

CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

Parmoor House, 13 Lypiatt Terrace, Cheltenham GL50 2SX



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014

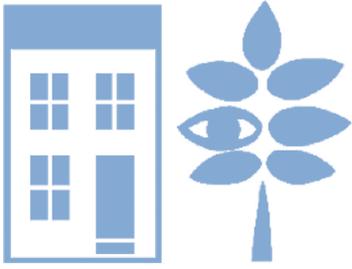


Century Court, Bath Road



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



Century Court, Bath Road.
Cover photo © FCB Studios

Designed by architects Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios and completed in 2001, **Century Court** is an excellent example of contemporary design complementing the historic environment.

But, siting such developments next to historic buildings is often controversial, and nowhere more so than in our own Regency Cheltenham. Contrary to common perception, contemporary architecture is not the brash new style it might first appear. Originating in the modern movement of the early 1900's, it took inspiration from the new technology of the industrial age. Uniquely among architectural styles, it has evolved for over 100 years, adapting to successive innovations in construction techniques and materials whilst retaining its purist design principles.

As a special contribution, the Newsletter is serialising *Art in Architecture*, a 2013 academic paper by the Editor, architect/artist Mike Duckering, in which he examines the connections between art and contemporary architecture. *Please see pages i - iv.*



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The year started with changes in the Executive Committee including the departure of Sheila Chaplin, whose contribution to the Society has been sorely missed. Roger Brown also stepped down but continued as Membership Secretary for which many thanks, as did Roger Woodley, who continued to play a major role in the Society. However our ranks were swelled with the arrival of Freddie Gick, now Chairman of Civic Trust, Cecil Sanderson, Leslie Whittal and the return of Roger Jones to record the minutes. Leslie is no stranger to organising events as is evident in the splendid programme she has drawn up for us, which I hope you will all support, and we have benefited from Cecil's input as a member of our 'way forward' teams. We were also fortunate in the secondment of Lloyd Surgenor, whose considerable experience as a Borough Councillor and Planning Committee member has been invaluable.

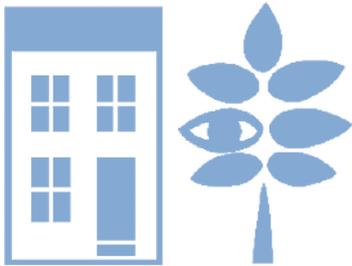
This has been a particularly active year, which I trust will herald a reinvigoration and new approach to the Society's aims and activities. A much overdue 'think tank' away-day resulted in the setting up of two steering groups. One, headed by Roger Woodley took an in-depth look at the Society as it stands; current strengths and weaknesses, how to improve the Society's image, and what further involvements we should take on. Roger's input proved invaluable in the survey of members, and he and his team expended considerable time and effort on this worthwhile exercise. The other group, under John Henry's experienced guidance, looked into Parmoor House, how its functioning and financing could produce better returns, whether it made sense to maintain it as our headquarters, or if there was an acceptable and more advantageous alternative. I am grateful to both teams and confident that their findings will be invaluable in pointing the way forward.

Last June's Civic Day coincided with the RIBA's Love Architecture week, and collaborating with local architects, we took an empty shop unit in the Regent Arcade and mounted an exhibition of four major schemes for Cheltenham. This gave us experience of a town centre presence and direct contact with the public. A number of Gloucestershire Architectural practices mounted displays of their work and manned a 'surgery' desk. This was a worthwhile experiment and one that the architects are keen to repeat. A good spin-off was the full page spread in the Echo devoted to the Civic Society and its work.

The Executive engaged in all its usual activities and, under John Henry's leadership, the Planning Forum advised the Council on planning applications both major and minor. We are assured that our comments matter to the Planning Committee even if at times we wonder if this is so. Diane Lewis continued as convenor for Civic Awards and this year's Award Ceremony will bear witness to her diligence and hard work. The Civic Award Lecture, by the renowned critic and enthusiast Tom Dyckhoff, much in evidence on TV of late, should prove unmissable.

Members of the Executive represented the Society on other organisations, such as Cheltenham Task Force and Cheltenham in Bloom, and a forum aimed at improving the architecture in Cheltenham. Stephen Clarke led a significant new adjunct to the Society, Cheltenham in Focus, providing common ground for community groups concerned with the wellbeing of Cheltenham. Bob Keevil skilfully managed the upkeep of Parmoor House, including the task of upgrading to comply with current fire regulations. Among other involvements, we continued our support of the magnificent Pittville Gates restoration project.

