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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Hello Members

Since last November there have been many important events happening in the Society, reports and photographs of which appear in this Newsletter. The Remembrance Service held on 11th November last year was a very inspiring occasion and great thanks its due to the organisers, Catherine Seymour and Jessica Spencer-Barry. We hope to hold a similar event this November.

Our annual award to a pupil at Berwick Academy who has made an outstanding contribution to the wider community was presented to Kayla Johnson at their prize giving in December. We are now waiting to learn who will receive the same award at Longridge Towers School on July 2nd. Last February saw the screening of the final episode of the Wall to Wall 'Borstal Lads' ITV project. Some of us featured at the Spittal Shelter where I cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony. It is planned to have the criminologist, Dr David Wilson, who led the programme, as one of our guest speakers in this year's calendar.

On 19th February, I presented The Civic Society Plaque for 2014; the winner was the Loovre Ice-cream Parlour which had really caught people's imagination for the novelty and humour. The three runners up also received much commendation.

Continued overleaf

The Main Guard is soon to open for the Summer Season. The new exhibition in The Officers Room, 'Guild and Governors' depicts some aspects of the Governance of Berwick through the centuries. An invitation to the Preview Party is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Sadly, a number of our members have died since November which we have recorded in this Newsletter. Amongst them was Henry McCreath, one of Berwick's most renowned citizens and a long-time member of the Society who has given talks in the past. He was a distinguished War Veteran and former Sheriff of Berwick. We are particularly grateful that he bequeathed half of the Thanksgiving Service retirement collection at the Parish Church to the Society- this amounted to a substantial sum.

There have been changes in the Office Bearers - Julia Butler had to retire as the Hon, Secretary in January due to family commitments, Jessica Spencer-Barry took over the position and has since been re-elected

at the AGM. Marion Mead who has been quite a magnificent Treasurer for the last five years is handing over to Jack Bryson. However, she is not completely retiring as she will still be in-charge of the administration of the Main Guard and publications.

The Planning and Development sub-committee which was formed after last years AGM had rather an informal start but is now more structured and ready to make some impact on plans and developments in the town. We are very fortunate that Elaine Paterson, a former Borough Chief Planning Officer with great experience, has joined our Executive and P&D committees. She is also our representative on CAAG. An article by her 'Lessons for the Future' features in this Newsletter.

At the moment, our main concern in the Society is the lack of any real consultation process with regard to plans for historic sites and iconic buildings. Not to mention our centuries old archives. We have written to the heads of the NCC/ Arch Planning Departments detailing

this and we hope that we can achieve a productive dialogue with them. Central to our objectives will be involvement in the Neighbourhood Plan project and would propose having a representative on the steering group. More of this in the autumn Newsletter.

In January of this year we held a Question Time Session with four excellent panellists:-Chris Hardie, Sir Philip Mawer, Elaine Paterson and Derek Sharman. Outlining their vision of Berwick, you will see in Michael Cullen's abridged report their suggestions for improvements in the local ethos. They did also touch on the issue of Berwick having a Higher Education College or University annex.

This, I have believed for some time would bring real 'life blood' and prosperity into the town on a permanent rather than seasonal basis.

If any member would be interested in joining our Executive or Sub-committees, please let me know. As always, I am very grateful to all our existing committee members for their support.

Have a great summer and I look forward to seeing many of you in The Main Guard.

Zoreen Hill

May 2015

DID YOU KNOW THE BERWICK ROYAL BORDER BRIDGE WAS FEATURED ON A FIRST CLASS STAMP? UNFORTUNATELY THE BERWICK POST OFFICE SOLD OUT IN 24 HOURS.



A VISION FOR BERWICK

At the Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Society Following previous worthwhile “Question Time’s” another was held on Wednesday, 14th January. The Panel introduced by the society’s chair, Zoreen Hill, consisted of Chris Hardie, Sir Philip Mawer, Elaine Paterson, and Derek Sharman. Each was asked to provide a biographical sketch and then to outline a vision of Berwick’s future. The profiles made clear the competence of the panel to speak with authority on a wide range of issues.

