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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Hello Members,

We are now approaching our Winter/Spring Events and addressing issues of Planning and Development. As always, the Main Guard has been central to our activities this summer and we have had a successful season.

The Society always likes to support Berwick Festivals and we were pleased that the Film Festival again utilised the Black Hole for one of their installations. We have supported the Literary Festival from its start in 2014 and I am very happy that the recent third festival was the most successful yet.

With regards to the plans for the new hospital we have much appreciated how the Northumberland Health Care Trust offered and have given the Society two presentations. Although Conservation issues have been raised many feel that it is an innovative design making the most of limited space. The iconic Bell Tower Block, the removal of which is causing concern, could be moved to another site. Imaginative ideas are invited. The most vital thing is that Berwick does not miss the chance of getting a really good hospital.

Planning and Development is rather like the 'curate's egg'. There have been some very good new buildings and renovation as illustrated by our Plaque Award nominations. The Seagulls and ourselves can now see what is happening to the old Kwik Save Site! A not unattractive building but, as often happens, quite a bit higher than illustrated in the original plans and too close to the pavement.

Much adverse comment has been made about the 'eyesore' of a new building which has been constructed at the far end of the New Bridge.

The constant query is how this ever got through the Planning channels It is situated in one of the most prominent entrance and exit roads in Berwick involving the A1 and Border routes.

The controversy concerning The Chapel Street Car Park still rages and demolition work has already started on the neighbouring yard. It is astounding how all the issues of: damage to an historic residential area; diesel pollution; large coaches getting stuck in the narrow junction of Church Street, Hide Hill and Marygate, have been completely ignored. To say that Berwick is going to be greatly enhanced by a small coach park in a totally unsuitable area of the town is absolutely ridiculous. It is hoped that there will be a public enquiry.

Sadly, two of our long standing members and one friend of the Society died over the last few months.

Francis Cowe, well known acclaimed Berwick historian and Honorary Member of the Society died on 24th May. It is understood that his son Jonathan is compiling a history of both his parents.

Alan Seymour, a very successful architect in both Britain and Canada, died on 25th August. I remember him on our Executive before he had his strokes and how he greatly contributed to the work of the Society.

Janet Clare-Dean died in the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle at the beginning of October. She will always be remembered for her forensic research into the Governor's Garden and also as a citizen of Berwick who constantly fought for honesty and good development. She will be greatly missed.

After the AGM in April, there were vacancies in the Office Bearer list. I am very pleased to report that two have now been filled: - Michael Gallico is our new Honorary Treasurer and John Webster, Deputy Vice-Chairman. The position of Hon. Secretary has still to be filled. Catherine Seymour, Vice-Chairman, has been acting Secretary and I am very grateful indeed for all her work especially with the great sadness she has had in her life with the death of her husband, Alan. She is also Membership Secretary, and has recruited a good number of new members.

The membership list is very strong at the moment and the Committee Structure is strengthening. If any member is really interested in the work of the Society and would like to join our Executive or Sub-Groups, please contact either Catherine or myself.

Elaine Paterson has recently retired from being our representative on CAAG to concentrate on the Neighbourhood Plan which seems to be

progressing well in some of the Groups. Dr Catherine Kent, a member of our Executive is now our representative on CAAG. As an architect and archaeologist she should bring invaluable experience to that Group.

Finally, I should like to wish all members a very happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to seeing you at our Events.

Zoreen Lady Hill

EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

Since the AGM we have had well-attended and stimulating meetings with good speakers, including the panel on 13th July at our Question Time session. Later in the Newsletter there are abridged versions of Michael Cullen's Berwick Advertiser reports.

On 26th May we held our annual Main Guard Exhibition Party with around sixty attending, which included The Mayor, Cllr. Ivor Dixon and The Sheriff and Sheriff's Lady, Mr & Mrs Brian Douglas.



As always, it was a very enjoyable occasion with one long-standing member saying that it was the best we had ever had! Many thanks to those who helped and contributed,



Heritage Open Days took place on 10th/11th September and seems to have been generally very successful in the Town. We had the Main Guard open for extended hours and stewarded The Gun Powder Magazine. Attendances were good - a total of 297 in the Main Guard over the two days and 322 visitors to the Magazine.



