



### Dates for Your Diary

**Saturday 20th October**

**Open Morning**

Music Room, Central Library  
Castle Street, Exeter

10.30am to 12.15pm

**Tuesday 23rd October**

**Civic Society 51st AGM**

Devon & Exeter Institution  
7 Cathedral Close

6.30pm start followed by supper.  
Supper booking form to be sent  
in by **16th October**

**Saturday 17th November**

Library closed

**NO OPEN MORNING**

**Saturday 15th December**

**Saturday 19th January 2013**

**Open Morning (note new venue)**

Hoskins Room, West Country  
Studies Library

Castle Street, Exeter

(next door to central library)

10.30am to 12.15pm

**Saturday 9th February 2013**

**Exeter's Elizabethan Buildings  
and its Orphans' Court**

A talk by Exeter historians  
Todd Gray and John Allan

2.00pm to 5.00pm

St Stephen's Church

High Street, Exeter

Admission £3 booked in advance  
through the Secretary (contact  
details on page 6).

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**Open Mornings** have a 10-minute  
speaker at 11.00am, and sometimes  
a discussion on current issues.  
Visitors and guests are welcome  
and refreshments provided.

### **EXETER'S EXPANDING**

Proposals for development in Exeter continue unabated and you would certainly not think the Country is in recession. Although the Society's consideration is only for development within the City (but not Topsham as they have their own Civic Society), the City's expansion is now taking place to the east in East Devon, and probably to the south of Alphington (although there have not been any planning applications in that area yet). Many of the proposed major housing development sites in the City are currently subject to Planning Applications, even though these sites are expected contribute towards the City's infrastructure up to the year 2026. And we are seeing some applications for large commercial and employment developments both within Exeter and to the east of the motorway. We can expect developers to submit outline proposals for the bus and coach station in the Autumn, keep an eye on the Express & Echo and express any concerns to the City Council planners. It is important that concerns are raised at the early stages of any major development as it may be too late to challenge something later in the planning process once it has been approved in principle.

### **VACANCY FOR PROGRAMME SECRETARY**

Margo Swift was unable to stand down as planned last year as no-one came forward. She has been very kindly arranging events for us all year but feels she can no longer carry on with this. This is a very important role because we need to hold regular events of some kind to meet our constitution. Anyone taking on this role would be fully supported by the committee and I'm sure would find it very enjoyable. There is also the possibility that this could be a shared role between two or more members, or that members could organise individual events. We are open to suggestions, and please phone for a chat if you'd like to know more.

## DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Our latest idea is to test whether the Society can provide a forum for discussion of development plans. For instance, recent letters to the Express and Echo have indicated a strong wish for a sizeable theatre in the city, possibly as part of the bus station development. The Society cannot be a pressure group, but it can usefully promote debate. Please encourage interested people to get in touch; whether or not they wish to join the Society their views will be welcome.

## AGM

Please book your meal in advance and remember if you have done so. At least once in the past we have had to point out to an eager eater that the loaded plate has not been paid for, a somewhat embarrassing situation.

## From Keith Lewis - Planning Sub-Committee - Development Proposals for the City

The City Council has recently consulted on their proposed Development Principles as well as some additional sites for development and infrastructure. The consultation was extended to 28 September to encourage more response. The Planning Sub-Committee has sent a lengthy and detailed response expressing our views and concerns. This can be found in the member's area. The consultation documents can be found on the City Council website at <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14278>. Proposals are largely sensible but we didn't think they were substantial enough in some cases, and although there were few surprises, a new link road between Marsh Barton and Water Lane is a proposal which could have a significant impact on travel west of the Exe (page 72 of consultation document).

If you haven't yet renewed, membership subscriptions are due 1st October

### 51st Annual General Meeting

Please note the date and venue:

Date: **Tuesday 23rd October 2012**

Time: 6.30pm

Place: Devon and Exeter Institution

Your supper booking form has either been sent to you by e-mail or is with this newsletter. If you don't have one then please let us know immediately. Notification of an AOB item should be sent to the Secretary (see back page) as soon as possible, certainly no later than 18th October.

### CHANGES TO CITY CENTRE TRAFFIC

By the time this newsletter is received the John Lewis store will be close to opening and the new road layouts will be fully functioning. It is worrying that concerns about the level of traffic in York Road are already emerging, and this can only get worse once the John Lewis car park is re-opened as this is the primary route to and from that car park. A young child was injured at the start of the new term on her way to St Sidwell's School, with the school expressing concern about the increased level of traffic in the area. This is an area of the City that needs our scrutiny to ensure the road network is fit for purpose and not detrimental to local communities.