Businessman Chris Hardie began with the under-rated temperate weather. Unlike places such as Sidney you don’t have to wait till late at night for cool. A need was seen for job prospects that went beyond tourism though more tourist accommodation was seen as a good thing. Engineering and cultural activity were suggested. Interest in the possibility of World Heritage status and Spittal Point development should be sustained. Needs were seen for more bus and car parking, for cafes to do better, for an improved hospital (he mentioned the

days when Berwick had been a training hospital for the days when Berwick had been a training hospital for nurses), for Northumberland College to offer more vocational courses, and for Berwick to be run with less squabbling. After wondering why more locals didn’t take more advantage of the excellent river walk he concluded by saying that what was really needed was an increase in a sense of pride in the town and the self-worth of its people. He even suggested that Berwick might be some kind of independent fiefdom.

Sir Philip Mawer began with his first impressions of Berwick. These were a place with rich history, with fine buildings, a strong sense of identity but whose chief asset is its people. He considered it a place of considerable potential with many able people but whose prime need was economic with a need for new, high value industries. It was though held back by a lack of confidence and of any shared vision: “without a vision people perish”. He stressed too that a good deal could be done without undue expense.

Elaine Paterson's vision for the future of Berwick was one of conservation-led regeneration, something that market towns have had a good deal of success with: Grainger Town in Newcastle-upon-Tyne was cited. One had to start with the asset and analyse the townscape. After that though there was the practical difficulty of a distant planning authority which on occasion showed ignorance of crucial documents. She suggested looking at Park and Ride, if only on a seasonal basis, with no parking or coaches in the town centre thus controlling fumes. The quayside should be tourism-related. She insisted that conservation was good business though it was hard to get business to see that. Arch she felt could be a good deal more pro-active, could do more to promote sites and be less opportunistic: in particular it might have shown more support for the proposed college. She concluded by saying that a vision need a vehicle, in this case either a local plan or a neighbourhood plan which

by law only the Town Council could adopt. The government too is insisting on up to date plans. Evidence of consensual agreement attracts money. The present core strategy for Northumberland, not yet adopted, has little to say about Berwick.

Derek Sharman sees a need for heritage-led promotion with Berwick perhaps becoming something of a mini-York. Berwick could profit from a link between higher education and heritage and environment. On the cultural side he saw openings at a practical and academic level for work on costume, drama, and management. He too saw the tourist potential of Quayside and river. He considered Berwick a place with a good atmosphere and friendly people with good tourist potential and little danger of its being overrun. Some features needed highlighting, such as Paxton House and the county's only watermill. Gaining Unesco World Heritage Status should continue to be an aim.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED CIVIC SOCIETY QUESTION TIME

Panellists at the society's "Question Time" outlined their vision for the future of Berwick as reported earlier. They went on to take questions. These elicited the following responses.

THE ECONOMY.

Berwick should aim for more tourists, trying to make the town a bit more like York or Chester but at the same time there was a need for more manufacturing and exporting. People are leaving Berwick because there is no work. Instead of being envious of the south Berwick should seek to emulate it. (Chris Hardie)

LEADERSHIP.

Berwick has never had very good leadership. With the Council now so far away matters are worse. In any case the Town Council has nothing like the budget of the old Berwick Borough Council, and meetings are now all at Morpeth and Alnwick. (Elaine Paterson)

There are many able people in Berwick and there is a real need for the kind of leadership which can draw people together round

a shared vision. The aim should be to liberate skill rather than suffocating it by "enabling people to give of their best". There was no point in pinpointing individuals most of whom are genuinely trying to do their best but the fact has to be faced that the Town Council is not delivering or helping itself and has found no agreement on how to move forward. Reconciliation will only come through sympathetic listening. (Sir Philip Mawer)

A TOWN PLAN.

