



Annual Reports

HE WHO TRIES WINS

(Apologies SAS)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2007

By Robin Morris

One of the controversial topics under discussion with the City Council at our regular meetings has been the future of the Greyfriars/Gloscat site in Brunswick Road.

Negotiations between English Partnerships, Edward Ware Homes and the City Planning Authority have been in progress throughout the year. I do not know for certain, but I assume the parties were seeking to reach agreement on a contract for sale subject to planning permission, with a built in formula for the consideration monies to be linked to the density of the permitted development. My understanding is that the negotiations have proved abortive.

The pilot scheme put forward by Edward Ware Homes was the subject of criticism by Gloucester Civic Trust for three principle reasons:

- The density of the projected development
- The height of the buildings
- The lack of respect for the listed buildings and the scheduled ancient monuments on the site

One of our concerns was also the need to make the most of the Roman City Wall which it is believed lies under the frontage of the site to Brunswick Road. There is also a school of thought which would like, if possible, to preserve the façade (if not all) of the existing buildings excluding the ugly tower structure.

I appreciate we have to be realistic because any scheme has to be viable in financial terms. On the other hand if ever there was a case for responsible public consultation this has to be it. Does the City really want a re-run of BT and Bloomsbury Land Investments –v- Gloucester City Council?

The Gloscat/Greyfriars site is so sensitive that the need for a successful development scheme has to be balanced with the historical and the cultural importance of the site. In addition to this, it is right in the centre of Gloucester and adjacent to the Public Library and City Museum. We really need to do something imaginative. Pending the outcome with English Partnerships – please can the site be cared for by keeping it litter free and by cutting the grass on a regular basis?

I had an opportunity to look around the new Gloucestershire College in the Docks.

The visit was organised by the Rotary Club of Gloucester of which I am a member. Whatever you may think about the external appearance of the building, the college is offering splendid educational facilities – I was impressed. One of the striking features is the wonderful feeling of the incorporation of Llanthony Priory into

the College Campus. I still have reservations about the way in which the new Trust has been set up, but we will have to see. With this in mind, Gloucester Civic Trust has offered our support and in particular the expertise of John Rhodes and Nigel Spry but so far without response. I propose to make an inspection with Andrew Fox with a view to ensuring that the new Trust is honouring its statutory obligations to keep the buildings wind and waterproof.

I was disappointed by the ill-informed comments contained in the Citizen of 21st February 2008, "We need Loos Not Regeneration". Copies of this and John Lovell's response are printed in this report.

History in a sense repeats itself. Gloucester Civic Trust was being criticised for all its scaffolding in the early 1980's when we were restoring the old Army and Navy building and what is now the Whittington Pub (see the 13th Annual Report "Scaffolding our Assets"). Some of our activities take years to bring to fruition and sometimes it seems that the public take only minutes to forget the progress which has been made.

The three topics which have been repeatedly pressed for by Gloucester Civic Trust together with city representatives at our joint meetings with the City Council has been the need for:

1. good public toilets
2. clean streets
3. coach parking

Thanks must go to Pam Daw and John Rhodes among others for their work and persistence in lobbying for the provision of good public toilets in our City.

The Citizens of Gloucester do need to play their part too – no litter please and could the public respect the toilets and not vandalise them! Believe me, these issues are real problems which we keep under constant review.

St Michael's Tower is dealt with elsewhere in this report but the lease has been completed and registered. I greatly enjoyed the function in the Tower on 27th December organised by the Tower Committee. The event included guests such as our local Member of Parliament Parmjit Dhanda, and the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Gloucester Harjit Gill. It was a real start to the Christmas celebrations.

Gloucester Historic Buildings continues to meet regularly. Progress is being made on a number of issues but it all takes time. The restoration of Number 66 Westgate Street is now making good progress and we all await the outcome with great interest. Much work went into this project before a Developer was found able and willing to carry out the restoration.

On the downside, we have to find a solution to the Visitor Information Centre which is located in the Docks. We will continue to explore all available opportunities.

Thank you again to all who give so much time to the well-being of Gloucester.