At the moment we are looking forward to a meeting on 9th November concerning Children in War, to include a presentation by Brian Devlin of the Children's War Museum. This will be very appropriate for Remembrance Week and topical with current world affairs.

Also, on the 11th November we shall be holding our third Remembrance Service at the Main Guard. This year, of course, is the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

Please note that the Xmas Party takes place on 16th December, not the 9th as indicated on the calendar. This had to be changed due to the caterer's commitments.

It's always a good occasion, so it is hoped that as many members as possible will attend. The information sheet and application for tickets form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

CIVIC SOCIETY AWARDS

On 7th July, Chairman, Zoreen Hill and Vice-Chairman, Catherine Seymour attended The Longridge Towers School Foundation Day and Prize giving when our annual award was presented to Martine Veirling Van Tuijl. Martine is an outstanding student who is now Head girl at Longridge. She has made a great contribution to the community with her charity work and also in the Performing Arts in Berwick.



Then on 9th July, Zoreen and Catherine (who also helped the organiser, Raine Bryant) attended an Award Presentation in Spittal's United Reform Church, formally St. Paul's Church for some of those who had contributed to the Spittal Litter Campaign (photo below). The Civic Society had donated a voucher prize which was won by The Spittal Church Youth Group. Spittal has for some time been in the forefront of litter clearing in the Town.



At present we are making arrangements for our annual award to a pupil at The Academy.

RECENT TALKS

BERWICK HOSPITAL



On the evening of Wednesday, **May 11th**, the Society was given a presentation on plans for the new hospital. This was delivered by **Tim Kilpatrick** of IBI, who was introduced by Paul Brayson. Both stressed that their expertise lay in architectural development and so they couldn't say a great deal about health care.

Future plans were made admirably clear, an informative talk being illustrated by a series of drawings, diagrams, and photographs. These were though, we were reminded, only plans and feedback was encouraged. When finalised, the completed plan would be to

achieve planning permission in the way of an ordinary submission.

Built in 1874, the hospital in Low Greens took over the functions of the Bath House and Infirmary, which had been carried on elsewhere in Berwick. Since then, it has expanded with buildings in a variety of styles. It is a prominent but constrained site pretty much filled by development. It was by no means ideal as the place for a fresh build - the entire present site is to be demolished, including the Bell Tower - so other alternatives, such as Academy land, were looked at, but with archaeological work now complete at the hospital work now complete at the hospital site, it was thought to be the most practical choice. There will not though be much 'elbow room' for any future expansion.

It is envisaged that building will start in the summer of 2017 and take about three years. At first, this was seen as a move in four stages but this has now been got down to a single phase, thus shortening the programme. Every effort will be made to ensure minimum disturbance to residents during construction. Then, as the neighbouring GP Practice will be moving into the building, the traffic

flow would be unlikely to be much different from today's.

It will be a substantial building, occupying 7,600 square metres, but the aim is to make it seem more approachable with the appearance of interlinked buildings, blending with the local character and not being too tall. Stress was laid on the importance of good interior design which is to include a courtyard which could seem like a pleasant surprise. Altogether the illustrations suggested a pleasingly bright and spacious ground floor area. On arrival, a patient would find a single entrance and a multi-skilled receptionist. Where to go would be clear. There would be a good deal of busy bustle on the ground floor while in-patient accommodation would be on the quieter floor above.

A lengthy questions session showed that this is a matter of keen local interest.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

On the evening of Wednesday, **July 8th**, **Tim Manning**, Head of Berwick Academy, gave the Society a joint presentation under

the title of 'Secondary Education within the UK'. Speaking first, Tim Manning explained the width of the title as reflecting the fact that some of his school's pupils come from north of the Border. Those joining the school since 2011 would have been taught in accordance with the Curriculum of Excellence.