There is a need for coherent local plan and the lack of any such framework makes progress difficult. This should be on the basis of shared ideas without being constantly thwarted by Arch and a Town Forum, with representation of all interested groups able to feed ideas into the Town Council, was suggested. It was acknowledged though that this could lead to a kind of "consultation fatigue". (Elaine Paterson). A good deal gets talked about but 90% of it never happens. (Derek Sharman). Don't try too much at once. Concentrate on one or two things a year to get momentum going. (Sir Philip Mawer)

PARTICIPITATION.

The same faces appear in different societies in all of which there is too little sign of Berwick's core population, There had been a degree of hostility to The Maltings now rather lessened with the diluting of its Arts coverage and the increase in the number of film and comedy nights there has been some progress. But if you see a need for something the answer is to get up and do it yourself. It's too easy to take the place where you live for granted. (Chris Hardie)

A need for volunteers was seen for Berwick 900. The forthcoming Open Day at the Town Hall should kindle interest with the exhibition "Salmon Shiels and Silver Darlings" while good co-ordination and proper promotion will be needed. He stressed that the activities will embrace both sides of the river. (Derek Sharman)

A coherent sense of Berwick's history should come out of it with a particular focus on the lives of families. (Sir Philip Mawer)

FESTIVALS.

From the floor it was said that there was a lack do co-ordination between the various festivals while the Film Festival stood out for its consistent excellence. To get things happening you need funding. The only festival that gets it is the Film Festival and that shows what investment can do. (Derek Sharman)

There is a need for more paid people. You can't run things without money. (Elaine Paterson)

HOLIDAY CAMPS.

Greater local involvement of the holiday camps was thought unlikely as the camps wanted money spent there rather than in Berwick. (Derek Sharman)

Zoreen Hill, the Society's Chairman, then thanked the speakers for their highly informative contributions.

EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS REPORT

As well as the January Question Time, we have had some very interesting and enjoyable meetings and events. Last November, to commemorate the 450th anniversary of William Shakespeare, we had a presentation by Dr Nolan Dalrymple, Head of English and Drama at Longridge Towers School, on 'Lives of Shakespeare' and a 'a look at at the Social and Political context of King Lear by his colleague, Mr Paul Brooke. The evening was enhanced by Hilary Wilshaw generously giving out copies of a book 'Discovering Shakespeare' written by a friend of hers, Edward Holmes and for which she had contributed to the publishing.

On 5th December, The Christmas Party took place in The Parish Centre with 40 guests. Unfortunately, our photographic system broke down, but rest assured it was a very happy gathering!

Mr Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing at NCC gave a talk in February. There was rather a small audience which was surprising considering the keen interest on planning matters at the moment. However, with

some very interested parties there, it ensured that there was quite constructive and lively dialogue.

In March members and guests were really fascinated by a presentation from The Air Command & Control Systems Force Presentation Team from RAF Boulmer. FL/LT Sarah Vickers was a delightful speaker.

This years calendar is enclosed and I should like to mention how pleased we are that Dr Peter Jones a well-known lecturer in Classics and reviewer for the Sunday Telegraph, Evening Standard and the Spectator, will be giving a lecture at our combined meeting with The History Society in October. Also, in November we shall welcome Dr Adam Manuge who when he was with English Heritage did a great deal of research for the book, Three places, 2 nations, one town which we sell in The Main Guard. He is now a lecturer at Cambridge University in the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art.

Zoreen Hill
Chairman of Events &
Promotions Group

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Berwick Civic Society with the support of English Heritage held a Service of Remembrance to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the First World War in 1914 at the Main Guard on Tuesday, 11th November at 10:50am followed by a two minute silence at 11am. This war was without parallel the first truly global conflict in which all of the Earth's great powers participated. Ten million died in battle and a further twenty one million were wounded.