We are not always met with success but 100% for all your efforts!

Civic Design Group by Anthony Ault

Several of the projects which came to the Group's attention last year have been on-going and have continued to be agenda items throughout 2007.

We have made known our anxiety regarding further developments in the Docks. The completed block of flats next to the Barge Arm has continued to attract justified criticism from all quarters as an intrusion blocking off access to the Waterways Museum.

No firm proposals have been available for the reconstruction of Merchant's Quay. We have learned with dismay that it is intended to be another block of apartments with retail use on the ground floor only. We feel this will lead to the Docks becoming an estate of down market flats with little to attract visitors and tourists. However, it must be agreed that the new restaurant adjacent to the Biddle and Shipton Warehouse has a much better ambience inside than the drab exterior would indicate.

Having pressed for landscape proposals around the ugly builders' merchants "shed" on Metz Way, the Group is disappointed with the sparse planting which has now been carried out. The planting does nothing but to maximise the impact of the ugly shed on the surrounding area.

Another on-going concern is the condition of Sherborne House in Spa Road. Notwithstanding the comprehensive specification for repairs, no work has yet been commenced. It seems the owner is unable or unwilling to accept responsibility for the maintenance of this Grade 11** listed building.

Last year we reported that the Golden Cross development, including the so-called Robert Raike's house, envisaged a new shop front of good quality. The work is now nearing completion and we applaud the careful and sensitive repair of this historic building.

Also progressed during the year has been the welcome restoration of 66 Westgate Street. We wait to see the result when the scaffolding and hoarding are removed.

A tentative proposal by the City's Conservation Officer to create a new Conservation Area in the Denmark Road district has been warmly welcomed. It is understood that the proposal has now received official support as well as support by most of the residents!

The year has also seen the final completion of landscaping around St Oswald's Priory which has created an attractive setting for the ruin, particularly when seen from Archdeacon Street.

Finally the Group has given support to the Council's innovative scheme for floodlighting the Guildhall.

It is likely that in the future the Civic Design Group will not meet regularly each month as has been the custom in the past 20 years. This is because matters of major importance are generally now discussed by the Trust's Council of Management. Listed Buildings at risk are reviewed at the Gloucester Historic Buildings meeting which is a partnership between the Civic Trust and the City Council. Therefore the Civic Design Group will be convened as and when appropriate to express its opinion on controversial issues. Our Planning Appraisal Group, which comments on important planning applications, will continue to meet each month.

Letter to the Citizen
From John Lovell
In response to a letter which appeared in the
Citizen - 21 February 2008

“SIR,

I am always disappointed when someone chooses to remain anonymous having used your columns to insult others.

I refer to a letter in which one of your correspondents suggests:

- (a) Gloucester Civic Trust paid for a new “super-duper camera” out of members’ subscriptions for a city survey. WRONG – the camera has been loaned to us by one of our members.
- (b) The Trust doesn’t care about the city’s heritage. WRONG – the Trust has been in the forefront of promoting and protecting the city’s heritage for more than 30 years.
- (c) Gloucester Civic Trust should ‘get back to basics’ and concern itself with improving the city’s toilets. WRONG – Gloucester Civic Trust has conducted an extremely comprehensive and critical survey of the present toilets and has since regularly urged the city council for improvements. In fact this was one of the major issues raised at a meeting between the Trust and the city council just recently.

Gloucester Civic Trust has numerous members who regularly give up their time for no reward to train and work as City Guides; man information points; give their expertise freely on committees dealing with planning and heritage issues; conduct surveys into car and coach parking in the city and assist in organising the city’s Civic Trust Awards Scheme.

The Trust has also taken a leading role in saving the Beatrix Potter shop and in the erection of the statue to Emperor Nerva in Southgate Street.

Quite recently Gloucester Civic Trust submitted a £198,000 heritage lottery bid (which includes toilets!) in order to turn St Michael’s Tower into a tower of learning and heritage in the middle of Gloucester. This bid took innumerable hours of volunteers’ time contacting more than 200 local organisations and compiling a huge dossier of evidence to support the application. No mean feat - and already those same volunteers have raised thousands of £s towards their goal without resorting to the public purse.

