleon's army, Nicolas Philippe Constant Caffieri, escaped from France to Cheltenham, and after teaching French in the town for some years eventually set up as a wine merchant. His grandson Hector became a well-known English landscape painter.

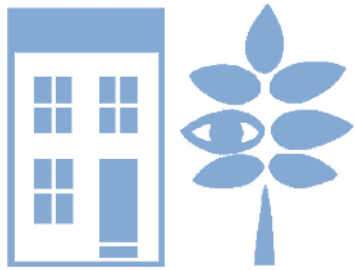
One of the 2012 Music Festival walks - around Lansdown and Montpellier - was repeated as part of the Society's contribution to the 2013 Heritage Open Days. This proved a revelation to a former Dowty employee who did not expect to find Sir George's first factory in Lansdown Terrace Lane. Walkers had a chance to admire one of the Society's latest plaques to the formidable clergyman Francis Close and view the spot where George III resided when visiting the town in 1788. Alas, Fauconburg Lodge no longer exists having been replaced by Sidney Lodge, one of the residences of Cheltenham Ladies' College.



Roger Jones Outside St Gregory's Church

Next year will be the 70th Cheltenham Music Festival and the organisers are keen to have more guided walks with a particular emphasis on Gustav Holst and Cheltenham in 1945 when the first Festival took place. Given the comparative youth of the tour leaders, they would be pleased to hear from CCS members of riper years who were living in Cheltenham in 1945 and can provide interesting snippets on how Cheltenham looked then. Please contact rogerjones@phonecoop.coop with any information you may have.

Roger Woodley and Roger Jones



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

The architecture of many recent developments has been, to put it kindly, disappointing. The brief for the Portland Street/North Place Development specified *"an exemplar of sustainable development and design quality in both building form and street scene"*, but the reality was somewhat less in terms of design quality and street scene, despite protestations by the Civic Society and the Architects Panel. To quote John Henry's comments from the Planning Forum, it was *"a missed opportunity"*. The long awaited redevelopment of the Haines and Strange and Odeon sites retreated to "safe ground" in the form of pastiche Regency.

This all shows a distinct lack of imagination in a town whose greatest asset, its buildings set in parks and gardens, results from the great self confidence and ambition of nineteenth century design by private developers, and is now known for its creative talent, its rich cultural life and home to a Design Festival.

What can we do? It was with all this in mind that a meeting was arranged between the Cheltenham Development Taskforce, the Civic Society, the Architects Panel and the Planners from CBC, with Graham

Garbutt of the Taskforce in the chair, to explore how the current opportunities can leave a 21st century legacy that our descendants will be proud of. There was a lot of meeting of minds and a number of ideas to develop and explore. How can we achieve a better sense of place? Will involving the planners at an earlier stage provide better direction? Can we lift the design aspirations of developers? Can we encourage and educate the Planning Committee members to demand better design? There are lots of good intentions, and as a member of the Taskforce I know the taskforce will take up these questions. Only time will tell how effective we are in significantly improving future schemes.

As guardians of Cheltenham's fine architecture, we must not be complacent. We must use all opportunities to raise the game on design across all new developments both in the town centre and around the town whether it be housing or commercial development. It is about what we build in the future and whether that enhances or dilutes our greatest asset and its impact on the quality of life of our future citizens.

Stephen Clarke

Portland Street/North Street Proposed Development





CHRISTCHURCH: A Talk by Roger Brown

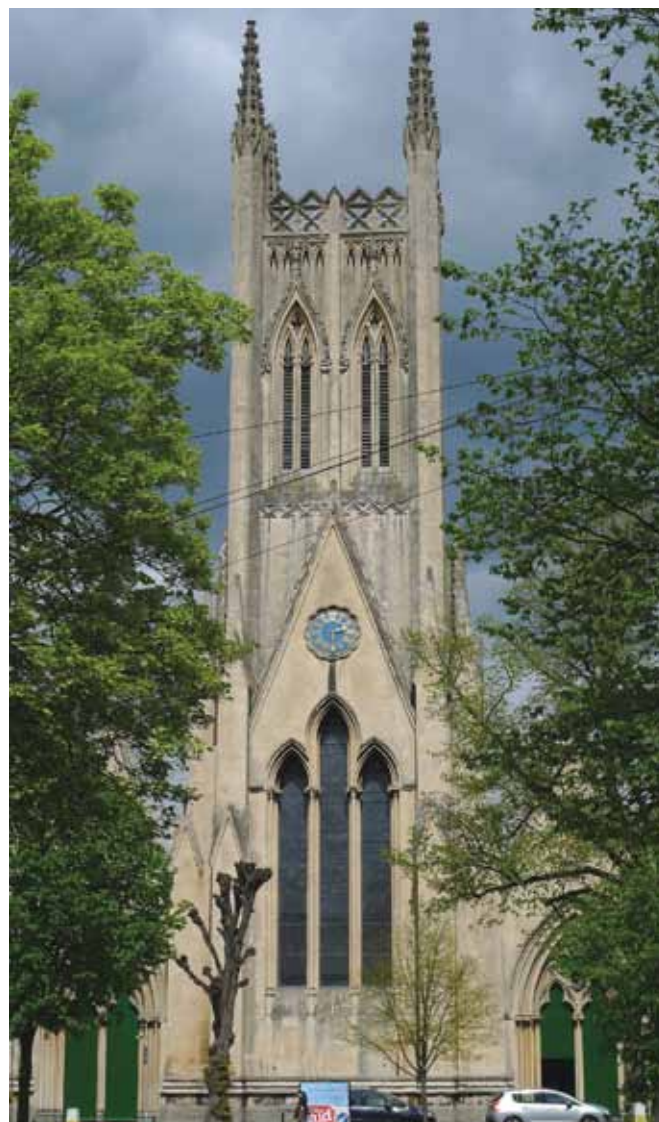
We all know the church. We've all caught sight of it. Some of us no doubt worship in it. Others have been in it on HODs or for some event. But I can't help wondering if many of us have looked carefully enough at its artwork. 'Best-kept secret' is a terrible cliché – but it fits this remarkable Cheltenham building quite well.