On behalf of the Civic Society, Chairman, Zoreen Lady Hill, thanks the Reverend Matthew

Knox, Mr Peter Walton (Secretary, KOSB Association) at Berwick Barracks, Mr Andrew Smith - Piper, (formerly KOSB), Mr Tom Turnbull (President) and Mr Ken Driver (Treasurer) who represented the Crookam Branch of the British Legion, Debra Jerdan (Detachment Commander) and supporting officers of the Berwick Army Cadets and Mr Paul Marshall (Berwick Group Scout Leader) who both attended and offered the assistance of Scouts and Army Cadets who laid out the display of 651 Crosses with Poppies to commemorate the fallen men from Berwick-upon-Tweed, Tweedmouth and Spittal. The Army Cadets and Scouts were presented with Certificates of Appreciation.



It was also very touching to see so many children and teachers of Longridge Towers Junior School, who observed the Service of Remembrance in such a dignified manner. They continued their mark of respect the following Thursday, mounting a superb exhibition and enacting a short play of their interpretation of the First World War.



MAIN GUARD

Summer is coming and we are getting ready for opening the Main Guard on 1st June preceded by the Main Guard Party for stewards and dignitaries on 28th May.

This year the Civic Society leaflets will be reprinted in colour. They have been revised and updated by Jim Herbert. We will also have the very successful Walking the Walls reprinted.

Marion Mead
01289 308333

The Main Guard is the Civic Society's registered address and our museum is open free to the public from 1st June to 30th September every day except Wednesday from 1 – 5 pm.

We are always in urgent need of stewards as so many of our loyal band have become unable to help. It is very rewarding talking to people from all over the country and the world, so if you are able to give two hours occasionally the Main Guard Committee would be very pleased to hear from you.

PLAQUE PRESENTATION

The Presentation Party when Mr Ian Douglas, Vice-Chairman of The Preservation Trust received the 2014 Civic Society Commendation Plaque from Chairman, Zoreen Hill, for the Louvre Ice Cream Parlour.

Mr Douglas stressed that it had been very much a team effort with David Blackburn, the inspiration behind the project, Michael Richardson who did the restoration work on the building and The Preservation Trust all contributing.



LOUVRE ICECREAM PARLOUR
ON BANK HILL



ALSO IN THE PICTURE ARE MRS SUE DOUGLAS AND
MEMBERS OF THE CIVIC SOCIETY.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE: THE KWIK SAVE SITE DECISION

The decision for phase 1 of an office development on the former Kwik Save site was made by the Planning and Environment Committee of Northumberland County Council (NCC) on 3rd March as minded to grant, subject to the Secretary of State deciding whether or not to call the application in (very unlikely), and subject to many conditions and further details being submitted.

Of all the issues raised in the planning process the proposed use generated most heat with many arguing an office use, especially relocating existing town centre offices, does not represent regeneration. The views of neighbouring residents, the Town Council and Civic Society were mostly ignored, and even a key recommendation from statutory consultee English Heritage to amend the building line was ignored. At least some of the significant comments made on design issues during consultation could, and should, have been acted upon by requesting design amendments.

A lack of up to date detailed local planning policy is arguably the main problem in this case. The 1999 Berwick Local Plan was partially



“saved” in 2007 but current national planning policy (NPPE, 2012) indicates this carries little or no weight in decision making. The 1999 Berwick Plan does not designate the site for any particular use, as it is too old to have anticipated the redevelopment, and it is particularly weak on design policy.

Another major problem is that the developer (ARCH) and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) are linked too closely politically, but not operationally. ARCH's main remit is economic development with rapid

delivery. The LPA must balance economic development with environmental protection and balance all views, taking into account adopted planning policy and a professional assessment from visiting the site.