Turning to England's system, he denied the often heard assertion that exams had got easier. Rather it was that they now tested different skills. Whereas questions used to rotate in a fairly predictable sequence over the years, and with a broad range of optional questions, there was no longer any choice. Then, while learning a geometric theorem by heart used to be all that was asked for, this knowledge now has to be used to prove something else.

In 2000 schools were given a new curriculum for A&S levels. Much of this was though rushed through in order to have it finished before the General Election. The results of this haste are that the greater part of it is still to be accredited by Ofsted.

He wondered whether those who seem so impressed by the Chinese system would remain so if they saw what actually happens in it. Miked-up teachers confront

classes of 65-80 pupils in which there is no interaction and few happy pupils. The pressure to get good grades is such that there is a high suicide rate.

Alex Widdowson stressed how much rides on exam performance in an extremely competitive employment era. Pupils are now evaluated over eight rather than the former five subjects. Of these, English and Maths are double-weighted, and English has been made harder. Since 2014 less weight has been accorded to vocational subjects and this could disadvantage a pupil who excelled particularly at Art. Another change has been the ending of coursework done in school time and a move to terminal exams.

She demonstrated how technical the assessment has become, instancing a pupil's showing that would have passed muster in 2013 but would no longer do so. In the latter case both the school and the child would be deemed to have failed. Worse, these weighting changes have not been generally made public. Crucial though exams are, the broader ethos of a school, with a love for children at its root, should never be diminished.

Tim Manning then returned for what he termed a 'rant'. First target was the Scottish inspection system, and a question as to the competence of teams that appeared to have so few teachers in them. Ofsted's English inspections are data driven and the downplaying of vocational courses may not do much for the self-esteem of the more practically minded. The former system for Independent Schools was usually led by a retired Headmaster and was usually a positive experience for a school, helping it improve its ethos. That has now been dismantled with the quality of teaching no longer being inspected but 'legal compliance' being the sole yardstick. This though now involves more than 650 items.

From the floor, issues raised included grade inflation, social mobility, integration with industry, manners, the place of the social media, and interview skills. From the platform there was a stress on the need to appreciate the scope of individuality and that education should be seen as offering an 'opportunity to excel'. Concluding the evening, Zoreen Lady Hill warmly thanked both Heads for their participation at such a busy time of the school year and remarked on the increasing degree

of co-operation between State and Independent Schools, while wishing Tim Manning well on his retirement from Longridge after his productive time there.

QUESTION TIME

On the evening of Wednesday, **July 13th**, The Civic Society held another of its Question Time meetings. The panel consisted of the Deputy Mayor, Gregah Roughead, Steve Scott and John Webster.

Leading off, **Gregah Roughhead** spoke of some of the problems facing youth in Berwick today. One of these was the unduly prevalent problem of mental health which in some cases had led to suicide. He contrasted the ready treatment of physical injury with the long wait for any kind of referral and suggested a need for a drop-in centre. Youth did too seem to have been short-changed when the seeming promise of a Northumberland College extension at the Kwik-Save site came to nothing.

Acquiring Foundation Level skills could enable more young people to stay and work in Berwick. His method is to target groups within the 20-30 age group, ask them questions, and in so doing get

something to put in the Neighbourhood Plan. He thought too that there was rather too much emphasis on north-south travel at the expense of cross-Border links.

Steven Scott described himself as a 'facilitator' in regards to his work on the Neighbourhood Plan, in particular with his participation on the tourism working group. The plan originated in 2011 legislation and was designed to let local communities have some kind of say in development. It is though a lengthy process involving public consultation, the collection of evidence, the framing of policies, the publishing of a draft plan and getting feedback, and, if the County Council is happy with the plan, scrutiny by an independent assessor and, finally, a referendum. Once completed, the existence of this plan should expedite planning decisions. The Tourism Group has a good deal of local knowledge but invites specialists when needed. Areas of particular interest are the development of the Heritage Hub, cycle tourism, and prospects for the Quayside and river. Other concerns are accommodation, parking, signage, the size of the Area of National Beauty, and the incorporation of Tweedmouth and Spittal into all relevant planning.

He stressed though that things are still very much at the fact-finding stage.