## From Peter Caspar - Treasurer

I have now officially been treasurer for a few months during which time I have been putting the accounts onto a system which is more suitable for me. I can report that the Society is solvent, and I hope to give you a full picture at our A.G.M. on 23rd October.

My thanks to those members who have already paid their subscriptions either in cash, cheque or standing order. Subscriptions are the main income for the Society and it is gratifying to receive these early in our financial year; if you are able to Gift Aid and haven't completed a form, then please do so as it increases our income significantly.

There are plenty of plaques in Exeter commemorating a great range of people and events, from the Devon Witches who were the last people in England to be executed for witchcraft, to marking the opening of the Exeter by-pass. But only a handful of plaques in the city are “blue plaques”.

So when the Civic Society appealed for a blue plaques coordinator to step forward, two big questions needed answering. Actually there was a third question, why would anyone do it? But I will deal with that later.

The most important and immediate question was, of course, what subjects should the Civic Society plaques celebrate?

The big joy of commemorative plaques is the sense of surprise and discovery they bring. To come across unexpectedly a building with links to a famous person during the course of history connects past and present in a very direct way. So rather than select sites for their historical or architectural interest alone, the committee decided to re-launch its plaques scheme by erecting plaques that celebrate Exeter’s associations with notable people, on buildings or sites with which the person commemorated had a specific connection.

People and place will be celebrated at the same time. The stronger the connection with Exeter, the stronger the case for a plaque, so the scheme will enhance the pride Exeter can take in its heritage and provide interest and information for residents and visitors alike.

The second big question was what form should the plaques take? The round blue plaque, easily legible with white lettering, and made famous by the familiar blue plaques in London, is the ideal choice. But the Civic Society’s plaques will also carry the Society’s Wyvern logo, making them stylish as well as distinctive.

Two plaques are currently in progress. Charles Dickens, who was born 200 years ago this year, will be commemorated by a plaque on the frontage of 143 Fore Street (*picture right*), where he used to stay with his friend Thomas Latimer when they were both young reporters. Latimer became a pioneering and radical Exeter journalist, editor of the *Western Times*, and the building in Fore Street was his printworks as well as his home.

A second plaque will go on the front of the Royal Clarence Hotel, marking the fact that Franz Liszt, the Hungarian composer and virtuoso pianist, gave two recitals there on successive days in 1840. While I was researching the story of Liszt’s visit, I found that he composed a piece of piano music inspired by his stay in Exeter and perhaps even wrote it while he was here. It is called “Exeter Preludio”, but it lasts only 20 seconds!

Putting up a plaque is sometimes a frustratingly slow process. To begin with, there must be certainty that the person being commemorated had the connection with the building proposed, which often involves intriguing research to sort out fact from myth.

For example, a rival site for the Dickens plaque was the Turks Head in the High Street, where Dickens is said to have been inspired by a customer to create the character of the Fat Boy in *The Pickwick Papers*, but there is no reliable evidence for this attractive tale. Permission is required from the owner of the building involved, and from the city council if it is a listed building, which is often the case. The design from the plaque manufacturers must be meticulously checked because it cannot be altered once it is up, and so on. Will the Dickens and Liszt plaques be in place this year? At this stage, it is hoped so.

Running alongside is a project to put information about the best of Exeter’s existing plaques onto the website so people can find out more and download a trail of the most interesting ones. Members and the public will also be able to nominate subjects for new plaques through the website. There are still scores of possibilities for blue plaques, given Exeter’s rich history, far more than current funds will allow; and it is a mix of popular figures and the great and the good.

Which brings me finally to that third question, Why would anyone want to take all this on? It is worthwhile, fascinating and can be fun, and involves a variety of activities and skills. But without doubt, a small team will achieve more than one person. Will you consider volunteering for a blue plaques group? You could quite literally make your mark on Exeter, a permanent mark that will bring enjoyment and interest to countless people.