Next week (Thursday, February 28th) your readers are invited – again at no charge – to come to one of the series of Autumn/Winter lectures or presentations being staged by the Trust at the GALA Club at 7.30pm. I would be delighted if your correspondent would avail him or herself of the opportunity of being present. In the meantime I’m immensely proud of being secretary of an organisation whose committed and hard working members have fought for years to maintain and engender pride in Gloucester. Could I suggest your correspondent becomes better informed as to what we are doing for the benefit of Gloucester and offer their help in moving things forward instead of sniping from the sidelines.

I am more than happy to be named”.

John Lovell, Secretary of Gloucester Civic Trust.

Gloucester Civic Trust – A Leading Light

By Parmjit Dhanda MP

Member of Parliament for Gloucester

Gloucester Civic Trust is taking a lead in our City's regeneration. In July I went to visit St Michael's tower to see for myself the important work that Gloucester Civic Trust is doing, converting the site into a community heritage facility. The Tower Team are doing a great job on this project and are working tirelessly to help bring the tower back to its former glory.

That hard work has really paid off!

Over the last year the site has been transformed and it has played host to visits and events. I noticed in the last Tower Times - the newsletter for St Michael's Tower - that Gloucestershire's Poet Laureate, Peter Wyton, will be performing poetry there.

The atmosphere in the tower when it's alive with people, food and beverage is something to behold. There was even a string quartet playing there on my recent visit.

There are so many sites like St Michael's Tower, peppered around our City. Sites like Llanthony Priory which, following the opening of the new Gloucestershire College, will once again become a focus of activity. The college's vice principal, Jeremy Williamson, has formed a Trust with members of the City Council, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund to look after the historic Priory. The Priory will make a terrific location for outdoor theatre - something I know the college is keen to pursue.

The University of Gloucestershire has recently unveiled its plans to build a new £40 million university campus around the Blackfriars site in Gloucester. Blackfriars Priory is steeped in history and I am delighted that the proposed campus will breathe new life into a part of Gloucester which has stood derelict for far too long.

Old and new, together in unison - this has to be the way forward for Gloucester. Modernisation and regeneration are all well and good, but when coupled with the restoration of historic sites we add something special to the public realm.

It takes real passion and drive to turn these historic sites into living and breathing hubs of activity for City residents and visitors to Gloucester.

The fact is regeneration isn't just about steel and concrete. It's about working together to make our City an exciting and vibrant place that pays tribute to its rich heritage. Gloucester Civic Trust's conversion of St Michael's tower is a wonderful example of that process in action.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank **ALL** the volunteers of Gloucester Civic Trust for the important work that they continue to do to make our City's rich heritage accessible to Gloucester's residents and visitors.

It just goes to show regeneration can be about our history as well as our future.

TOUR GUIDES REPORT

By Colin Nyland

A close colleague remarked to me recently, ***“We Civic Trust Tour Guides are like missionaries in a strange land trying to promote the rich heritage of the city sometimes frustratingly, spreading the good word”!***

I thought this comparison was very apt for us all, but a mission we must all strive to continue.

However, do I detect a glimmer of hope? Do I sense “things are beginning to move”? I do believe we can see progress towards our aim to promote Gloucester and put it truly on the tourist map.

I am sure we are all heartened to see and hear all the good work taking place to bring St Michael’s Tower back into use as a Civic Trust run Community Heritage Facility. What a positive statement to everyone that Gloucester Civic Trust is determined and able to show such positive action. St Michael’s Tower will make a wonderful base for our city tours, meetings, lectures and so much more. The Tower will allow us to further promote the work we do and to extend learning and access to the wider community and visitors to Gloucester.

Phil Moss and the Team have done a fantastic job with all the Gala Club lectures in 2007. We’re very pleased to report good attendances in the main function room and during the following months both Chris Morgan and Julie Hodcroft have expertly encouraged the trainees through the first stages of guiding.

Well done to all tour guides for all the hard work and dedication during the season. Your support, enthusiasm and commitment are such a tonic and very gratefully received. With your help we are able to offer rota tours from June through to September in both the City and Docks.

