

Friends of Lewes

the Lewes Civic Society



Autumn 2014 Newsletter

Former Magistrates Court

The revised planning application for re-development of this site was considered by the National Park Authority's Planning Committee in October. Whilst the Society accepts the concept of demolishing the Court building and having a Premier Inn and retail development on the site, and recognised that the revised plans were better than the earlier ones, it was still concerned about a number of design aspects and so objected to the revised plans on that basis. After discussion in the National Park Authority's Planning Committee they too agreed that the design needed to be improved and so consideration of the application was deferred to enable the developer to address this. Further amendments to improve the design have since been made to the plans and the matter will now be considered again at a future meeting of the National Park Authority's Planning Committee



North Street Quarter

The Society understands that a planning application for this development will be made

before the end of the year. It will be what is known as a hybrid application in that overall principles will be provided for the whole of the site but detailed designs will only be made for phase 1, which will be that part from Phoenix Causeway northwards to North Street. This part of the site will include a new medical centre and car parking as well as some housing. Ultimately the developer intends to provide about 400 new homes of which about 36% will be affordable. Until this part of the site is built, something which is estimated to take about 2 years, there will be no change to traffic flows although a new roundabout, which will ultimately become permanent, will be provided on Phoenix Causeway to enable contractors to enter the site. Once the plans have been finalised and are available for public comment the Society will post this on its website so that members can let the Society have their views before a formal Society response is drafted. The Society has also been in touch with Lewes Phoenix Rising who are putting forward an alternative scheme which would retain the old ironworks buildings. The roadshows they plan are shown on the Society's website.

Neighbourhood Plan for Lewes

This is slowly moving forward and the Society is represented on the Steering Group set up by the Town Council. Consideration is currently being given by the following topic groups to the major issues facing the town. Social, Community and Cultural; Sustainability; Big Benefits Game; Transport; Housing and Tourism.

Southover Grange

The Society has recently met with County Council representatives about their plans for the house, which has now been transferred to them from the District Council. The businesses in the east wing will remain but the remainder of the house will be used for the Registration service, with much improved facilities being available for weddings on the ground floor. A lift will be provided to the offices on the first floor and a new door will be provided from the lobby to the Newton Room to enable this to be hired out to community groups when it is not required for registration purposes.

Meanwhile There is very slow progress over persuading the District Council, which continues to own the gardens, to remove the ugly chestnut paling fencing and replace it, where necessary, with something more aesthetically pleasing.

High Street signs

Lewes Old Grammar School submitted planning applications in August for permission for new signage and painting the entrance doors of 137, 140, 141 and 174 High Street. The Society had no objection to their plans to paint the doors of each campus building in the school colours but did object to the plans to install projecting metal hanging metal signs. It felt that the addition of hanging signs would permanently damage the fabric of listed buildings of national historical importance and compromise the balance of the Georgian facades of significant townhouses reflecting Lewes's late Georgian prosperity. Their historic significance is recorded by Pevsner in "Buildings of England" and Clifton Taylor in "Six More English Towns" as an object lesson in flint construction. It also considered that the addition of three new hanging signs along a short stretch of the High Street would be intrusive and detrimental to the street scene in the Conservation Area.

In their report to the District Council's Planning Committee, officers recommended

approval of the applications. The Society attended the Planning Committee meeting to argue its case to members and ask for refusal. The Committee was in agreement with the Society and refused the applications on the grounds that the fixing, design and materials would have a detrimental impact on the historic fabric of the buildings their character and the wider setting.

Pavement repairs

At a meeting with ESCC Highways in September, the Society expressed continuing concern about failures of enforcement concerning utility companies making good repairs within the agreed time frame; sometimes the county is itself the culprit!



Persistence has seen the large patch in the pedestrian precinct brick pavement (above)

reinstated recently and Castlegate (left), we are assured, will not be long in getting overdue attention.



Pavement parking has damaged the slabs in front of the County Court Building, and tarmac repairs are unsightly in another prominent location. A recent report names this

part of the upper High Street as being the

second-worst in the county for illegal pavement parking, but action has been delayed for further assessment of alternative strategies for deliveries.

Railway Station area, Station Street and Fisher Street

The work needed to reinforce the bridge leading to the railway station is scheduled to start in January. There have been some delays



to the promised work on the station forecourt. On the other hand the planned work to Station Street has now been completed, which makes this a more pleasant way of approaching the upper High Street than previously. Unfortunately the similar work planned for Fisher Street has been deferred until the next financial year, although it seems likeable that the change of priority at the West Street junction will be made permanent.

Grants

The Society has recently made a grant of £500 to the University of the Arts for the recent display of window boxes showing pictures of the past in shop windows in the town centre.

Heritage Open Days

The Society again organised September's Heritage Open Days. With almost a third of the buildings open this year being new to the programme, over 3500 visits were made across the town. Thanks go to the organising team, volunteer stewards, our sponsors and, especially, to all those who opened up their buildings or held special events, which all

contributed to the weekend being so successful.

2015 dates are 10-13th September: planning starts in January, so if you have any suggestions for buildings or events, or want to volunteer, you can contact us via the Friends of Lewes mail box at the Town Hall reception, or email leweshod@gmail.com.

Children's Tree Competition, Summer 2014

To celebrate its Lewes Arboretum Project, and to encourage people of all ages to become more aware of the project, the Society invited all primary school children in Lewes to make a poster to show everyone that "Trees are important to Lewes because..." Over 50 children entered the competition and the results were announced on 5th September. The winner, Lily Taylor Martin, aged 9, of Lewes Old Grammar School Junior Department, won a £10 Bags of Books token for herself and a £50 token and ten trees for her school. A special prize of a £10 Bags of Books token was awarded to Liam Barbieri, aged 6, of Southover School. Photographs of the winning entries are shown on the Society's website and all the entries may be viewed on the "Lewes Urban Arboretum" Facebook page. An exhibition of all the children's art work for the competition was held in the entrance of Lewes Town Hall during the week beginning Saturday 11th October.