**If you are interested in joining the blue plaques project, please contact John Monks on [jbmonks@btinternet.com](mailto:jbmonks@btinternet.com) or phone 01392 493559**



Much of Planning sub-committee's time and indeed interest has been spent on studying and preparing a response to Exeter City Council's 'Site Allocations and Development Management Plan' draft document. As you will, I hope, have noticed the Forward Planners prepared a tip-of-the-iceberg version of this document, displayed at the Civic Centre, libraries and some schools, with eleven A1 boards giving details and maps of possible development in the city and inviting residents to 'Have your say'. Perhaps some members will even have been inspired to study the 81 page document on which the colourful display was based. It was available on line – in fact it still is as I write this as the deadline for response was extended, twice. The document was also available in the Civic Centre and the Forward Planners, who are always helpful as are all the Planning department, provided a copy on extended loan. Perhaps some members would like to study it. Do let me know if you would. Eventually the Council will produce a finished document possibly incorporating some of the comments received.

Later paragraphs of this Newsletter report will deal with the Planning sub-committee's response to the draft document, but first a few examples of the varied planning applications which we have discussed and commented on in the last few months, starting with an update on Acacia House and Magnolia House which you will remember from the last Newsletter. At last, with the encouragement of the Conservation Officer, a successful design was achieved for the conversion of these two venerable houses to three viable dwellings, but the two new houses at the prominent corner of Friar's Gate really exercised the City Council's Planning Committee who deferred decision until they had visited the site *en masse* – which is quite unusual and shows the members wish to make the best decision for this site. Eventually, when all these efforts had been made, the application for the conversion and the new build gained approval - but will be very closely watched.

One more update – we were glad to know that, although the conversion of Magdalen House and the addition of a terrace of three houses gained approval the extra pair nearest to Magdalen Road, to whose design we objected, did not. An application for a new design for the two is on a recent list which we will be studying and then discussing in early October.

So far the result of the consultation and definitive plans for the site which is still being called the 'Bus Station Site' have not been published, but the site has grown north-eastwards, now extending beyond Summerland Street to reach, but not include, the very fine roundabout at the top of Sidwell Street. The extension seems entirely logical, but we trust that the existence of Summerland Street, which has become a major thoroughfare, will not be compromised. Perhaps by the time of the next Newsletter our comments on the full planning application for the entire area will fill the Planning sub-committee report.

Meanwhile we will comment on several applications which we have considered in the last four months. You will recall that we were very happy about the proposal by the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education to relocate to the northern part of the site between Ringswell Avenue and Ribston Avenue, long vacated by St Luke's School. After some amendments relating to access the application was successful. Of course the move will leave the Deaf School's present site on Topsham Road available for development and there may well be future applications which will not be greeted with acclaim, by local residents or by Planning sub-committee. When these plans materialize we should be very happy to hear members' views on the proposals. In fact we should be glad to hear any comments on any of the many applications each month.

In June we spent much time studying a huge development which will create over three hundred dwellings just south of Monkerton and another six hundred or so plus offices and local facilities just beyond the Science Park in East Devon. The two areas will be linked by being designated Tithebarn Green and by Tithebarn Lane which crosses the motorway and will be upgraded to carry transport, including a bus service, from Cumberland Way to the Honiton Road [and probably on to distant Cranbrook]. So far this is an outline planning application, but there are hints of a health and fitness centre, a garden centre, a crèche, various other community facilities, an employment area and a park and ride facility. All of these would be in the East Devon part of the scheme. We look forward, with some trepidation, to the more detailed applications which will no doubt fill a great many files. East Devon District Council has communicated several times, although not concerning Tithebarn Green.

The most recent letter asked us to view their intentions for the District's villages. We are happy to do so although feeling that we have no great involvement with these, but times are changing and there is clearly going to be much more connection between Exeter and the region which East Devon calls its 'West End'.

Sometimes we are glad to hear that a proposal about which we have written and/or spoken with Planning Officers has been sent back for amendments or even refused, as in the recent case of an additional house behind two houses in St David's Hill which would loom over Little Silver. Occasionally we are slightly surprised that approval is readily given to buildings, as recently happened with two bungalows in Matford Avenue, which some of us consider too large for their situations. Sometimes we feel the need to object although we expect that no change will happen. Recent examples in a joint application are the Premier Inn and Brewer's Fayre restaurant proposed for the area between the Met Office and the Honiton Road, referred to as a 'Landmark Building'. We feel it is not worthy of the title and hope that, even if inevitable, it will be hidden by hedges. The Met Office itself, of course, is truly a landmark building, but sadly is not visible from the road.