Now standing down from the Chair, I am delighted to be succeeded by Roger Woodley in whose capable hands I am confident the Society will flourish. Lastly, I offer my sincere thanks to the Executive Committee, in particular to our Honorary Treasurer Ken Stephens, also stepping down, and all other members who have given me their support and worked so hard for the Civic Society. In doing so, they have given me an enjoyable and memorable year as Chairman. *Douglas Ogle*



PLANNING FORUM: ANNUAL REPORT

We considered two major issues affecting the future of Cheltenham this year. Firstly, how many more buildings do we want in Cheltenham, and secondly, what sort of buildings should they be.

The first issue arises from the current consultations on the Joint Core Strategy. This will decide how many more houses there should be in Gloucestershire. Generally we favour providing land for new jobs and houses in Cheltenham, which is vital for the economic prosperity of the town. But it is important to identify the most appropriate land for development as without an agreed strategy there is a risk that applications for less satisfactory schemes will be approved on appeal. Our comments on the JCS were submitted in November, and we await the outcome. Taking the longer view, we supported an outline scheme for 650 dwellings in Leckhampton, which is in line with the draft JCS, although the majority of views expressed locally have been vehemently against it. Without extra provision for houses and jobs, Cheltenham runs the risk of becoming a genteel geriatric dormitory town, and that is not what we should bequeath to future generations.

Perhaps this may explain why we have seen a greater number of residential care home applications this year. We commended the careful attention to detail and rectification of the earlier architectural vandalism in the scheme proposed for the old Kraft building in Bayshill Road. This is still pending, but if it goes ahead it will restore the dignity of the two listed buildings and provide high quality accommodation in an ideal location.



Proposed St George's House, Bayshill Road

We did not like a scheme at Cotswold Court in Lansdown Road. Whilst the damage to the setting of the listed building by the large, unremitting rear block happened some time ago, the new design did nothing to alleviate the situation. The rear block as proposed will detract from the listed building.

The second issue, is the argument for and against mock-Regency, highlighted by proposals for the Odeon Cinema site. The widely held view is that Cheltenham is a Regency town and new buildings should be in the Regency style. We argue against this because a series of second-rate pastiche Regency style buildings will detract from genuine Regency architecture. Good quality design in a contrasting style will enhance the area better, but the scheme for the Odeon site was approved, so we must wait to judge the quality if and when it is built.

One or two individual schemes deserve a mention. There have been several iterations of the scheme on the old Police House at St Mark's. This is a difficult site, and we like what has now been approved. We also like the scheme on the site of the Little Owl pub, Charlton Kings. Some may have seen the television programme about Ian Nairn, whose visit to Cheltenham in the 1950s played a part in the establishment of the Civic Society. The Little Owl scheme reminded me of him, as he was unlikely to approve of any scheme which involved the loss of a public house. Times move on!

On which note, I should like to record my thanks to Tony Davy, who stood down from the Planning Forum at Christmas. He has been involved with the Planning Forum and the Civic Society for many years and in many roles, and we are grateful for the conscientious and informed way he has contributed to our work. I should also like to thank all the other members of the Planning Forum who give up their time to help us offer views on schemes.

John Henry



PATERSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

In December 2013, the Civic Society welcomed Sarah Staniforth, Museums and Collections Director of the National Trust, to give the annual Paterson Memorial Lecture at Christ Church.



Sarah Staniforth

In her lecture *Bringing Historic Properties to Life* Sarah explained the Trust's current thinking on how to present and interpret the 142 buildings in its charge – a move initiated by Simon Jenkins, the current chairman. *"We want to create a better feeling of how houses functioned in the past and help people's understanding of the *genus loci* (spirit of place)"* she explained.

She gave instances of how the Trust put these ideas into practice. At Attingham Park near Shrewsbury a shop was created in the butler's pantry selling the kind of merchandise one would expect to find in such a pantry. At Quarry Bank Mill at Styal, Cheshire the Trust bought back the land surrounding the mill to create a community such as would have existed at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Calke Abbey in Derbyshire shows a country house in decline in the wake of the First World War. The National Trust acquired it in a very run down state in 1985 and apart from restoring the structure of the house decided to keep things as they were.

The Trust draws a line at certain projects. It would not go down the route of Longleat House, with the opening of a safari park, even though it had transformed the fortunes of the estate. Sarah noted that the Longleat management would like to install cable cars on its side of the Cheddar Gorge, but the NT is unhappy with the idea. Owners of private properties have more freedom than the National Trust, she explained.

Examples of conservation NT style included demonstrations of medieval weaponry at Chirk Castle and showing life above and below stairs at Erdigg near Wrexham. At Lyme Park in Cheshire visitors can handle the books and view digital and facsimile versions of its precious missal, while Snowhill Manor now boasts a modern penny-farthing bicycle for demonstration purposes.



Chirk Castle, Wrexham

As NT membership grows, properties are becoming busier, and this is having an impact on the *'spirit of place.'* One idea under consideration is quick, guided tours after which visitors can explore properties at their leisure. Another is to work in partnership with stately homes such as Tredegar House near Newport in South Wales. The Trust is also looking into the possibility of acquiring parks in cities.