A special mention must go to Margaret Day for her help and dedication with the booked tours – it’s not a straight forward job. Finding guides that are available, checking times, venues and the wishes of the visiting party can be a testing task. With Margaret’s expertise and the attention to detail, this service runs with no problems at all. I know Margaret is very grateful to all guides who help, especially on some occasions at very short notice.

The summer visit to Stratford was a great success with a coffee stop at the Evesham Garden centre en route. All those who came enjoyed the guided tour of the town with the afternoon free to explore, shop or just relax. As in previous years, it is interesting and enjoyable to see other tour guides in action.

Heritage Weekend in Gloucester proved very popular and was a great Gloucester Civic Trust success – thanks largely to the organisation of Sue Wilson. It is always enjoyable to show off our buildings that are normally closed to the public. We have so many of them in our City of which to be proud.

As in previous years, we do not always have sufficient trainees to be entered into the Green Badge test, so a Civic reception was not arranged this year. Instead a tour guides evening supper was organised at the Fountain Inn and I am very pleased to report an attendance of over 90%. Reports from committee members and an informative talk on the progress of St Michael’s Tower all made a very pleasant evening.

Towards the close of 2007, thoughts and preparation work is channelled into the 2008 tour guides year. I am very lucky to have an excellent Team known as T3. Thank you to the Team for all your help, dedication and hard work. Without you neither I nor the trainee or tour guides service would exist.

Special mention and thanks to:

- Terry for all his hard work and dedication with the publicity and marketing
- John for all the work relating to the financial side of running the organisation
- Karen for her secretarial expertise
- Chris with the training and organising
- Lindsay without whom the VIP would not function
- And of course Phil and Margaret whom I've already mentioned.

Lastly, my appreciation and thanks go to Robin Morris, our Chairman, for all his help and expert guidance.

We the tour guides are geared up and ready for this year's mission.

TOURIST INFORMATION TEAM by Lindsay Mitchell

What a year of sheer frustration!

We started 2007 with the news that our base in Merchant's Quay was under threat and that "demolition" was planned to take place by that Easter. We were to be offered the possibility of a new home by George Streatfield, Curator of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, albeit a small corner in the Museum. This was not without its difficulties. However, the Curator thought he could squeeze us into the front area of the Museum by adapting the layout to accommodate our desk and cupboards. Nothing eventually transpired.

Easter came and no plans had been agreed for Merchants Quay and the demolition was delayed. In the meantime, the main Café, Cawardines, had closed and one by one many of the other shops closed down including the Edinburgh Wool Mill; others relocated to premises in the city centre. Since then Naylor Powell have moved into their new premises by the Barge Arm and shortly after, Merchant's Quay was closed to the public – including the public toilets!

Our Tourist Information Team carried on, although the number of visitors who ventured into our territory was much lower. Our wonderful Historic Docks were fast becoming a vast housing estate surrounded by a building site. It was at this point when we decided to start up a Visitors' Comment Book!

Our gallant volunteers battled on manning the information centre despite the feelings of uncertainty, through bad health, family problems and general volunteer absence due to holidays. Due to the reduced numbers of visitors, it was decided to reduce the opening hours of the Information Centre.

We welcomed the support of Billy who worked hard to run Joe's Café who supplied us with hot drinks and snacks as well as the chance of the occasional chat!

We were thrilled, however, to welcome back crowds of visitors for the Tall Ships Festival in October 2007. It felt good to be busy once more. The whole event proved a great success for Gloucester. Sadly the Festival was short lived and we returned to our lonely existence adapting to a singly manned centre with shorter shifts.

With the main public heating switched off we relied on small electric heaters during the very cold spell before Christmas. With very few visitors, we worked even shorter shifts and finally closed from December 23rd. It was then decided to extend the closure throughout January, with hope for better news coming our way.

On December 6th new plans emerged for the Merchant's Quay replacement, which were presented by the owners Crest Nicholson. However we note that our Information Point does not feature in any of the proposals. We still wait to see if a new home can be found for our band of volunteers who work so hard to promote the docks area and the city as a whole.