John Webster then spoke under the title of 'An Incomer's Point of View' having been in Berwick for a year. He started by mentioning some positive aspects. These included the panorama of the river and walls with Berwick being one of the 'best preserved walled towns'; the 'Dubrovnik of the north' one visitor had hailed it, suggesting it was rather underrated. Against that had to be set Marygate, which was more like a thoroughfare, poor signage, and a need for more attractions to get people to linger for longer. He saw a potential for more heritage walks and for promotion of cycling projects.

More specifically, he outlined three projects. First, he saw a need to enhance Marygate by reducing the traffic flow and giving it more of a sense of being a 'shared space' and a 'softer street'. One way in which through-traffic flow could be reduced would be by the closure of the Old Bridge to vehicles. The next suggestion was for a Visitor Centre on the Quayside and with more use of it: possibly visitor trips by boat to Lindisfarne. Then a small indoor market which could be a forum for the sale of speciality

foods was proposed. Illustrations of the type of changes talked about were provided from various locations here and abroad. After the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan, projects had to be identified which would be carried out by a local delivery team with a ring fenced budget.



A shared space town centre

John Webster mentioned a couple of recent reports on traffic and travel management and wondered whether either was under any kind of active scrutiny. This theme was taken up by many from the floor who wondered how it was possible to actually make something happen. One speaker thought Berwick people 'treated with contempt' by the County Council and saw little attempt to join up projects in a meaningful way. Particular issues mentioned were the future of the Sandstell Road Car Park, very much seen as deprivation of a local asset, the moving of the tourist office - 'ludicrous', the siting of the coach

park and the traffic problems likely to arise from the opening of the Sandgate Hotel.

The Chairman, Lady Hill, thanked each of the speakers for the 'detailed analysis' they had shed on aspects of Berwick life.



A Berwick Indoor Market?

BERWICK HISTORY/ BCS JOINT MEETING

On the evening of **19th October** the History and Civic Society held a joint meeting. The speaker, introduced by the history society's chairman Bernard Shaw, was **Mike Fraser**. His subject was The Forgotten Appeaser - Viscount Runciman's Mission to Czechoslovakia. As well as tracing the course of the mission, he gave one of the most lucid accounts of the events immediately preceding the Second World War that one could hope to hear.

Born in South Shields, Runciman inherited the considerable wealth that his father's shipping business had generated, and which enabled the purchase of Doxford Hall. He went into politics with the outlook of a moderate Liberal of the laissez-faire persuasion and held significant offices of state, though was never a very successful minister.

As an individual he was hardly charismatic, having rather the bearing of a back-room person. A French diplomat found him "cold and impassive", and rather like someone "fallen from the pages of Dickens". At the time of his mission, for which he was not first choice, he was a rather unhealthy 67, rather keener on his hobbies than long-distance diplomacy.

A look at the map of Europe at this time showed the vulnerability of the recently created Czechoslovakia, with its substantial number of Sudeten Germans, Chamberlain believing that the desire for a Greater Germany was the limit of Hitler's ambition. Hitler, though, had already decided it would be 'wiped off the map'. Mediation involved contact with some unusual characters, such as the Princess Stephanie, Hitler's 'spy princess', and the supposedly independent Henlein, who was, in

fact, close to Hitler. Runciman's insistence on ample leisure time at weekends led him to spend a good deal of time with the Germans until a death threat drove him to the British Embassy. Benes, the Czech president, who had little time for the Sudeten Germans, in the end capitulated.

The mission was a PR disaster. In Churchill's words, the settlement was a "total and unmitigated defeat". According to a witness, Runciman on return looked 10 years older and a broken man. He resigned from the Government on the invasion of Poland.

OTHER ITEMS

GOVERNOR'S GARDEN

The nature of any development within the walled garden at the old Governor's House at Palace Green was the subject of much discussion over the past decade with various proposals made and rejected as inappropriate for the area. Eventually, Lindisfarne Homes Ltd was given planning permission to restore several buildings attached to the Governor's House, and thought to date from the 1850s, and for the

construction of fifteen new houses around the periphery with a landscaped central area. The work is now nearing completion and in my opinion (admittedly biased as I have bought one of the restored houses) is an attractive development that has enhanced the garden area which had become a derelict site in recent years.