Those members who arrived feeling that the National Trust was caught in a time warp were no doubt heartened to hear of the new initiatives outlined by Sarah Staniforth in her lively, well-illustrated lecture. Whether any will have the courage to try out Snowhill Manor's penny-farthing remains to be seen!

Roger Jones

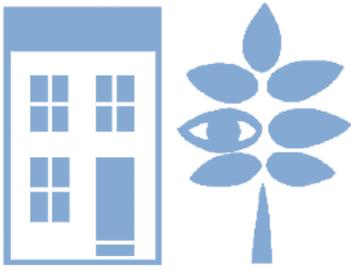
PARMOOR HOUSE

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



FUTURE OF CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

This is a summary of the findings and recommendations arising from last year's membership survey and other research into the future of Cheltenham Civic Society. They were included in a full Report to the Executive in January and presented at the recent AGM.

Membership

The survey showed plenty of enthusiasm among members for the Civic Society to achieve a higher profile and become more influential, especially in planning matters. The existing membership profile is becoming elderly, and young people are too busy to join organisations like Civic Societies. A membership sub-committee is recommended to run a campaign aimed specifically at recruiting those in the 45-65 age range and separately, to recruit corporate members.

Communications

While celebrating the newsletter, our image in the town needs perking up. A better website is needed, perhaps a Facebook page, and wider coverage in the Echo and local media. Another subcommittee to cover this subject, including a Press Officer is recommended.

Public Relations

Connected to better communications and publicity, a campaign to widen the Society's range of operations is recommended. We should make links with local commercial organisations, the University, other colleges and schools, and relevant social groups, clubs and societies. This would enable a larger group of citizens to understand our purpose, and perhaps contribute to making Cheltenham a lovely place, as well as leading to new members. It is also important to enrich our relationships with the Borough Council and established civic bodies.

Events for Members - and Others

Our programme of events for 2014, now well under way, has a civic emphasis intended to be distinct from the programmes of the Local History Society, NADFAS, and the Friends of the Art Gallery and Museum. This should be extended and developed in 2015 and the coming years. It might be possible to develop a presence in the town centre, even if for only short periods at a time, eg at markets or during the Festivals.

Structure

It is recommended that the Society's structure be developed to include these additional subcommittees alongside the existing Planning Forum and House Committee. These committees could include members with relevant skills who do not have time to sit on the Executive Committee, but to provide a reporting link, the Chair of each should be an Executive Committee member. There is already a President in the form of the Cheltenham Mayor, but the role of Vice-President could be used to encourage greater effectiveness in pursuing the Society's aims.

Summary

In summary, the essence of the Report was not to propose radical change in what Cheltenham Civic Society is doing, but to recommend means for it to carry out its established role with greater effectiveness. This would entail more members, more activity and a higher profile.

Immediate Outcome of the Report

The Executive Committee generally accepted the Report, although it was recognised that the present lack of resources would make it difficult in the short term to act on all the recommendations. The authors of the report prepared a list of measurable targets to be achieved in 2014, which were broadly agreed by the Executive Committee in February, and tabled for discussion with members in the Open Forum at the AGM.

Roger Woodley

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

A few members still have not paid their 2014 subscription. If you cannot remember whether you have renewed, or not, please contact me on **01242 239179** or at membership@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

If I have not heard from anyone by the end of March they will be deleted from the membership register.

We warmly welcome to the Society Mr Richard Sharpe, Dr & Mrs J Hodsdon, Mr & Mrs B Buchanan, Mr & Mrs S Ray and Mr & Mrs D Bradley.

Roger Brown, Membership Secretary

ART IN ARCHITECTURE

Examining the connections between art and contemporary architecture with reference to the work of Frank Gehry and others.

Mike Duckering BSc BA RIBA

Part 1: Introduction

Architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure. John Ruskin (1907, p8)

The last two decades have seen the global growth of both visually exciting and beautifully minimalist architecture, as can be seen in many recent works in the UK alone. Buildings such as Zaha Hadid's Aquatics Centre and Michael Hopkins Velodrome at the London 2012 Olympics demonstrate the sheer quality of current contemporary architecture.



*Imperial War Museum North, Gateshead, 2001
Architect: Daniel Libeskind*

In his 2011 publication *The Art-Architecture Complex*, Hal Foster refers to the 'global styles' of modernist architects Richard Rogers, Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, and the minimalism of Hadid. (2011, pviii) And as Kenneth Frampton confirmed in his 2007 critical history of modern architecture:
Given the proliferation of quality work worldwide, it has become virtually impossible to make a balanced selection from the vast array of buildings completed over the last twenty years. (2007, p346)

Following on from the short-lived Postmodernist period of the 1980's and 90's, which saw a return of natural materials, albeit often applied in a kitsch parody of classical themes, contemporary architecture has emerged almost spontaneously.



