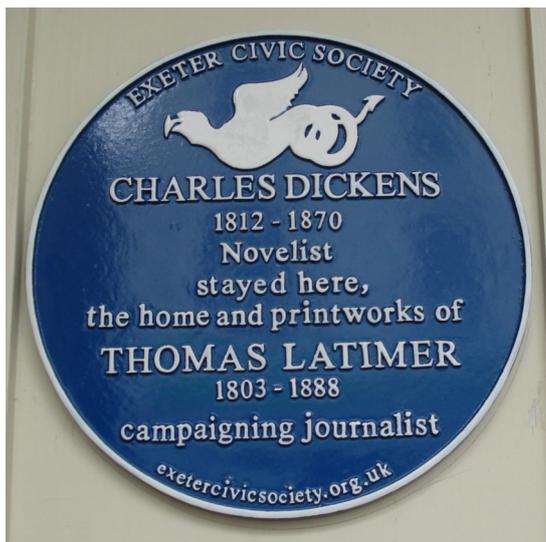


Newsletter - Autumn 2013

UNVEILING OF CIVIC SOCIETY BLUE PLAQUE TO CHARLES DICKENS AND THOMAS LATIMER

On 16th August 2013 Civic Society members turned out with enthusiasm to see the unveiling of another new Blue Plaque in Exeter, this time commemorating the association of Charles Dickens and campaigning journalist Thomas Latimer with 143 Fore Street, Exeter. The plaque was unveiled at 11.30am by journalist and crime writer Simon Hall on behalf of Exeter Civic Society. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of recognising the two men being celebrated.



The Society's Chairman Felicity Murdin gave a brief introduction before the unveiling and Nigel Bush of Exeter's Red Coat Guides also attended the event. Everyone was then invited to take a short walk down Fore Street for refreshments at a delightful vintage tea room called 'Hidden Treasure'.

As soon as the plaque was unveiled and the photos taken our Blue Plaque Co-ordinator John Monks made sure the details were on the Blue Plaque pages of our website. This time the plaque was listed under both Dickens and Latimer, along with a slide show of the unveiling.

Dickens and Latimer met when a parliamentary election was taking place in Exeter and on nomination day, 1 May 1835, the *Morning Chronicle* sent its ablest shorthand writer and reporter from London to cover the hustings at Exeter Castle. He was the 23-year-old Charles Dickens, and after that the two men were firm friends. Dickens visited Latimer at least twice at 143 Fore Street, Exeter, which were both Latimer's home and the *Western Times* office and print works. Many more details on Dickens and Latimer can be found in the **Blue Plaque Guide** on our website.



TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

At the last ECS committee meeting we agreed that it would be helpful to have a sub-committee to monitor and investigate all matters regarding transportation.



This could be a wide remit and look at pedestrian access, cycling (noting recent debate in Express & Echo about shared cycleways), car and transport congestion, and public transport. Our constitution says we will 'promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit.', and whilst our prime area of activity has related to buildings, the impact of transport upon the built environment appears to be having a detrimental impact at busy times of weekdays and at weekends. Planning by both the City and County Councils appears to be inadequate, with many residential and commercial developments resulting in piecemeal adjustments to our road network without a master plan being in place to cope with the City's expansion.

There was an initial discussion at the September Saturday morning meeting with several people raising issues. If you would like to be part of a sub committee group, or wish to offer your views to it, please contact Keith Lewis by Email at keith.lewis@devon.gov.uk or by telephone, 07964 219153.

Guided Tour of Tuckers' Hall - by Ann Kennedy

On Saturday, 6th June, we welcomed members of the Tiverton Civic Society who joined us for a tour of **Tuckers' Hall** where a talk had been arranged for us all. **Mike Walker** - the Heritage Manager - guided us to the first floor of this impressive building on Fore Street which has been extensively refurbished and re-opened. He told us about the history of the building. We learnt that the Hall started its life as a Chapel in 1471 and was used for worship by the fraternity or Guild of Weavers, Fullers & Shearmen. The land on which it was built was given to them (4 acres in all including an orchard) and as it lay inside the City Wall, its position denoted the power of the guild early on.

Originally, it was a one-storey building and members escaped the fate of other, local religious buildings which suffered destruction during the Reformation of the mid-16th century. Cleverly, Guild members saw what was coming and took away artefacts which exhibited religious roots - carved angels, the altar and the screen. Ostensibly, the building became a meeting hall and during the 1560's - 80's, another floor was added. This then became the venue for the Merchants and Mill owners connected with the Guild; they were the governing body who made all decisions concerning the Guild's activities - they became very rich and powerful!