STREET SURVEY REPORT

By Marilyn Champion

It's been another interesting year for the Street Survey Group monitoring Gloucester's street scene. We follow National Civic Trust aims on striving for a clean, safe environment for all those who live, visit and work here.

Enforcement:

One major success this year is the fact Oasis Café in Southgate Street was eventually taken to task putting plastic windows into a listed building. Our Street Survey team reported this building to the city council in October 2004! So although it took a while, we're pleased that the work we do is filtering through. Gloucester City Council tells us that more enforcement is to be used in and around our Gate Streets in the future. However there's still a long way to go.

Mosaics:

Another success is that the restoration of our Gate Street mosaics is now under way. The first one located by the entrance to Maverdine Lane is being restored. It's now back in situ but there's still some work needed on it. The process is very complex, slow and specialist. We hope over time that all the other mosaics will be restored. We shall keep the pressure on to make sure they are.

Townscape Heritage Initiative Bid

We were disappointed to hear that the city council's THI bid for Southgate Street failed. Our Street Survey Group supported the bid which would have given property owners in Southgate Street access to grant money to improve their buildings – something which is greatly needed around the Kimbrose Triangle area. The city council is resubmitting their bid so let's hope we get lucky next time around.

Street Cleaning and Maintenance of Open Spaces

We have mixed feelings here.

Street care seems to be concentrated on our Gate Streets and we have noticed an improvement – which is good.

However areas in and around the city are prone to fly tipping and it's been quite a problem for many months. The I Care Team has allowed large urban landfill sites to grow and grow – despite all the complaints we've made. We also feel that the street cleaning in approach roads to the city and historic docks is not as good as it could be. We've had meetings with the city council and I Care representatives about this problem. There has been a change over from companies from Accord to Enterprise who now do the street cleaning. We feel this hasn't helped.

We feel there is still a problem on response times and we do wonder what the Street Rangers do? We watch them walk past grot spots and other problems completely oblivious to their surroundings not reporting them. Part of the problem we feel is lack of training and supervision.

St Oswald's Priory:

We've seen St Oswald's Priory area transformed into a beautiful historic open space – reaching its full potential for visitors and residents. The area will be flood lit by the summer time; new interpretation boards tell residents and visitors all about the site. The area is well used and is kept in good condition.

Bishop Hooper:

You can now sit in leisure in this city oasis, taking in the story of Bishop Hooper in a relaxed, clean and pleasant environment. Again, there is a new interpretation board so visitors can read all about Bishop

Hooper's gruesome death. What we found satisfying is the number of residents who can better appreciate the story of Bishop Hooper – many of them would pass by the monument daily and were unaware of its significance. So the use of interpretation boards across the city helps increase learning and access to Gloucester's heritage. We aim to lobby for more interpretation boards.

Hillfield Gardens:

We must congratulate the Friends of Hillfield Gardens for their work. These gardens are a delight. It's a shame that both the King's Board and Scriven's Conduit remain a target for vandalism and graffiti; and where's the door of the St Mary Magdalene Church? Why is it still boarded up and looking so ugly? The hunt is on for the doors as we write!

St Mary de Crypt

This has been our major gripe during 2007 as the garden at the rear became unacceptable and was full of litter, broken glass and needles. The ivy has started to creep over the stonework of the church and is starting to break up the stone. We put in a plea to the city council for funds to be made available for St Mary de Crypt. We're pleased to say – yes funds are now set aside to revamp the gardens at the rear. Another complaint we constantly receive is that visitors who are tracing family history cannot read the tombstones as they are covered in ivy.

Civic Awards

We're pleased to say the Civic Awards are to be held in November 2008. Gloucester Civic Trust will lead the project in conjunction with Gloucester City Council sponsored by the Citizen. Hugh Worsnip will be our GCT judge. It was generally agreed that the Awards in 2006 gave us all a bit of a buzz including local businesses and residents who had worked so hard trying to improve their properties and ultimately improving our street scene. Please watch the local press around September and October time for details.