Tate Modern, London, 2000, Architects: Herzog & de Meuron

With its roots in Bauhaus and Corbusian philosophies, it has thrown off the hair-shirt socialism of post-war modernism, and taken advantage of much improved modern construction technology to produce a revitalised architecture of the times. And it is not just the landmark statement buildings such as Daniel Libeskind's Imperial War Museum North or Herzog & de Meuron's Tate Modern, that have flourished, but also the smaller, subtler buildings and interventions, such as David Chipperfield's River and Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames and Nicholas Grimshaw's Thermae Spa, Bath, probably the only contemporary building slotting perfectly into the historic Georgian fabric of Bath.



*Thermae Spa, Bath, 2006
Architect: Nicholas Grimshaw*



*River & Rowing Museum, Henley 1996
Architect: David Chipperfield*

But how do we evaluate the aesthetic qualities of contemporary architecture? Should we assess architecture as art, or is it an artistic status in its own right? By examining recent specific works by Frank Gehry and other architects, it is perhaps possible to elucidate the connections between art and architecture.

The words 'art' and 'architecture' have become so ingrained in any discourse about architecture as to presume their interchangeability. Art has always been used to adorn and furnish buildings, and many buildings are beautiful works of architecture. But in today's world can contemporary architecture, predicated as it is on a scientific design and construction technology far removed from the crafts based traditions of old, be defined as art? Furthermore, does the essential functionality of architecture set it apart from art, so that it must possess a separate status in its own right? Other than a few notable exceptions, for example buildings such as Thomas Heatherwick's UK Pavilion at the Shanghai 2010 World Expo, it is the rare piece of architecture whose sole purpose is to be art, and it is the rare architect who can design and have built what he or she pleases. Unlike architecture, much contemporary art does not have to be site specific, nor solely dependant on patrons, and can be merely produced to satisfy the artist's creative whim. Although this is a generalisation, perhaps it is art that has moved away from an architecture still tied to a traditional commissioning process, and art that has freed itself to explore hitherto unattainable fields of creativity.

The inherent dilemma is recognised by David Goldblatt and Roger Paden in their introduction to a special edition of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* on the aesthetics of architecture: *So common is the expression 'art and architecture' in discourse about the arts that its implications tend to slip by unnoticed. However, ... 'art and architecture' tends to underline the externality, if not the exile, of architecture with respect to other art forms, indicating, perhaps, in its conjunction, a different kind of status from them. (2011, p1)*

As a combination of function and aesthetics, making architecture is a skilful and demanding

activity. The whole process from the singular initial design concept in response to a client's brief, the bureaucracy of statutory approvals, and the multi-discipline production process to eventual on site construction is so complex that it is extraordinary that any but the simplest of buildings get built at all. More extraordinary still is that so much good architecture has emerged apparently unscathed from this complex process: a process so removed from the methodology of creating 'art' as we commonly perceive it, that Goldblatt and Paden might be right in seeing architecture as having a different status.

So can *architecture be art*? To even begin to answer this question we first need to define both art and architecture. This is not easy, and perhaps it is the broader diversity of art as it is practised today compared to the complex process of making architecture that needs to be addressed. In many areas of art, the artist is free to make his own way, whether it is in painting, sculpture, photography or many other forms; and artists such as Damien Hirst, who have created their own market rather than being commissioned, are more typical of art practice today. This lack of direct patronage has also led some contemporary art to extremes, where shock and awe rather than beauty are the aesthetic credentials. In defining art today, the most important factor is its ability to exist for aesthetic pleasure alone, or indeed other emotional responses, without a concurrent function, that sets it apart from architecture.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines architecture as *the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings and the complex or carefully designed structure of something*. This tells us little about the principles or aesthetics of architecture. However, we can go back to the earliest surviving written work on architecture, *De architectura libri decem* by Vitruvius, a Roman architect who lived in the first century AD. According to Bernd Evers in his preface to *Architectural Theory, Vitruvius*, the first of all architectural theoreticians, distinguishes between *firmitas* (robustness and structural stability), *utilitas* (usefulness or commodity) and *venustas* (beauty or delight). (2003, p6)

Leon Battista Alberti later elaborates on the ideas of Vitruvius in his treatise, *De Re Aedificatoria*. Veronica Biermann et al in *Architectural Theory* tell us that Alberti referred to the beautiful 'body' of architecture, and talks of architecture as 'beautiful art'. Alberti analysed the building form in precise detail, its columns, cornices and proportions, and how the individual parts are pieced together to form one beautiful whole. He refers to this in aesthetic terms as 'concinntitas', ie exhibiting the laws by which the correct number of parts, their proportion and rhythm merge to create a beautiful piece of architecture. (2003, pps 24 & 25)