Various changes to the building took place during the 16th and 17th Centuries. Some of the internal walls were painted with murals, some of which survive on the east wall.



Oak panelling was introduced during the 1630's and it's clear that we were able to spot the work of the tradesmen who fashioned their work as they often left their initial carved into the wood.

During the latter half of the 18th century, major changes led to a slump in Exeter's woollen trade. The Napoleonic War prevented vessels carrying cloth bales to the Continent in the English Channel, so that the city's merchants could not export their wares to the Continent. The discovery of the steam engine by James Watt put paid to the water mill industry on the Exe. As Devon has no coal to power the mills, cloth making moved to the North.

By the middle of the 19th century, it was noted that the south side of the building needed to be repaired and in the mid 1870's, money was raised to reconstruct the wall in the Victorian Gothic style we see today.

The afternoon concluded with an opportunity to see parts of the rest of the Hall which included the Museum showing story boards, an interactive computer and full-size uniforms of the guild Master - trimmed with ermine, in addition to the uniforms of the Beadle and under Warden.

We were able to socialise at the end of the afternoon and all agreed that this was indeed a "hidden Gem of Exeter"

Local Democracy Week- Exeter City Council –14th to 18th October 2013

The European Union has established a Local Democracy Day across Europe for the past few years to support citizens in finding out more about what is happening in their area. This year Exeter City Council has signed up to this initiative, so if you want to know more about the process for district and city councils and councillors, and how they make decisions that affect people's lives, visit or monitor an event. We would encourage members to attend some of these events, and if you do please give your feedback to our secretary Pamela Coleman.

Further information on the City Council website at:

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14836>

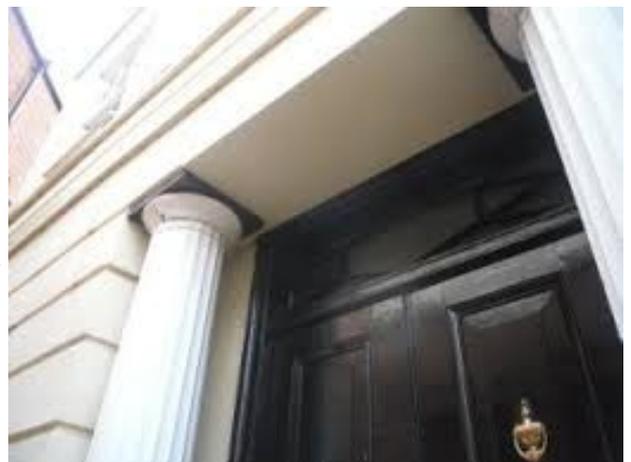
This year Exeter City Council is working with Exeter CVS and Exeter College students to offer a range of options for residents to find out more about how democracy is working in the city.

These include:-

- * **Mini Mayor for the Day.** School children write their views about being a Mayor.
Council meeting - Tuesday 15 from 6 PM at the Guildhall. This is the full council.
- * **Never mind the Ballots!** From 6.30, Bike Shed Theatre - informal discussions with local councillors and decision makers.
- * **Mini Manifesto - Filming by Exeter College Students** recording the views of local people.
- * **Make a difference: Be a Councillor**, find out what is involved - Thursday 17 6.30 - 8.30 and Friday 18 10.00 to 12.00.
- * **Any Questions - Friday 18, 7 - 9 PM** Panel of local politicians, including Ben Bradshaw MP.

Guided Tour of Exeter Synagogue - by Felicity Murdin

On July 13 last, members and friends of ECS enjoyed the rare opportunity of visiting Exeter Synagogue. It was a privilege to see the interior of this little-known gem of a building, to be shown its magnificent scrolls and other treasures, and to learn something of the past history of Jews in Exeter. The synagogue is still in regular use, serving a wide area of the southwest. We learned how services are conducted and had the opportunity to ask all sorts of questions. Our warm thanks go to **Richard Halsey** for his enthusiastic and enthralling presentation, and to our Programme Secretary Ruth McLeish for arranging the visit.



New Members' Evening

On 17th September we held a second new members' evening at the White Hart Hotel in South Street, welcoming 12 new members. With three committee members in attendance, we had a lively discussion about some of the issues people are concerned about including transport, schools and an Exeter events guide (or lack of it). We would like to hold this event twice a year to enable new members to meet up, and as invariably some of those invited are not able to come they can have another opportunity a few months later.