This month we are objecting to three very different proposals all in very noticeable situations: for a rather metallic shop front next to the Guildhall; for an hotel to replace the redundant National House diagonally opposite to the Clock Tower at the head of Queen Street; and to demolition and redevelopment of the Country House Inn. The hotel is likely to be too tall and has a rather massive appearance and the

proposed three houses replacing the Inn in the narrow space alongside Topsham Road would give very poor provision for the eventual occupants. In fact I would prefer to see the Inn removed completely, slightly easing congestion in that part of Topsham Road, but I don't suppose that Heavitree Brewery would agree.

This penultimate paragraph will return to the major topic, the Site Allocation and Development Management Development Plan Document which will, when completed: allocate land for new development; designate land for protection, safeguarding or specific policies; give guidance on whether applications should be given planning permission; and show which land is designated for particular purposes, such as housing, employment et cetera. The DPD is currently in the form of a consultation draft which includes sixty seven maps, a statement of Exeter's Vision for Sustainable Development, a great deal of explanatory text, and the thirty nine statements, intended for the eventual document, on which we are invited to comment, as are all Exeter residents. Planning sub-committee was able to 'agree with the preferred approach' in about half of these and make what we hope are useful comments on the others. In some cases we were quite vehement. Copies of the draft document and of our reply will be available at an Open Morning and after the AGM.

The Red Cow was the tailpiece of the last report and is so again. You will remember that it had at last achieved approval as a new building arranged as group flats of the type giving accommodation to groups of students. It now seems that the flats can be bought individually. We wonder whether each will separately have to apply for HMO status

### From Keith Lewis - Planning Sub-Committee - a new theatre for Exeter?

Those that read the Express & Echo regularly cannot have failed to notice the many letters in recent months calling for Exeter to have a new town centre theatre to challenge Plymouth's Theatre Royal, and that it should be on the bus & coach station site. This would be wonderful, but also very expensive to both build and operate. And we are already blessed with many small theatres providing a diverse range of performance. The committee has agreed to support local public discussion about the desirability and possibility of a new theatre in the City, although we must stress that we have an open mind about its viability. We will invite anybody interested in such a debate to register their interest with us at either our Saturday meetings, or in writing. Watch this space! If you are interested in joining the debate, and perhaps helping to host the event, please contact Felicity Murdin (details on back page).

**WEBSITE**

The website continues to develop and we are hoping to get the section on Blue Plaques up and running before the end of the year. This may start slowly but will be added to in time as more information is compiled.

**MEMBERSHIPS**

Many thanks to all members who have renewed their subscriptions and have tolerated the reminders I keep sending out, especially those who pay by standing order and had to increase it again. Hopefully next year they can all go smoothly through without any chasing up!

**RECRUITMENT**

Recruitment of new and active members is a high priority for the society and we are currently focused on this as a matter of importance. If we can get our message across to the public this will certainly benefit us because there are a lot of people who care about the current developments going on in and around Exeter. We would like to infiltrate the workplace as this will reach a lot of people, so if you have any ideas on how we can do this please contact the Secretary. Promotional material for distribution can be provided either by e-mail or as hard copies.

From Keith Lewis - Planning Sub-Committee

**The growing population is putting pressure on the city's infrastructure**

Past housing developments have resulted in a large increase in Exeter's population, and a resultant surge in births, higher than ever before. This has resulted in a shortage of school places which has required the County Council to expand several of Exeter's schools and plan for new schools. East of the Exe has seen Clyst Heath, Countess Wear and Newtown expanded, and to the west, Exwick Heights and Bowhill Primary schools. There will soon be consultation to expand 2 more schools to cope with children already living in the City but yet to start school, with nurseries and preschools struggling to cope with current demand. New housing will result in new Primary school on the former Royal Naval Stores area to the north of Topsham Road, and there is a current outline planning application for a school at Monkerton behind St Lukes Science and Sports College off Hill Barton Road. There is also the possibility of new schools east of Pinhoe (developers seem to be installing sewers in readiness for the new housing) and south of Alphington. All of this growth will put pressure on our secondary schools in about 5 years time. It is likely that other infrastructure such as surgeries and shops will also need to expand, or new provision provided. Three new stations are proposed at Newcourt, Hill Barton and Marsh Barton to improve travel to the city centre and work places. Developers have already made financial contributions as part of planning approvals for new homes so the stations are not being funded wholly from public funds.

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