The Parthenon, Athens, Greece, 'the supreme example among architectural sites' (Fletcher)¹

These principles, perhaps with additions and subtractions to suit the prevailing fashions, have underpinned architectural design for the past 2000 years. However, the important requirement for architecture to have 'beauty', which is the essence of art, does not necessarily make it art. As with 'art', the term 'architecture' covers a multitude of activities and things. All images and objects are not art, and all buildings are not architecture. How does one decide whether or not a building is 'art' or has 'artistic' qualities? If a beautiful building does not adequately fulfil its functional brief - Vitruvius's '*utilitas*' - can it still be 'art' albeit failing to serve its purpose? Paul Guyer addresses this issue in his article *Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture*, and quoting Kant, he says: *... judgments of adherent beauty presuppose a concept of what the intended function or 'particular end' of the object is, 'by which the imagination, which is as it were at play in the observation of the shape' of the object, would be 'restricted'. Kant then . . . illustrates his conception of adherent*

beauty with architectural examples: thus he says that 'the beauty ... of a building . . . presupposes a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection ...

Guyer goes on to say that Kant seems to return to the traditional Vitruvian paradigm that a successful work of architecture must be judged to have both *utilitas* and *venustas*. (2011, pps 14 & 15)

Equally of interest in assessing the question of art or architecture, is how we evaluate architecture's aesthetic qualities. As in the arts of painting and sculpture, we can approach it from the viewpoint of an uninformed observer, relying on Clive Bell's aesthetic emotion² or as a knowledgeable art critic or practitioner. But with architecture, even the informed critic or architect will need to have an understanding of the building's functions, indeed how well or otherwise it satisfies these functions, in order to make a qualitative judgement on its aesthetic / artistic merits. Andrew Ballantyne recognises this difficulty when he argues for pragmatist aesthetics in his article *Architecture, Life, and Habit*. His point is that simply appraising a building visually, its composition and form, whilst not to be dismissed, is not the only approach. He goes on to say:

... the appropriate conceptual model for the building is not the artwork, but the tool, and the aesthetic appreciation cannot be separated from what it does. This . . . argues for a pragmatist aesthetics of architecture, where the sense of the building-in-use is given weight and an ethical aspect seems inescapable. (2011, p43)

Certainly, to me as an architect, Ballantyne's views strike a chord, however, he fails to elaborate how this 'complete' approach can be meaningfully translated into an aesthetic evaluation. He tries to explain:

Aesthetic analysis is necessarily contemplative in character, but if we are to apprehend a building's everyday character, . . . then we need to understand it by way of the habits of everyday life. The building will support some habits, and might obstruct others, but crucially the thing that makes it satisfying is the match between the building and the life that goes

on and through it. The role of aesthetics can be to articulate an appreciation of the fitness of the match between the place and the ethos, to see the building through the habits of daily life. (2011, p48)

In examining the connections between art and architecture, terminology might well be an issue, when the words used to describe the aesthetic qualities of art cannot adequately convey the *utilitas* and *venustas* qualities of architecture. This perhaps reflects in the varying convergence and divergence of art and architecture throughout history, and also in education. But since 1919, when Walter Gropius (1883–1969) brought together the teaching of art, crafts and architecture at the Bauhaus in Germany³ there has been a continuous thread of purist modernist architecture that has survived into the education of the 1960's and the minimalist contemporary architecture of the last few decades. My own experience training as an architect in the 1960's at the University of Bath shared a similar excitement at pursuing new teaching methods. Like the Bauhaus, the course developed its own ideology based on art, science and technology. But a healthy design ethos also prevailed, and the design philosophy taught by Professor Ken Smithies (1921–95)⁴ was of particular value. His almost Vitruvian philosophy was based on the acronym F.U.S.E.M:-

Function	(use / utilitas)
Unity	(whole or oneness)
Stability	(clarity of structure)
Expression	(visual expression of function)
Magnitude	(scale)

This taught design philosophy was later expanded to form the premise of his 1981 publication, *Principles of Design in Architecture*, in which he says:
All aspects of design react one upon the other so that all are interrelated. . . I find it helpful to consider the basic objectives as five principles of design. (1981, p5)

These principles provide a logical structure within which to develop and evaluate a building's design, but more importantly, they also provide an objective methodology to analyse and evaluate the aesthetic qualities of contemporary architecture.

Mike Duckering © 2013

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2. Bell, Clive (1914) 'The Aesthetic Hypothesis' in *Frascina, Francis and Harrison, Charles eds. (1982) Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, London: Paul Chapman, p69.