The garden is being laid out at the moment as seen in the recent photo, which shows the path being laid to a central circular area that will have plants growing on trellis and seating for the residents to use during the scorching Berwick summers.



The Governor's House itself dates back to 1715 and is thought to have been designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor (who also designed the stunning All Souls College in Oxford) as part of the Berwick garrison barracks. Originally built for the Military Governors, it was

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE

apparently little used by them over the years and by 1815 was converted into rooms for officers.

The house and garden was sold to George Carr round about 1840, who built a brew house and malting barn in the gardens and let off another part as a timber yard.

By 1849 the house was being used as a boarding school for girls then Carr sold off the house and yard to Patience Johnson in 1855 who continued the brewing business as the Tweed Brewery.

This survived until 1934 when it was taken over and traded under the name of Berwick Breweries until the late 1950s although brewing had ceased by then and the site was used simply as a bottling plant. In recent years the site was part of the Lindisfarne Mead business with a pottery, museum and other activities.

The site itself goes back a long way and under the walled garden are the remains of an early mediaeval Carmelite Friary, which is one reason why the central area has not been built on.

John Webster

It's a long slow process to produce a Neighbourhood Plan with no paid staff, but hopefully worth it once fully adopted following referendum, independent examination and adoption by NCC as legally part of the development plan.

Progress is being made, and some grant assistance is helping. The process of applying for grants and indeed determining which grant packages are appropriate for us is, in itself, a time consuming task.

One round of public consultation back in February this year helped to decide on the topics to be covered, and recently an initial vision with aims and objectives has been compiled by the steering group and made public. In the meantime necessary evidence is being gathered by working groups for each topic to help substantiate our draft policies - such evidence includes housing needs assessments (coordinated by the Housing Working group) and updated character appraisals (coordinated by the Built Environment working group). Draft policies will go out for further public input sometime next year hopefully.

The Built Environment working group may be of particular interest to Civic Society members. This group has gathered relevant data on existing heritage assets, potential for new local listings and is currently trying to determine the extent to which the Plan can make policies pertaining to the public realm - a somewhat grey area in terms of the regulations.

The Built Environment group aims to produce policies that offer more detailed protection for heritage assets, beyond the Core Strategy, and also more detailed urban design policies to help ensure that new development is sympathetic with the local environment and heritage assets in particular.

Policies will also, hopefully, promote positive change for areas of public realm, much of which is currently highway land of some sort.

Elaine Paterson

**CAPTAIN FRANCIS
MARTIN NORMAN
R.N. J.P.**

**DONOR OF THE
CASTLEGATE
FOUNTAIN**

"Deliver this to Mr. Hewitt in the right Lancaster battery, and get back as soon as possible." "Get back," I thought; "shall I ever get there?" as I ran off to execute my mission.

This was the instruction to Norman, then a young midshipman, at the height of the battle of Inkerman during the Crimean War. It meant crossing an area of about 400 yards 'across which from several directions and several sources were flying shot and shell of all sorts - about mid-way I passed a shell lying on the ground and fizzing away in a manner far from agreeable.' The message though was delivered and he got back.

Earlier he had been on the brink of what would have been a desperate encounter when stationed on a hillock with a naval detachment in reserve with orders to engage the enemy with cutlasses should their

troops force their way that far. Fortunately, no engagement took place or, as The Berwick Journal observed, Captain Norman might never have seen Berwick. As it was he survived without a scratch and was awarded the Inkerman clasp to add to his Crimean medal.

His Crimean experience left a deep mark. When in the trenches before Sebastopol, he never forgot sights such as that outside a hospital marquee where there was 'a heap of amputated limbs with boots and stockings on, and as he was gazing at the gruesome sight a surgeon came out from the tent and threw some more limbs past him on to the heap as if they were just a lot of old bones.'