There's a great deal more to the Christchurch than you might suppose, as Roger Brown explained in his fascinating talk. The exterior is compelling enough, visible from many points around the town, and, from a distance, it appears to be of cathedral-like proportions. Yet when you get close to it, the tower and facades are almost bizarrely pointed and vertiginous.

Christchurch was part of the great ecclesiastical growth of Victorian Cheltenham, stimulated especially by the Rev Francis Close. It was the only church designed by the Jerrard Brothers, the designers of the Lansdown estate, the Queens Hotel and Montpellier Arcade and Walk. Perhaps that's why it looks so distinct: they hadn't much experience of church-building. Pugin wouldn't have approved - at all.

But the interior was deliberately cavernous, with seats for over 2000 people, mostly renting pews, but with nearly 500 free. Box after box, as Roger's excellent old photographs showed, where huge numbers would sit and hear the Word. But after 1856, when Close departed for Carlisle on promotion, the mood changed. Out with evangelism and in with ecclesiology. Out with the box pews and the three-decker pulpit, and in with benches, candles, incense and steps up to the altar.

And not just steps, in the end, but an added basilica with a great marble reredos, marble casing to the pillars and marble for the communion rail, wrought iron screens behind the choir. Above all, literally, a jaw-dropping display of brilliant tempera frescoes over the altar and round the roof of the apse. These last were the work of William Blake Richmond, London artist and portrait painter, and later designer of the mosaics in the chancel and dome of St Paul's Cathedral, assisted by J Eadie Read, whose dream-like images can be seen in many other places in the town.

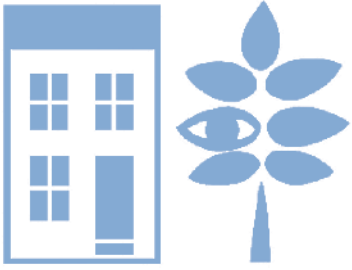


Christchurch, Malvern Road

Richmond was recruited for the Cheltenham job by a notable character I knew nothing about until Roger's talk: Professor J H Middleton, son of John Middleton, architect of All Saints and several of our Victorian churches, but very much his own man - he went to Iceland with William Morris and became professor at the Slade.

It was an enlightening evening - an absorbing talk with excellent illustrations. We were inspired! Now go and take another look for yourselves at Christchurch's knock-out interior.

Roger Woodley



NEWS

New Chairman of Civic Voice



Freddie Gick

Executive Member, Freddie Gick, has been appointed Chairman of Civic Voice, the national organization for the country's 500 civic societies with over 75,000 members. A former Chairman of the Birmingham Civic Society, he has been involved in the movement for the past 17 years. We wish Freddie well in his new and challenging role.

Membership Survey

Civic Society members will have received a questionnaire inviting their views on the future of the Society. The exercise has been part of a wider enquiry, agreed by the Executive Committee, to clarify the Society's forward plans. The response from the membership has been excellent. We received over 50 completed questionnaires and 13 sets of further comments, which is tremendously good from a membership of 230 individuals. It is proof of a high level of interest in the Society's future.

The small group set up by the Executive to look after this study (Freddie Gick, Diane Lewis, Lesley Whittal and Roger Woodley) are really grateful for the thought members have given to the questions asked, and the quality of the answers received. The Society has no excuse whatsoever, for the foreseeable future, for saying it is unclear what its members feel.

Developing a clear view of the way forward, however, will require careful analysis of the questionnaires, in conjunction with the other enquiries being conducted. A full report will then be prepared for the Executive Committee. The outcomes should be ready for communication in the New Year, and any changes will probably be announced at the AGM in March.

Roger Woodley

Richard Smith

On a sad note, with the sudden and untimely death of Richard Smith, the Society has lost an ardent supporter and regular attendee of events over a good many years. Richard worked tirelessly for a number of Cheltenham's Arts organisations, particularly the Holst Birthplace Trust and The Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, and his enthusiasm, knowledge and wisdom will be sorely missed. We offer our condolences to Catriona.