3. Thus was established the most daring and far reaching experiment in the twentieth century. Scheidig, Walter (1967) *Crafts of the Weimar Bauhaus 1919 – 1924*, London: Studio Vista Ltd. (cover)

4. Kenneth W Smithies, Dipl.Arch., M.Arch., FRIBA, (1921-1995) was Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Bath until his retirement in 1986. Smithies began practising as an architect in Bristol in 1950 and was a past President of the Bristol Society of Architects. He was joint founder of the School of Architecture and Building Engineering at the Bristol College of Technology in 1958. The college gained C.A.T. university status in 1963 and became the University of Bath in 1965.



WINTER PARTY JANUARY 2014

The annual Civic Society Winter Party was held at Parmoor House in January. Well supported as usual, a good few hours of convivial conversation was enjoyed by all. Our thanks go to the Catering Committee for providing the wonderful spread.



Roger Woodley, Dawn & Irvin Joblin and Lesley Whittal



Jacqueline Storm with Jenny Ogle



Fiona Clarke, Anne Surgenor and Pat Rose



David Lyall, Tom Lyall, Douglas Ogle and Roger Brown

OLD CHELTENHAM ON FILM



The Fountains 1937

There was a "Full House" sign needed when Roger Jones entertained members to **Old Cheltenham on Film**. Although the films were rather old and scratchy, members really appreciated seeing pictures of Cheltenham's old buildings in the first film **Regency Cheltenham**.

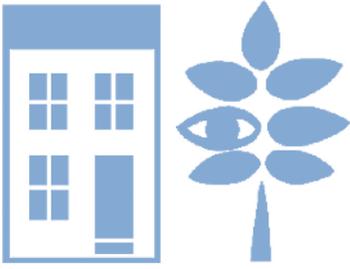
The second film **Cheltenham and the Cotswolds in the 1920's** described Cheltenham as the Carlsbad of England. There was interesting footage of water treatments being carried out on people in what is now The Playhouse, but was then a bathing treatment centre for various ailments.



The Promenade 1923

Ladies College girls were seen doing 20's style exercises in very fetching outfits, and the Boy's College cricket team in what seemed to be sunny weather. Various shots of the surrounding hills were interesting with few buildings to be seen in sharp contrast to today. Members are looking forward to the next time Roger entertains with other old films from his collection.

Lesley Whittal



CIVIC AWARDS 2013

For projects, which through vision, design and craftsmanship beyond the ordinary, both respect their surroundings and give an example for the future, resulting in a feature of which Cheltenham will be proud.

The 2013 winners of Civic Awards and Commendations in each category are:-

NEW BUILDING Award

● St Paul's Walk Urban Regeneration



St Paul's Walk

Completion of the St Paul's Walk development is the culmination of one of the most important urban regeneration projects in Cheltenham. Together with the improvements to the existing houses in Hudson and Manser Street, which were recognised in the 2012 Civic Awards, the panel were impressed by the well-planned layout of the new public spaces. The new buildings are equally well-designed, and with their modern detailing and materials, complement and enhance the existing properties. The benefits of direct consultation and involvement of the local community have clearly been an important factor in the success of this new, integrated neighbourhood.

Award

● 16a Rodney Road

This new 4 storey townhouse has been inserted into the narrowest of infill sites, and in doing so succeeds in creating a refreshingly simple and attractive architectural solution. In a street frontage of varied styles, the thoughtfully composed design is original, yet deferential to its neighbours. The re-installation of the original railings, marrying old and new, is a delightful detail that adds to the to quirkiness of this excellent small addition to Cheltenham town centre.



16a Rodney Road

Commendations

● 4 & 5 Well Place

Two refined and well-detailed contemporary private houses that fit unobtrusively into the Conservation Area.

● Tivoli Villas, Andover Road

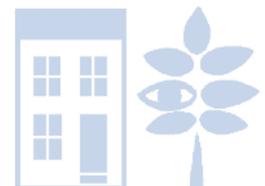
Highly original, beautifully designed and detailed, these four contemporary private houses re-interpret the architectural language of the traditional Cheltenham villa.

● Alpine House, Queen's Road

This mixed residential and retail development, with its striking composition of brightly coloured elements, has revitalised the locality around Cheltenham Spa station.



Alpine House, Queen's Road





RESTORATION/ADDITION TO EXISTING STRUCTURE

Award

- The Wilson Museum & Art Galley, Clarence Street



The Wilson, Clarence Street

Having to pull together the disparate spaces of the existing buildings within a limited budget, architects Berman Guedes Stretton have succeeded in providing Cheltenham with an elegant architectural solution of international status. The Clarence Street facade, with its bris soleil creating an intricate layering, has made a striking, yet subtle link between the Victorian library, the post-modern facade of the 1989 extension and the Georgian houses to the East. Equally successful is the carefully composed North elevation that now provides views and direct access to St Mary's churchyard.