First the good news. You will remember how perturbed we, and very many local objectors, were by the application to build a multi-storey hotel on the corner of New North Road and Queen Street, opposite to the Clock Tower. The hotel was not named but would have been of the Premier Inn type and would have in no way enhanced the entrance to Queen Street and so to the centre of the City. We were not surprised when a second, slightly amended, application succeeded the first and our further objections quickly followed. At the time of the last Civic Society News we and the entire locality were waiting with trepidation for the next application to spring on us, but the original agents made no further communication, even to the Planning Officers. When the next proposal for use of the building became known it delighted us and I imagine that the neighbourhood sighed with relief. The outward appearance of the building remains more or less unaltered, and so is still not particularly 'enhancing' the street scene, but it now has a very worthwhile use as addition to Exeter College. In the last decade or so Exeter College has taken on several buildings in Queen Street and has built several more behind those on the west side. The plans are always impressively well presented and the work is carried out very soon after approval is granted. In this case National House (it still retains its name) was renovated where needed and had services in place for the start of the new term in September!

By early September Exeter College's plans for its next enterprise were available to view; a proposal for conversion and extension of Rougemont House, one of Exeter's favourite Listed buildings, to be a Mathematics School for 16–19 year olds, partly funded we understand by government initiatives and supported by the interest of the University, and intended eventually to attract students from the whole Southwest some of whom it is suggested could stay for part of the week in University accommodation. The application might interest members with time for study as it contains much information on the building, on what lies beneath it, and on the care and renovation which will be given to it, with all of which planning sub-committee is perfectly happy. We have written to the Planning department of our concern that the tower for stairs and a lift, which is a necessary addition to the existing House, is too angular and have suggested that a curved outline would be more in keeping; and we welcome the continuing

consideration which the Conservation Officer is giving to the design of this structure and the choice of cladding.

I hope that Civic Society members will be glad to see this Exeter landmark brought back to life. This seems a good point to remind you that we would be very glad to have your comments on any planning matters and on our reactions to the applications even, indeed especially, if you think we are talking nonsense. And we would of course be delighted to hear from anyone who may be considering joining us; in which context there is more good news. The sub-committee now again has five members as Paul Barkley joined us in July. Paul is a fairly recent member of Exeter Civic Society who is by training a lawyer and whose professional work involves giving advice to individuals and developers intending to make planning applications and to pursue appeals. He will, of course, stand aside from sub-committee discussion of any matter in which he is professionally involved. If you are thinking of joining please do not be deterred by supposing deep knowledge is necessary; all you need to begin with is the ability to hold a map the right way up and a consuming interest in the continued well-being of Exeter.

In the last four months we have discussed a wide variety of applications ranging from a single door in Bedford Street to the many acres covered by Devon and Exeter Constabulary at Middlemoor. The door is that of Strutt and Parker's Listed office on Southernhay which opens on to Bedford Street and which they wish to partly glaze or replace with glass to be more welcoming to passers by. There has been long negotiation between the firm and the Conservation Officer, with conversations with English Heritage and with us and we all hope that an acceptable compromise can be reached before winter sets in.

The large expanse of Middlemoor is the subject of two major applications of which you may have read in the press. Morrisons propose to build a large supermarket on the northern part of the site and to construct large buildings further south to give much needed space and improved facilities for the Police. In a related outline proposal Morrison's would also build two residential areas in the Middlemoor expanse so increasing the City's housing stock. The utilitarian design of both the supermarket and the Police Hub are acceptable in this situation, but we have written to the City Council of the sub-committee's concern that the

exit and access at the northern part of the site will, in spite of highway alterations which they propose to provide, overload traffic routes in this area. Our concern re traffic congestion on a far reaching scale has also prompted letters to East Devon District Council and Devon County Council on fears for increased highway problems on roads approaching Exeter which will result if access roads to and from the development at Pinn Court Farm are accepted. Although the Pinn Court Farm development, on the eastern edge of Pinhoe, is in East Devon District not in Exeter it is one of many which will greatly affect the City or at least its transport routes. These two examples make clear how very necessary it is for Exeter Civic Society to (re)create a Transport sub-committee, which may also have some interesting railway matters to consider in the next few years.

One recent planning application involved a building associated with St David's Station but for seven years deserted and, it is claimed, so deteriorated as to be past repair and reuse that an application has been made to demolish it. It is the attractive two-storey building at the north corner of the station's forecourt sometimes known as the White House and seen by everyone visiting the station. It is understandable that an authority planning to redesign the area in front of the station within the next few years should wish to know that this building need not be included, but it is not permissible to demolish a structure without approved plans for the use of the piece of land it sits on and we have objected in these terms to the Planners...who of course know that already but seem glad to have our views.