ARCH did not seriously engage with the LPA it seems until plans had been drawn up by Ryder architects for them, at some point shortly before the planning application was submitted. It is well before this immediate pre-application stage that discussion should have been had about issues of the use and design principles – preferably through a development or planning brief for the site produced by the LPA.

In cases of councils' own development across the country truly independent decision making is extremely hard as both answer to the same set of local politicians in a myriad of ways. There is currently no real solution to this problem, though the Local Government Association "Probity in Planning " 2009 contains some words of caution on council own development including "A member whose responsibility effectively makes them an advocate for the development almost represents an internal applicant....such a member should not vote on relevant applications." It could



be argued that all members of the Planning and Environment Committee that voted on the application have an interest in the regeneration activities of the council although none of the members of this committee are actually on the ARCH board. The ARCH board, however, comprises the leader and deputy leader of the Council, the leader of the Lib Dems and Conservatives plus one private sector member, so the political leaders will be strongly influencing all members of the key committees.

Increasingly it seems unlikely that Northumberland County Council will produce any type of local plan with sufficient site level detail in the near future, especially since the scoping of the

core strategy delivery document was revealed earlier this year to be another Northumberland wide document. This in turn makes a neighbourhood plan for Berwick, initiated as it must be by the Town Council, more pressing. It must be recognised, however, that the neighbourhood plan process will be difficult and expensive requiring an examination in public and a referendum of the whole community before it can be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Plan. Looking forward positively, is it possible that the lessons from this saga might galvanise more people in thinking that such a plan is really the only option to ensure better local control and future vision for Berwick?

IT CHANGES

Should the Civic Society move into the 21st century and contact members by email? This was a question posed at a recent meeting. It was suggested that we get the reaction of members through this newsletter and if positive try the idea for our next communication.

Over the last few years we have been collecting the email addresses of members and now have about half of the

membership emails on file. We are aware that many people do not use email to communicate and if you register a preference we will use the usual channels to get information to you. Members will realise there is a substantial cost savings over "snail mail". The paper, printing, and envelope and the ever rising stamp costs or volunteers time for hand deliveries all add to the financial burden.

So members over to you.....
Would you be willing to be contacted by email?

CONTACT INFORMATION

Registered Charity No. 508953
www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Office-Bearers 2014-2015

Chairman.....Zoreen Hill
Vice-Chairman.....Catherine Seymour
Hon. Secretary.....Jessica Spencer-Barry
Hon. Treasurer.....Jack Bryson
Membership Secretary.....Catherine Seymour

You can call in on: 07510141794

Please feel free to e-mail any of the Committee or to request a membership form at: contact@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk



IN MEMORIAM

PAT, LADY AIREY

WIDOW OF SIR LAWRENCE AIREY, A FORMER CHAIRMAN WHO REALLY REVITALISED THE SOCIETY IN THE EARLY 1990'S. PAT HERSELF CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE SOCIETY'S WORK.

MR HENRY GOURLAY MCCREATH MBE

MR JIM STOBO

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY FROM 1999 TO 2001.

HE DID GREAT WORK IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEES.

MRS JUDITH PAYNE

WIDOW OF THE WELL-KNOWN ACTOR, LAWRENCE PAYNE, JUDITH WAS AN ACCLAIMED WRITER ON EQUESTRIAN MATTERS.

MR ROBIN NICHOLSON

EMINENT GEOLOGIST AND HUSBAND OF OUR FORMER HON. SECRETARY, JUDY NICHOLSON

MRS PAT LOUGH

SHE AND HER HUSBAND FRANK HAVE LONG-STANDING MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

MR & MRS JACK LIDDLE

THE FIRST OCCUPANTS OF THE PIER ROAD MALTINGS DEVELOPMENT

MR PHILIP MILLER, ARCHITECT

ON 15TH MAY 2015, CASTLE HILLS HOUSE, CHAIRMAN OF CIVIC SOCIETY BETWEEN 2004 - 2006. FULL OBITUARY IN NEXT NEWSLETTER.