"If you think Cheltenham wants warmth, lacy materials and soggy historical references in its architecture, then forget it: this building is too busy doing its job, and that it does extremely well."

So wrote Thom Gorst, lecturer in architectural history and theory at UWE, Bristol, in his recent glowing appraisal of the new Wilson Museum & Art Gallery published in the February 2014 issue of *Architecture Today*.

Award

- Eslington Mews, Thirlestaine Road



Eslington Mews

Designed by architects Stanley Partnership, this modern extension to a Victorian coach house has created a beautifully designed private house. The careful composition of elements and natural materials is exquisitely detailed and perfectly constructed. Unique and contemporary, yet displaying a welcoming warmth, it has an established presence on this garden site. The panel was unanimous in their appraisal of this architectural gem.

Commendation

- Sixways Hall, Charlton Kings



Sixways Hall

Rescuing Sixways Hall from dereliction has been a labour of love for its owner, who has created an unusual house within its shell. Described as being Edwardian Baroque, this former Charlton Kings Council Office is grand neo-classical architecture on a small scale, and almost every part of the building has required careful restoration. To succeed in saving it from almost inevitable demolition is highly commendable and worthy of recognition.

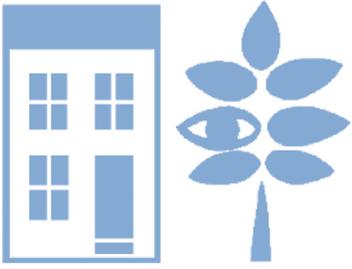
LANDSCAPE / BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Commendation

- Railings, St Faith's Nursing Home, Malvern Road

The reinstatement of the railings to St Faith's Nursing Home has been carried out to a high standard of workmanship and greatly enhances the building and its setting. The panel welcomes this latest addition, and hopes that it will encourage others to follow suit.

Diane Lewis



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Planning Politics

Sir - Asking "the people" indicates to the electorate that the planning of the town "is in hand" when in fact no one is available, capable or qualified to coordinate any public opinion received. Our elected body will take no decision on such sensitive matters as planning the town for fear of losing the next election.

Take the Green Belt issue, where we are faced with Government imposed targets for new housing in Gloucestershire. The need for schools, work places and shops in a planned community makes such numbers impossible to accommodate within the town envelope and would impact hugely on the quality of living in the town.

What is not realised is that 200 years ago there was no town. The village surrounding the Parish Church was developed entirely by speculators hoping to cash in on the success of Bath. Further expansion has to be carefully integrated, and it could be that Cheltenham has now reached its limit. We should instead be creating a new town, an ideal location being between Stroud and Bristol.

George Mathers ARIBA

Civic Pride

Sir - Visiting Germany one can never fail to be impressed by the quality of their municipal buildings. For outstanding examples of architecture, look at the Rathaus in the main square, where the Town Council and local administration is housed. French towns have their Mairie, similarly dignified and impressive. We too have distinguished examples of municipal architecture - Rochdale's magnificent Gothic Town Hall and Birmingham's Council House are both outstanding expressions of Civic Pride.

This is why I have strong reservations about Cheltenham Borough Council selling the Municipal Offices to the highest bidder. The building forms a perfect background to the Remembrance Day ceremony and is ideal for entertaining foreign dignitaries. If due to staff reductions, much of the offices are underused, why not let this surplus space to organisations that require a town centre presence?

Moving to new (and cheaper?) premises can prove expensive. I recall that GCHQ incurred massive cost overruns when moving to the Doughnut. I therefore counsel caution and urge that any plans be carefully costed before irrevocable decisions are made.

Roger Jones

Road Rage

Sir - The poor state of pavements in the centre of Cheltenham shows that there is scant regard for the safety of pedestrians. Outside no.131 Promenade, where I have never seen a pavement with so many cracked flagstones, is exceptionally dangerous. This is a disgrace to the town. If shop floors were in the same state, companies would be prosecuted under Health and Safety legislation. There should be a more effective means of communicating problems to Cheltenham Borough Council so that they are made accountable for the state of town.

Diane Lewis



Pavement in the Promenade

Sir - You may be interested in the response from my local Councillor, Paul Baker to my complaints about pot-holes in The Avenue. "The problem is years of under investment. There is an £85m backlog across the county, and over £5m in Cheltenham. Pot-holes I reported 6 months ago have reappeared and even a small area of resurfacing carried out recently at the London Road/Old Bath Road/Hales Road junction is pot-holed again. It is hugely frustrating because I report these issues, and pavements too, knowing it is highly unlikely that anything other than a short term fix will be done. I would like to see Cheltenham take back responsibility for the management of its own roads and that is something we are looking at."