Night time Street Scene:

As you probably know national Civic Trust has spent 3 years analysing the evening and night time economy of cities all over the UK. Their findings are included in a Government report. Gloucester is no different to many of the cities which National Civic Trust has studied. However, our Street Survey Team feels things are getting better.

The Gate Streets are cleaner during the evening as the street operatives work on a rota shift. Our Survey Group members regularly walk the streets late at night (in a nice way). We take photos as it's a good way of monitoring progress (with a camera loaned to us!!) The streets feel less intimidating; the beggars have gone for the moment which helps. We use the eating places and pubs in the city centre and we find on the whole the standard has risen. There is also a greater choice of restaurants now offering good food in lovely surroundings.

The Docks in the evening is busier with people milling around. The owners of Fosters and Vinings restaurants tell us business is booming and they are busy each night. Residents who live in the nearby flats are finally using what's on their doorstep in the evenings. The Convenience Store which is open until 9 pm seems busy in the early evening and is also doing good business. We're anxiously waiting to see who will take the large restaurant unit in Shipton Square – a Chinese or Italian would mean a greater choice of eating places in the Docks.

With the opening of the new College the footfall in the Docks has shifted. The walkways between the College and Llanthony Road are busy in the daytime. Parking has become a problem and we understand negotiations are taking place to provide a new parking area. The Waterways Museum has opened its new eating place – **Coots**. It's wonderful – **please support it**.

The businesses in the Docks including Fosters, the Antiques Centre, the Soldiers Museum, National Waterways Museum and British Waterways are forming a Docks Events Committee to lay on regular events throughout the year in the Docks. We think this is an excellent idea and we've asked the city council to support them.

Monitoring of Plaques and Monuments:

This is our latest project. We're photographing plaques and monuments all over the city and surrounding area. We're finding plaques we didn't know existed! It's also great fun walking our city and exercising at the same time!

We aim to put all photos on a DVD. Each photo will contain the historic interpretation of the plaque or monument. We're debating whether we should also do voice overs for each photo as this would help people with impaired vision and will allow them to listen to Gloucester's Heritage. The project's going to take some 18 months we think to complete – it's weather dependent and time dependent too! The DVD will form part of our Trust's archive; will be on show in St Michael's Tower and available to buy.

We're grateful to our fellow GCT colleagues who have loaned us the tools of the trade to carry out the project – namely a professional camera and the use of an Apple Graphics system to create the DVD. Such professional equipment will ensure we produce a quality DVD.

Many thanks to those who support our Street Survey Group.

Keep reporting things – ring 396396 – let's keep Gloucester clean for our visitors and residents.

St Michaels' Tower

By Pam Daw

2007 has been a very exciting year for Gloucester Civic Trust's Tower of Learning Project.

We started off 2007 with trepidation not knowing if we would be granted a lease by Gloucester City Council to take over the management of the building. In the meantime, our Tower Team members continued to look after the building; we cleaned out all the junk left over from the TIC days and made many improvements inside the Tower.

7th March 2007 was a milestone for the Tower project. At the city council Cabinet Meeting it was agreed for Gloucester Civic Trust to have a lease on St Michael's Tower. A loud cheer echoed around the Council Chamber from our very jubilant Tower team members. In fact we doubt if the Chamber has seen such a show of enthusiasm for many years! We then went to Fosters to continue the celebrations.

In May 2007 we started researching what grants were available to us. In fact there were many. We plumped for local ones first of all and then we decided the main grant application should be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund after weighing up all the possibilities. We know that no grant is guaranteed so it's really a numbers game applying and applying until we get lucky.

In August we were awarded £20,000 from Gloucestershire Environmental Trust; followed by £4,000 from the Gloucestershire Community Foundation and £4,000 from the Summerfield Charitable Trust.

In December 2007 we submitted a £198,000 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The bid represented some 7 months of very hard work on behalf of the Tower team. The bid was so large we had to go out and buy a suitable container to put it all in. Then we delivered the bid in person to the Lottery office in Exeter.

