



Annual Reports

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, 2006, by Robin Morris

"I verily think these Sunday Schools are one of the noblest specimens of charity which have been set on foot in England since William the Conqueror" - John Wesley - 1788

The year 2005 was a busy but productive year for the Gloucester Civic Trust. One of our main projects, the Street Scene Initiative was carried out by members of the Survey Group in the four main gate streets of the City, with particular reference to the state of listed buildings. The photographic and commentary record which was prepared as a result is a tribute to the very hard work of the Survey Group. The culmination of all this activity was a well-attended public meeting in the North Warehouse on the 1st November hosted by the City Council. The Trust gave a presentation based upon material which had been placed on disc by David Champion was well received by the meeting. The presentation was subsequently also given to a number of organisations within the City. We are anxious that the initiative will not lose its impetus and we accordingly wrote to Mick Thorpe on 16th November, a copy of that letter is set out at the end of this report.

Another success story this year is the work which has been carried out to restore St Oswald's Priory. It has been the subject of constant comment and discussions within the press and at meetings of Gloucester Historic Buildings (GHB). It was something I became very incensed about at one stage. There was a lot of work from members of GHB and in particular the work of David Farrington the Conservation Projects Officer in obtaining grants. The work has now been completed. We have had some reservations about the sealing the top of some of the Priory walls with earth and turf. We will have to see how this works in practice. John Rhodes also had some reservations regarding the pattern of the mullions of the windows. The pattern which was eventually chosen was as a result of the views of English Heritage which John felt were not strictly correct. On the whole however the outcome is satisfactory. At the time when I write this report some of the scaffolding is still in place and there is a rubbish skip still on site. Hopefully these will be removed shortly.

We are also very pleased with the restoration of the Raikes Statue in the park which has been carried out as a result of a financial contribution by the City Council, Ecclesiastical Insurance and the Civic Trust. It looks very splendid indeed. The Trust has expressed some concerns about the existing landscaping. Negotiations are progressing to find a solution to the problem and we have had a number of discussions with Lorraine du Feu on the subject.

King's Square has also been the subject of much discussion. David Champion prepared a report on behalf of Gloucester Civic Trust which was submitted to the City. We have had a meeting with Mick Thorpe, Lorraine du Feu and other representatives of the Council on 11 November 2005. We had an opportunity to consider the current proposals about which the Trust members certainly had some 'reservations. On the other hand, there were some good ideas coming forward and we are hopeful that the King Square, Oxboode and Aldate area of the City will be greatly improved once the plans have been finalised, it is too early to express a final comment but things seem to be moving in the right direction. Slightly tongue and cheek I

thought members will be pleased to see copies of two photographs which were taken at about the time when the last refurbishment of King Square was taking place! The city is hoping to backfill the existing water feature at the same time as improvements are carried out to the Oxbode. The area would then be surfaced with a suitable paving in order to create extra useable space immediately. This sounds like a good proposal.

On GHB it has been very much business as usual. Such matters as 66 Westgate Street and St Michael's Tower, new plaques for the Gloucester Catholic Martyrs amongst many other things have occupied our time. The Buildings at Risk Register has also been kept fully updated and contains a very comprehensive portfolio with information on listed buildings with structural problems within the City.

Very unfortunately David Farrington the Conservation Project Officer, has left the GHB in order to join English Heritage. We wish him well in his new post but he will be sadly missed on our committee with his very constructive input to the problems we have in Gloucester.

In September 2005, Keith Birtles prepared a report on the financial commitments and suggested priorities of GHB in particular with reference to the post of Conservation Project Officer since September 2003. After some discussions it was unanimously approved that GHB should continue to part fund the salary of a Conservation Project Officer. This was giving us the best possible return at the present time because David Farrington with his expertise had been able to obtain grants for some of our more significant projects such as St Oswald Priory and 66 Westgate Street. GHB must continue to be the repairer of last resort, stepping in when only open market solutions cannot be found and following the completion of rigorous technical and viability analysis.

Since that meeting, a new Conservation Project Officer has been appointed in the person of Carolyn Ansell as a replacement for David. She was previously with Wychavon District Council as a Planner until 2004. She then took a year out at Oxford Brookes College where she took a postgraduate diploma in the Conservation of Historic Buildings. I have spoken to her on the telephone but I have not yet met her.

I am sure we would all like to congratulate Marilyn Champion for being made Citizen of the year. This is a very fitting tribute to her dedication to various voluntary organisations within the City including the Civic Trust. The presentation was made at the North Warehouse on 17 th February and amongst others, Marilyn was given tribute by the mayor and the bishop. Once again well done Marilyn.

On a more general topic, I think we have had a good year, but this cannot be achieved without the first class teamwork on the part of committee chairmen and committee members. Thank you for all you continue to do for the City of Gloucester.

Letter

16th November 2005
Mick Thorpe
Gloucester City Council
Herbert Warehouse
The Docks
Gloucester

Dear Mick

Street Scene Initiative

I would like to thank the City Council and yourself for hosting the open meeting regarding the above on 1st November. I have since had a meeting with David and Marilyn Champion and Hugh Worsnip. We are very anxious not to lose the impetus generated by the meeting. The following points arise:

1. The Trust will be sending a letter to all the attendees thanking them for their interest, generally encouraging them to implement the guidelines set out in the various presentations.
2. As the City has now appointed a new enforcement officer, we would like to encourage the use of enforcement notices if no suitable action is taken by the owner/occupier of the building once the City has made appropriate contact with the person concerned. There is always room for negotiation after the enforcement notice has been served and it would provide an incentive because such notices are registered as a Local Land Charge.
3. David is going to be looking at the various reports which have been prepared and he will make any necessary adjustments on an individual basis. These reports will then be made available in batches probably on a monthly basis to the owner/occupier of the properties. Copies will be sent to the City. David considered that it might be helpful if copies of all supporting leaflets prepared by the City could accompany the copy report.
4. The Civic Trust welcomes the proposal of periodical meetings with Paul Smith and other interested representatives of the City Council.
5. We felt that one of the most important parts of our presentation was the one titled 'Bin City'. The Trust feels that there should be a concerted drive to clear the city of refuse bins of all sorts, whether they are commercial or domestic.

Finally we would really like to see something done about St Michael's tower. It is right on the cross and the City could do something about the window dressing. It would also be helpful if Councillor Paul James could give some consideration for the tower to be opened for the next tourist season and possibly use it as a base for the Civic Trust Guides. It would give the building some use and it is an excellent position next to Starbucks Café. This could be one way of bringing it back into use. It could be made very attractive with the use of flowers and good window displays. At the present time it is used by the farmer's market every Friday because it has kitchen, toilets and other facilities in full working order.

Yours Sincerely
Robin Morris

cc: Paul Smith, Councillor Paul James