Family Quiz Summer 2014: the Plaques of Lewes

The Society are regularly involved in suggesting ideas for plaques around Lewes, to mark a link between buildings or places and a famous person or event in History. Its Family Quiz invited people to walk around Lewes and find nine of these plaques, discover the "missing words" and then match the plaque to the correct photograph showing its location. The names of everyone who completed a correct entry were put into a bag and drawn out to find the winners. First prize of a £50 W. H. Smith voucher went to Daehon Brian Park and five other lucky entrants won a £5 voucher.

Events

Members of the Rye Conservation Society came for a day in early September and declared themselves well-pleased with their visit, when issues of mutual interest could be discussed as we toured the town.

The Autumn & Winter series of lectures began with Mat Homewood's entertaining talk on the turbulent history of public houses in Lewes. The two lectures due in the new year are described below.

Membership Secretary

Marietta Van Dyck, who has been our Membership Secretary for many years, would like to have an assistant to whom she might ultimately hand over the job. In order to keep abreast of developments in communications it is important that this person is computer literate. If you are interested in helping the Society in this way please either contact Marietta or the Treasurer, Mike Stepney. They can be reached on 01273 474521 and 475741 respectively.

Forthcoming Events:

Thursday, January 15th, 2015 - Brigitte Lardinois tells the story behind the recent much-appreciated exhibition of photographs from the Reeves Archive, *Stories seen through a glass plate* <http://bpb.org.uk/2014/event/stories-seen-through-a-glass-plate>

Thursday, February 19th, 2015 – Marcus Taylor shares some slides of Lewes from the collection left to the Society by the late John Houghton and throws in a few “puzzlers” for you to identify.

Monday, 23rd March, 2015 - The Friends of Lewes AGM will be held in the Council Chamber at 7.45pm.

For information Meetings of the Lewes History Group:

8th December, 2014 - AGM & talk

12th January, 2015.

Sussex Industrial History: A different perspective

Geoffrey Mead looks at the wide variety of trades and industries that have been part of the Sussex landscape over the past 5,000 years. From flint working to an international airport and from Chichester Harbour to Rye Bay and from Crawley to Brighton, this talk will be industrial history made easy through a cunning plan of digging, making and selling.

9th February, 2015.

MPs from Lewes Past: John Kay

9th March, 2015.

Further plans for the Reeves Photographic Archive – Brigitte Lardinois.

FRIENDS OF LEWES

Minutes of the Autumn General Meeting 1st October 2014

Present: Baroness Kay Andrews (President), Jim Franks (Vice President), Robert Cheesman (Chairman), Marcus Taylor, Mike Stepney, Roger Maskew, Audrey Jarvis, David Hutchinson, Janet Kennedy, Ruth O'Keeffe, Neil Merchant, Marietta Van Dyke and 37 other members of the Society

1. Apologies: Peter Mettyear (Vice-President) and 10 others
2. To consider matters on which prior notice has been given: there was none
3. My perceptions of Lewes as an historic town in East Sussex: a talk by Rupert Clubb, ESCC Director of Communities, Economy & Transport

Rupert began by outlining the development of the town, from three separate entities - the centre, Cliffe and Southover - and the importance of continuing archaeological investigation of the area, which is part of his department's remit; others include transport, highways, libraries and trading standards.

- The current works on Station Street, although very disruptive, will improve not only pedestrian access, but will respect the heritage of the area - formerly St. Mary's Lane. The work should be completed by 19th October.
- In February 2015, work will begin on the station forecourt area, improving parking and providing pedestrian crossings.
- The 20mph zone is being extended, though Malling will also require traffic-calming measures: this speed limit will be policed by voluntary groups.
- By February 2015, the Lewes-Ringmer cycle-way will be complete.
- With regard to the proposed North Street development, shared space on the Causeway is still being considered, although any Waitrose expansion would increase still further traffic in this area.
- Financial challenges will be increasing, as between 2016 & 2020, £70 to 90 million in savings will need to be made

Following a question and answer session, the following issues were raised:

- *Pavement/street surfacing:* for economic efficiency, jobs are often packaged together. Utility companies have 6 months to make good any repairs. A two year re-surfacing programme can be seen on the ESCC web-site.
- *Economic priorities* include maintaining a workforce in the county that is equipped to meet the needs of employers in terms of skills. The cultural contribution of institutions such as Glyndebourne and Charleston is recognised.
- A 'grants & loans panel' has been created to help small businesses.

- *Improving the infrastructure*, including the Beddingham to Polegate section of the A27 is also important to future economic growth.
- *Road safety*: whatever the speed limit, drivers should drive according to the quality of the road surface at the time. Pot-hole repairs are on-going, and should not take longer than 28 days following identification. The extent of signage required for 20mph zones is being investigated.
- *Newhaven port* is currently subsidised by its French owners by £14million Euros per annum. *ESCC* is part-funding road improvements in the area, the town is the centre for maintaining the Rampion wind farm, and a technical college will be opening there shortly.
- *Drainage*. There is a cyclical programme of drain clearing, and records of drain location and clearing are being brought up to date, but the systems can only deal with normal weather conditions. Increasingly, more sustainable urban drainage schemes are being investigated.
- *Conservation areas* are more expensive to maintain: parish precepts can be used to enhance normal works.

The Chairman thanked Rupert for interesting and informative evening