During the 7 months of putting the lottery bid together, we had great fun whilst carrying out the extensive public consultations which were all part of the grant process. We had a series of Open Days in the Tower where on each occasion over 200 people streamed through the Tower door. Everyone completed a survey form on what they would like to see the Tower used for in the future. We also consulted 233 community and voluntary groups across the City. We went to see many of them and chatted to various community leaders who want to get involved in the Tower project.

Many of the people who visited the Tower have signed up to become a "Friend". In addition over 20 people, all of whom are Trust members, have signed up to become a Volunteer to help man the Tower when it's up and running. We're going to need lots of volunteers to run the building in the future. We've had experts calculate our potential footfall which they tell us will be in the region of 30,000 visitors per annum – and more if we change the entrance to Southgate Street.

Marilyn Champion and I went back to school this year! We spent half a day at Harewood Junior School whose pupils will be helping us develop some of the Tower activities – and who knows some of them may become future Trust members? It was interesting to learn how heritage is delivered in schools nowadays. It's all high tech and very much audio visual and above all fun – very different from when we were at school! We were very impressed. We were also very relieved as our planned activities for the Tower are certainly on the right track.

Due to the initial grant funding we've had, we've been able to clear out the Tower to create a versatile open space.

For 2008 we shall be laying on numerous events thanks to local re-enactment groups and individuals who have come forward to offer their services free of charge to support our Project.

Please look at our Gloucester Civic Trust Website www.gloucestercivictrust.org.uk for details of the Tower events – and also keep an eye on it as the events will grow.

As Trust members and “guardians” of our city’s heritage please support the 2008 events in St Michael’s Tower. This is Gloucester Civic Trust’s Tower!

We hope we get good news in June this year when our Heritage bid is assessed. If we are successful we shall be able to convert the Tower into a Community Heritage Facility. The Tower will also be the city centre base for Gloucester Civic Trust where we can further promote the work we do and increase membership.

We aim to provide a new disabled toilet; kitchen and storage facilities; a new floor with under floor heating and a new entrance in Southgate Street – where the original entrance of the church used to be. For our Heritage Lottery Bid we had to specify in detail the types of activities and events we wish to lay on in the future – some of which we hope the Lottery will fund. Our activities have been put together based on the public consultation sessions we had in the summer and what people said they wanted – their replies also form part of the lottery bid and we had to include every single reply in the grant application so the Grant Officers can see we have done our best to give the people of Gloucester what they have asked for!

These activities include a community filming project; audio trails and a series of heritage based arts and craft workshops for adults and children as well as living history events and lectures. We aim to cater for all tastes young, modern, traditional – but all activities will be heritage based. Our goal is to make the Tower a fun and entertaining place to learn about Gloucester’s heritage. Above all we hope to attract younger people into joining the Trust. We need young people to come forward and to be the future of Gloucester Civic Trust and to carry on the good work done by us all.

As Chair of the Tower Team I’d just like to say what a great team we have. Like everyone else in the Trust, we give hours of our time freely and our Tower members and “Friends of the Tower” have dug deep into their pockets to fund many aspects of the Tower to date without any recourse to main Gloucester Civic Trust. Also thanks to Chairman, Robin Morris, for his unfaltering faith in us and his on going support.

Programme Secretary's Report

By John Lovell

THIS has been my first stint as Programme Secretary and I've spread my net wide in order to bring to the Trust a range of speakers whose expertise will appeal to the diverse range of members' interests.

We kicked off in September with Chris Oldershaw, Chief Executive of the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company, with a talk which, unfortunately wasn't terribly well attended. Since both his company's heritage title and our own concerns coincide, it should have been a fascinating evening since there are many in the Trust who feel that Chris has yet to earn his spurs in the heritage stakes. As it was he escaped relatively unscathed. He has offered to come again and next time we must try to get more members present to ensure Chris has a warm welcome!!!

The October meeting was slightly better attended when Phil McLellan gave us a fascinating insight into the highs and lows of his term as the city's Mayor. He's still a hard working councillor and we are grateful for the time he gave us.