We are guessing that several applications in the last few months are fore-runners of more, seeking change of use of HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) to two or more apartments, usually with a certain amount of improvement. Each application implies that the increase in large student blocks of cluster flats makes letting of ordinary houses to groups of students less easy,

which also may account for the number of 'To Let' signs. If, as seems to be the case so far, this results in the return of these houses to general residential use and even the Council's desired 'family occupation' we are not at all likely to object to these 'change of use' applications.

However we are concerned by the end result of two recent 'change of use' applications each of which wished to change from the Retail category to that for Finance and business. One, granted approval on Appeal against the Council's refusal, was for the interesting building on the corner of Paul Street and Queen Street which has been empty for over a year since Chandni Chowk migrated to the Custom House. The other was for the Edna Sherrell flower shop which enhanced Sidwell Street for nearly 50 years. Both have now applied to become branches of Coral, the betting firm, which certainly comes within the Finance category. But we fear that Sidwell Street will not be improved as a continuation of High Street which was the Council's expressed intention when New North Road was narrowed between Waterstones and John Lewis, and we fear that the Paul Street-Queen Street corner will become a problem for pedestrians. We are writing to the City to make these comments and to object to several structural points.

In case readers were hoping for news of the Bus Station redevelopment expected in each of at least the last three Newsletters I can say that this seems to be receding into the future and is not likely to come forward before 2014 or 2015. We wonder if it will then have to be accompanied by a renewed public consultation.

As a tailpiece the news of 157-159 Heavitree Road, the small and deteriorating building we call 'the bothy', is that the latest application, this time for re-construction as only one house, has followed its many predecessors by being refused.

GIFT AID REMINDER

Once again the society wishes to thank our Gift Aid Co-ordinator **Gordon Read**, who has claimed back **£291.14 for 2011-12** in Gift Aid. Members who pay yearly are reminded that once you sign a Gift Aid Declaration we can keep claiming for you each year, as long as you are a UK tax payer.

Gordon is currently working on the year **Oct 2012 - Sep 2013**. If you stopped or started paying tax during that time please let the Membership Secretary know (details on back page) so we can amend our records. For Life Members we only make one claim on their life payment and no more claims after that, so this doesn't apply.

Dates for Your Diary

PLEASE BOOK FOR ALL EVENTS

Wednesday 23rd October

Guided Tour of Exton Road Recycling Centre, Marsh Barton, EX2 8NR

Starting at 2pm this is a free event but places are limited and booking essential. This is a noisy working environment and there are steps involved. You will need stout footwear or you will not be allowed into the plant. Contact Ruth McLeish to book (see below)

Saturday 26th October

Garden History of Devon and Exeter

Caradoc Doy will talk about 'The Influence of Veitch on Devon' and Todd Gray will talk about 'The Garden History of Exeter'. **2.00pm to 5.00pm** at the Mint Methodist Church in Fore Street. **Admission £3** booked in advance (£5 for non-members) through the Secretary Pamela Coleman (details below). This event is open to the public and early booking advisable.

Wednesday 6th November

Visit to the Exeter Mosque

An opportunity to visit the Mosque opened in October 2011 and to learn more about the religion and culture in a peaceful and friendly environment. We must respect the protocol – shoes must be removed before entering, dress modestly, no food and drink are allowed in the prayer hall. **Meet by the main gate at 1.50pm for the visit starting at 2pm.** The Mosque is in York Road and the nearest parking is in The King William car park nearby. Donations if desired which will be given to the planned Multi cultural play area. Places are limited and booking essential. Contact Ruth McLeish to book (see below)

Wednesday 20th November

52nd Annual General Meeting

Devon and Exeter Institution
7 Cathedral Close

6.30pm start followed by supper. Supper booking form to be sent in by **13th November**.

Saturday 25th January 2014

Revealing our Cathedral's Heritage

A special visit to Exeter Cathedral, led by Ellie Jones, Cathedral Archivist, and Simon Timms, chair of Heritage Lottery Fund's SW committee.

From 1.30pm to 4.00pm. Cost £6.50 each payable on the day but booking is essential. All proceeds to go to Cathedral funds. More details will be sent by e-mail in the new year. If you do not have e-mail contact Ruth McLeish (see below) for more information or to book.

If any more events are organised before our next newsletter on 1st February 2014 they will appear on the website and members will be notified by e-mail.

Monthly Open Mornings

Saturday 19th October

Saturday 16th November

Saturday 21st December

Saturday 18th January 2014

Hoskins Room, Central Library
Castle Street, Exeter

10.30am to 12.00pm

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.

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