

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010

**By Robin Morris**

"I have noticed again and again since I have been in the Church that lay interest in ecclesiastical matters is often a prelude to insanity"  
Decline and Fall – Evelyn Waugh (1928)

I feel more optimistic this year as a result of events since my last Chairman's Report.

In many ways the most significant development has been the partnership which has been forged between Gloucester Civic Trust and Ecclesiastical Insurance Group. Ian Simpson, the Director of Strategic Planning and myself as Chairman of the Trust have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for co-operation between the two organisations. This will involve provision of office conference facilities for our Council of Management meetings and logistic support in many other areas of our activities. We will receive help in such matters as design and printing. A representative of Ecclesiastical will sit on our Council of Management to assist in our deliberations. We have already held our first Council of Management meeting at Beaufort House and we see the fruits of all the new arrangements in this Report and our Winter 2009 Newsletter. Evelyn Waugh obviously got it wrong!

This time last year we were contemplating that the Waterways Museum at the Docks would have to close. As the result of an initiative by the Trust volunteers have come forward and the Museum is now open seven days a week. Visitor numbers have increased and takings in the shop have improved. Richard Trelfa has been the catalyst and without his hard work and dedication this would not have been achieved. Thank you Richard. Our visitor information point has been moved back to the Museum from College Street. I know that my decision on this was not popular but we had to avoid spreading our volunteer resources too thinly on the ground.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009 St. Michael's Tower was dedicated by the Bishop of Gloucester. It is hard to overstate the impact that the Tower has had on the City. It has been a dramatic improvement right at the heart of our City. To take a very simple example the Tower was used for the sale of Charity Christmas Cards and the team of volunteers reported a one hundred per cent improvement in their takings for the same period in 2008. Marilyn Champion you and your team have worked wonders. The Tower has been closed for a short time in order to carry out further improvements including installation of a webcam and CCTV. The Tower is shortly to become our registered office. With apologies to Shakespeare it is truly a tower of strength

We are making some progress on St. Mary the Crypt and the Old School Room. At the end of January I met with Jonathan McKechnie - Jarvis at my home. Jonathan represents the Diocese. We had a constructive discussion on the way to make progress. I have now written to him setting out our objectives. One of the complications is the fragmentation of land holdings. St. Mary the Crypt is in the jurisdiction of the Diocese, the School Room is vested in a separate charity and the old burial ground is vested in the City Council as an open space

under The Open Spaces Act 1906. In effect this means that the old burial ground cannot be built upon with the result that the scheme to build toilets and stairs in the corner between the Church and the School Room would not have been capable of implementation. We therefore have to settle upon another solution for which we are seeking help from architects. Ian Simpson has promised support for the project by helping to prepare any briefs required when applying for grants.

On a personal note I would like to thank the City Council for their gracious gesture in hosting the Trust and me and my wife Pat to a Civic Reception on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of April 2009. It was an honour for me but more importantly a tribute to the Trust and its members.

So far as Llanthony Priory is concerned our member John Rhodes has joined the Llanthony Priory Trust. That has got to be progress but I continue to monitor the situation.

Finally a very big thank you to Margaret Day for all her work as the tour guide booking secretary. The City and the Trust owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

Evelyn Christmas has indicated her wish to step down from the Council of Management. If it was not for Evelyn the Gloucester Campus of the University would now be a superstore or a blocks of flats! Council members will miss her views and support.