Phil Newcombe



A sunny August afternoon saw a small group of his Civic Society colleagues paying their respects to the late Phil Newcombe and enjoying the bench, recently placed near the bandstand in Montpellier Gardens, honouring his many years of service to the Society.

From left to right: Sheila Chaplin, Roger Woodley, Roger Jones, Douglas Ogle, Bob Keevil & John Henry.





PATERSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

This year's Paterson Memorial Lecture at Christchurch, Tuesday 3 December, will be given by **Sarah Staniforth**, Director of Museums and Collections, National Trust, entitled *Bringing Historic Properties to Life*.



Sarah Staniforth

Sarah has written and lectured extensively on preventive conservation for collections in museums and historic houses, and some of this work is recorded and published in the *National Trust Manual of Housekeeping*, 2006 (revised 2011). Sarah studied painting conservation at the Courtauld Institute of Art and worked at the National Gallery before joining the National Trust. Not to be missed, this will undoubtedly prove to be an interesting and popular talk.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The current membership year ends on 31 December and subscriptions therefore fall due on 1 January 2014. [A membership renewal form for 2014 is enclosed with this Newsletter.](#) If you already pay by Standing Order then you do not need to do anything. But, if you pay by cheque, or wish to change your method of payment to a Standing Order, then please return the enclosed form to the Membership Secretary.

Please let us have details of changes to your postal address, telephone no. or email address, so that we can send out reminders of Society events and news of other events that may be of interest to members, but cannot always be included in the Newsletter.

We warmly welcome to the Society Mr & Mrs Lloyd Surgenor, Mr Stephen Lea and Mrs Debra Lea, Mrs Monica Long and Dr Frances Wilson-Copp.

Roger Brown, Membership Secretary

2014 PROGRAMME

Taking on the enjoyable task of arranging the programme for 2014 has been a little daunting following in Sheila Chaplin's very capable footsteps, but I hope you will find the enclosed programme interesting and entertaining. In addition to regular events such as the Winter and Summer Parties, AGM and Heritage open Days, we have some interesting speakers and trips planned for 2014.

In April, Tom Dyckhoff, architecture and design critic for the BBC's Culture Show, will present the Civic Awards and give the Awards Lecture. For those with an engineering bent, June's talk by Liz Payne of the Stroud Canal Restoration Trust will be a fascinating insight into the work of the trust. And in July, Geoffrey Rowe, Chief Executive, Everyman Theatre, will enlighten us on the History & Restoration of our wonderfully elegant theatre.

My thanks to the programme group, Roger Brown, Roger Jones, Roger Woodley, and Chris Wilton for their help in putting together the programme.

Lesley Whittal

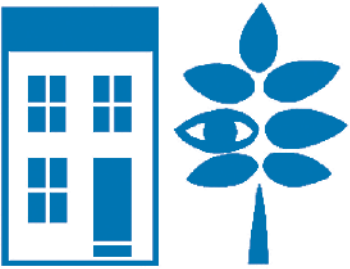
CIVIC AWARDS



Tivoli Villas, Andover Road

The closing date for Civic Award Nominations has now passed. The assessment process has begun and the Awards Adjudication Panel will convene early in 2014 to visit each project and make a decision. A surprising number of new buildings feature in this year's list of nominations. Two important developments are the extension to the Art Gallery & Museum and the High Street entrance to the Regent Arcade. Quirker projects include Tivoli Villas in Andover Road.

Diane Lewis



FORTHCOMING CIVIC SOCIETY EVENTS

Tuesday 3 December 2013 – 7.30pm

**Paterson Memorial Lecture -
Christ Church, Malvern Road**

Sarah Staniforth, Director of Museums and Collections, National Trust will give a talk entitled 'Bringing Historic Properties to Life'.

Admission on the door £5 including a glass of wine.

Sunday 19 January 2014 – 12 noon to 2.00pm

Winter Party – Parmoor House

Refreshments provided. For details please see and complete the enclosed form.

Tuesday 11 February 2014 – 7.30pm

Talk - Parmoor House

Roger Jones will give a talk and show entitled 'Old Cheltenham on Film'.

Tuesday 11 March 2014 – 7.30pm

Annual General Meeting at Parmoor House

An opportunity for members to attend the AGM and have their say about the activities and work of the Society.

The admission charge to a Civic Society Lecture at Parmoor House is £2 (members) and £4 (non-members). Doors open at 7.00pm for tea or coffee and biscuits.

Cheltenham Plaques



Full of history of local people and places, the Civic Society **Commemorative Plaques of Cheltenham** makes an excellent Christmas stocking filler! 128 A5 pages with 130 b&w illustrations. **Special Member's price - £1** collected from Parmoor House or **£3 incl. p&p**. Stocks are limited, so place your order asap. Please email the Newsletter Editor.

CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman: Douglas Ogle
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Chairman of Planning Forum: John Henry
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