Alec Cornish-Trestrail

Do you have strong views about anything that affects the environment of Cheltenham?

If the answer is yes – then please tell us about it.

The Editor welcomes letters, emails or any other contributions to the Newsletter. Please send letters to:

**The Editor, Cheltenham Civic Society,
Parmoor House, 13 Lypiatt Terrace, Lypiatt Road,
Cheltenham GL50 2SX**

or email: newsletter@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk



2014 PROGRAMME

The 2014 programme continues with the **Civic Awards** presentation by **Tom Dyckhoff** at the Town Hall at 4.00pm Wednesday 16 April. Tom will also be giving the evening lecture at 7.30pm at St. Andrew's Church, Montpellier.



Tom Dyckhoff

Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and a Trustee of the Architecture Foundation, Tom Dyckhoff is best described as **'an enthusiast, historian, writer and broadcaster about architecture, cities, design and places'**. For eight years architectural critic for the *The Times* and later columnist for The Guardian Weekend magazine, he has contributed to other publications including *Domus*, *Blueprint*, *Icon* and the *V&A magazine*, and has been a visiting tutor at various universities. Tom is recognised for the enthusiasm and excitement injected into the many television documentaries he has written and presented including *'The Secret Life of Buildings'* and *'Saving Britain's Past'* and is architecture and design critic for BBC's Culture Show. Tom has also been Exhibitions Curator at the RIBA and has hosted and been a panel member of The Stirling Prize. He is currently editing the 21st edition of Bannister Fletcher, the time-honoured encyclopaedic history of architecture, and working on his first book on contemporary architecture and the city.

With his wide-ranging interests, Tom will take a quizzical look at 'architecture without architects' and the growing movement around the world for 'doing it yourself' and its philosophical roots.

We invite you to join us for a stimulating and enjoyable evening not to be missed and a chance to talk to Tom over a glass of wine.

On Tuesday 13 May we have the opportunity to visit ***Madresfield Court***, the beautiful, privately owned house near Malvern that has been the ancestral seat of the Lygon family for several centuries. The original Great Hall was built on the site in the 12th century and rebuilt in the 16th century. With subsequent remodelling over many years, it is now a unique, moated stately home. This is an opportunity not to be missed, so early booking is recommended.

The coach will leave Parmoor House at 9.30am and the visit will include a guided tour of the house. Afterwards there will be a lunch stop at the Yorkshire Grey Inn, Earl's Croome. Please complete the enclosed form to book your place.

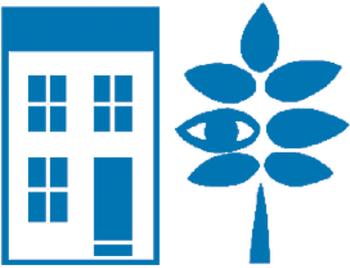


Madresfield Court

Saturday 21 June Civic Day

No building has graced Cheltenham's skyline longer than Cheltenham Minster, formerly the Parish Church of St Mary. So this year Civic Day will concentrate on this oasis in the town centre, looking at how it has evolved over the centuries to changing circumstances, and its place in the modern age. The Minster will be open to the public from 10.00am to 12 noon in the morning, and at 2.30pm in the afternoon there will be a talk and tour by Roger Jones followed by refreshments. Picture quizzes are available for younger visitors. The Minster is close to the rear entrance to The Wilson Art Gallery & Museum and can be reached from Clarence Street via Well Walk. The postcode is GL50 3JR.

Lesley Whittal



FORTHCOMING CIVIC SOCIETY EVENTS

Wednesday 16 April 2014 - 4.00pm

Civic Awards Presentation

Tom Dyckhoff

Cheltenham Town Hall

Civic Awards Lecture - 7.30pm

Tom Dyckhoff

Admission on the door £7.50 including a glass of wine. Tickets will also be available from the Tourist Information desk at the Wilson Museum & Art Gallery, Clarence Street.

Tuesday 13 May 2014 - 9.30am

Visit to Madresfield Court

Nr Malvern, Worcestershire

Coach trip and guided tour £21.

For details please see and complete the enclosed form.

Tuesday 10 June 2014 - 7.30pm

Talk - Parmoor House

Liz Payne of the Stroud Canal Restoration

Trust will give a talk about the restoration of Stroud Canal.

Saturday 21 June 2014 - 2.30pm

Civic Day - Cheltenham Minster

Off Well Walk and Church Street

Cheltenham Minster - a tour and talk by Roger Jones at the Minster followed by tea. No charge.

Tuesday 8 July 2014 - 7.30pm

Talk - Parmoor House

Geoffrey Rowe, Chief Executive, Everyman Theatre will give a talk about the history and restoration of the Everyman Theatre.

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.

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