Though he returned from the Crimea unscathed he was wounded in an action in the Chinese War when, with a string of small boats towed up the Canton river to try to put a shore battery out of action, he was shot in the throat by a gingal, a swivel-musket capable of firing hundreds of small bullets or slugs. It bled profusely but turned out less serious than it first looked.

Retired from the navy, Captain Norman came to Berwick, which he came to call the Home of his adoption, living at Cheviot House,

and for the next forty years devoted himself to service to the town. He had two spells as Mayor and two as Sheriff and for some while was the Borough's senior magistrate. In 1903 he was made an Honorary Freeman. Some saw in him traces of a 'quarter-deck manner, but, as a friend observed, 'if this were taken to mean brusqueness or impatience, nothing was further from his nature - he was full of old-time courtesy, precision, punctuality, scrupulous observance of obligations and performance of duties - (and expecting the same of others).

He came to take a keen interest in the history of the town, publishing a pamphlet on The Old Bridge while Mayor. In it he was against any plan to alter it except under the guidance of a competent engineer. At that time there had been talk of widening it.

Later he published his official guide to 'The Fortifications of Berwick-upon-Tweed', written mainly for the benefit of visitors. His literary ability was evident in his journalism and books where his interest in archaeological and scientific matters was a prominent theme. One of his books, 'At School and At Sea' opened with his time at Harrow, which he can

barely have left before being dispatched to the Crimea.

He did too give regular talks, sometimes on the Crimea. He recalled a most oddly discoloured cloud on the horizon which he was convinced was an infectious miasma of a kind that caused cholera. That was at one time quite a widespread view. On the continent artillery was sometimes deployed to disperse such noxious clouds. On a different occasion he took part in a demonstration arranged by the Spittal postmaster, an early enthusiast for the telephone, to demonstrate its working. He emerged from the Town Hall's billiard room; where he'd been put on his own, to announce to the company that he had indeed heard a voice on the line.

A deeply committed Christian, he was presented in 1911 with an illuminated address by the four parishes of the Borough as a mark of gratitude for his work for the church, one aspect of which was his Bible classes for groups of youths held at his home. On one occasion he presided over a gathering of a large number of Tweedmouth children, under the auspices of the Sunday School Union, and had to announce the

unfortunate choice of hymn: 'Here we suffer Grief and Pain'.

By the time of the outbreak of The Great War he was one of a small band of surviving Crimean War veterans and had come to be regarded very much as Berwick's Grand Old Man. He continued to take a keen interest in the town, being strongly critical of the wartime use of the Cumberland Bastion which he saw as being 'hooliganed'. He died in October, 1918.

Michael Cullen



THE MAIN GUARD



The Main Guard has had a successful season over the June/July/August/September open period. There was a total of 5,249 visitors. Our sales of books, leaflets etc. made £467.45 and donations totalled £632.29.

The Guild and Governors Exhibition in the Officers Room was carried on, with a few additions, for a second year. The interest and complimentary appreciative comments seemed to be even better this year than last and stewards had many interesting conversations with visitors. The History of A Garrison Town Exhibition in the Soldier's Room was completed with Jim Herbert producing the fifth panel on the modern era. The room had the additional interest of panels from The Building Study Group concerning Bridge Street completed in 2011.

We are very grateful to all the stewards - particularly those who sign up for regular slots. Many find stewarding very enjoyable and we should welcome more members agreeing to do this. Marion Mead has done a great job in looking after the Main Guard finances and publications again this year and our thanks go to her.

The renewal of the Society's base in the Main Guard with English Heritage has just been signed. It is hoped that we can, in the future, take advantage of the surrounding grass area and the underground cellar adjacent to the building.

The Berwick Civic Society is a Registered Charity (No. 508953)

Website: www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Office Bearers 2016-2017

Chairman..... *Zoreen Hill*

Vice-Chairman..... *Catherine Seymour*

Deputy Vice-Chairman..... *John Webster*

Hon. Treasurer..... *Michael Gallico*

Membership Secretary..... *Catherine Seymour*

Please feel free to email any of the Society or to request a membership form at: contact@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