The November meeting was very well attended - perhaps because it was better publicised in The Citizen and also because wine and mince pies were on offer! Chairman Robin Morris, spoke about Gloucester banker (and miser) Jemmy Wood - but to prove he's in a different category - Robin bought the wine! A good pre-Christmas evening was had by all.

In February members were entertained by local man Pat Furley to his Magic Lantern show. Pat has been collecting old 'lanterns' and glass slides for years and has shared their magic with numerous local audiences. This time it was our turn - and we weren't disappointed.

Last month one of our Trust members, Jackie Perry, gave us an insight into boat building on Alney Island - a hugely important business in the city for generations. Once again Jackie showed how lucky we are to have such talent within our own ranks.

As part of the Programme, we welcome my old boss (and friend) Ian Mean, formerly editor of The Citizen but now, more recently appointed editor-in-chief of Gloucestershire Media. He's extremely busy (usually from around 6am till 10pm) and we are very grateful he has given up an evening in his tight schedule to speak to us. Of all the bosses I have worked with, Ian is by far the editor who has most involved himself with the city. Both as an editor and as vice chair of the regeneration company Ian has strong views on the city's future and isn't afraid to express them. I know also from past experiences he welcomes questions ...
..... so let's ensure he doesn't get off the hook too easily.

- All of our Autumn and Winter meetings are open (at no expense) to the public as part of our continuing 'mission' to involve the public in the city's past, present and future. We will, of course, be hoping that non-members who show an interest by attending might eventually sign up as members.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S WORK THROUGH "THE CIVIC TRUST NEWS"

Terry Brooks – Editor

Another year and a few more issues of Civic Trust News behind us.

Number 109 is now due for publication.

Continuing the theme of communication from my last year's report, Civic Trust News continues to give the opportunity to communicate with our members. It also, however, gives a much wider opportunity to promote the Trust's activities and aspirations. How do we do this? Well, copies of the newsletter are sent to our local Member of Parliament, to the Mayor and to the leaders of the three political parties on the City Council. A copy also goes to the Council's Chief Executive and to City Officers with whom Council of Management members meet at the tri-monthly Joint Civic Trust/ City Council Forums. The Chief Executive of the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company is also on the distribution list.

Communicating and introducing new members to the Trust is also extremely important. As well as a welcome in Civic Trust News, members receive at least the latest issue in their welcoming package which is sent to them on joining, thus enabling them to quickly become aware of the work and activities of the Trust.

Traditionally the newsletter is distributed three times yearly. The first, the winter issue, is sent in early January. For the last two years, with the winter newsletter, we have distributed a Trust calendar to members. Because of this it has been very important to get the package out as early as possible in the New Year. The spring issue goes with the Trust's Annual Report and the Annual General Meeting Agenda. Generally I aim for the summer newsletter to be with members before the end of August.

My thanks to those who have supported me with contributions to the Newsletter in 2007.

I must also again take the opportunity to thank Simon Day for his sterling work in putting my script on to disc ready for printing.

I hope members find the articles and features which appear in the Newsletter interesting and informative.

The work of the Trust continues and, hopefully, Civic Trust News will continue to keep members informed of the Trust's involvement and activities in protecting and promoting the heritage in our great city of Gloucester.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

John Lane – Membership Secretary

It is always a little difficult to find anything different to write for this part of the Annual Report.

Our membership numbers tend to hover around the 300 mark each year which ensures we have a reasonable income to continue the Trust's work throughout the forthcoming year.

Since the last Report, the hosting arrangements for our own website have changed bringing with it a new look. The site is still under development but over the coming months it should start to fill out and include more and more information.

Already, a new page devoted to St Michael's Tower, has appeared and this too will be expanded as time goes on.

A reminder of the website address : **www.gloucestercivictrust.co.uk**

Returning to membership matters, more and more members are electing to pay their subscriptions by standing order. This helps enormously to keep administration and expenses to the bare minimum, and therefore ensures even more money is available for our various projects and the work we do.

I know one or two people are reluctant to pay using this method but, to them, I would say, it is perfectly safe (and painless) and avoids having to remember to write a cheque and post a letter!

I look forward to receiving many new memberships.

GLOUCESTER CIVIC TRUST

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