

Cockermouth & District Civic Trust Newsletter



President: The Lord Egremont, Chairman: Phil Campbell
Secretary: John Dent, Treasurer: Ian Dodsworth
Issue no 135, July 2017 - **50th ANNIVERSARY YEAR**

We are now well into our 50th anniversary year. We have had our 50th anniversary lunch with Hunter Davies and we have issued the anniversary newsletter, celebrating our achievements over the 50 years. The next anniversary event will be cutting the cake with a celebratory evening of entertainment at our first member's meeting of the 2017/18 season in October. In the meantime, we have the annual trip on 6th September, this year to Newcastle, and our Heritage Open Days events the weekend after, focusing this year on our Conservation Areas.

OUR 50th LUNCH



Many thanks to Hunter Davies for coming and sharing our anniversary celebrations with us at the Trout Hotel and for giving an entertaining pre-lunch talk, focusing on the life and career of his wife, Margaret Forster.

50th Anniversary Members Meeting

Our first meeting of the 2017/18 season will be on Wednesday 4th October at the earlier time of **7pm** at the Friends Meeting House. The meeting will open with a short concert by Katie Gentry. Katie's music is vocal and acoustic guitar and she writes her own songs. She has said that she will not charge for her performance but will accept donations for Cockermouth Mountain Rescue. We will give a Civic Trust donation, and there

will also be a collection box. After the concert, we will have light refreshments including the 50th Anniversary Cake. There will then be a presentation led by Brian Coley comparing photographs of Cockermouth around 50 years ago with today. After the Civic Trust was first formed, some members undertook a photographic survey of Cockermouth buildings. Brian has been spending time seeking to take current photos from the same locations.

Member of Civic Voice. Registered charity number 254362

Annual Trip, Wednesday 6th September

This year we are taking a guided backstage tour round the Sage at Gateshead in the morning followed by a guided tour round the historic quayside area of Newcastle and Gateshead. The Sage is a modern concert venue with iconic architecture that opened in 2004.



Leaving Cockermouth at 08.30, we should arrive at the Sage around 11am. After coffee, (included), we have an hour's back stage tour. The tour will provide you with a chance to visit areas of the building not normally open to the public. It will also give you the opportunity to see and learn about the design & architecture of the building, the history of the site & the history & development of the institution itself. Then time for lunch when we have reserved seating at the Sage Brasserie. At 2pm, we will be met by our guides outside the Sage for our tour that will loop the Quayside, taking in some of the notable landmarks including the Baltic Gallery, Tyne Bridges, Bessie Surtees House, and possibly the Castle Keep area. It has been described to us as a 'more sedate, slow paced tour' and since we will have 2 groups, we can potentially have an easier & harder group.

The ticket price at £28 includes transport, both tours and coffee on arrival. If you would like to come, please return the attached ticket application form. Numbers are strictly limited to 25 and we have to submit details in advance, so early application is encouraged. Also we will be asking members of other Civic Trusts if they are interested in taking up spaces on our trip once our members have had an opportunity to apply.

Neighbourhood Plan for Cockermouth

You will no doubt have realised that our Town Council have again failed to take the opportunity to move forward towards developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Cockermouth. We believe that this does now mean that there is no point in wasting people's time taking the project any further as there was no sign of any movement in the attitudes of the majority of the Councillors. The working group had spent considerable effort putting together an initial project plan, which actually only asked the Council to take the project forward, with no immediate commitment to financial

spend or commitment to the final plan until a full project plan has been developed.

The saddest thing about the project has been the inability or refusal of the Town Council to engage with the community. They are supposed to be a 'community council' after all, ideally above party politics. Perhaps this is something for us all to consider at the next Town Council elections?

Conservation Areas, 50th Anniversary.

We have been more successful with the Town Council in establishing and running a working group to reinvigorate our Cockermouth and Papcastle Conservation Areas as part of the national campaign to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first Conservation Area in 1967. Cockermouth first had Conservation Areas back in February 1970, 47 years ago. We have discussed with Allerdale BC as to whether it would be appropriate to revise & update the conservation area boundaries; for example the Derwentside Gardens estate is within the CA, which isn't necessarily appropriate. However, it has been decided to keep the status quo on cost-benefit grounds. With the help of grant funding from the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, (IHBC), and Allerdale BC to the tune of £500 in total, we have agreed the following actions:

Conservation Area Booklet

We have produced a booklet covering the Cockermouth & Papcastle Conservation Areas explaining why they are there and what the constraints are on building owners within these areas. Many thanks to Eric Apperley for producing this booklet on our behalf. We have printed 1800 copies of the booklet and will be distributing them to all of the 1600 building owners within the conservation areas in August, plus Councillors and Council Officers. It will also be launched at a Heritage Open Days event.

Conservation Area Information Boards

We have designed an information board summarising what our Conservation Areas are about and where to find further information. We intend to erect one in Old Kings Arms Lane adjacent to the Town Trail Board, with permission of John Cusack, and hopefully a smaller version within the Library/TIC.

Conservation Area Walking Tours

We have produced 2 self-guided walking tour leaflets, one for the historic core of the Cockermouth CA and one for the Papcastle CA. The objective is to encourage locals and visitors alike to appreciate what we have. Copies will be available free of charge at the Heritage Open Days event and subsequently at the TIC.

Heritage Open Days Exhibition and Book Launch

There will be an exhibition about our Conservation Areas along with a formal launch of the booklet at the United Reformed Church Rooms on Saturday 9th September, as part of Heritage Open Days. We also hope to arrange some form of presentation/talk.

Local Heritage Listing

'Hot news!' I am pleased to report that we had a meeting with Allerdale BC on 11th July – our Cockerthouth Councillors Alan Smith & Joan Ellis and Council Officers, and we appear to have resolved the impasse that we have had on Heritage Listing for the last year. They have agreed to formally recommend to Council to now include aspects within Conservation Areas as we have wanted, and as is recommended in the Code of Practice. This will not take effect until approval is received in September, but in the meantime they will consider the 2 aspects outside of Conservation Areas that we have submitted as a pilot.

Derwentside Footpath, by John Dent

We reported in the last newsletter that we were applying to Cumbria CC to have the Derwentside footpath between Waterloo Street and Low Sand Lane formally registered as a recognised footpath. We have now been informed by Cumbria CC that they will consider our application, but since they have assessed it as low priority, it will not be formally considered until between 6 and 9 years time.

Confluence Area Improvement Scheme

The ground improvement work is now complete, so I hope that you have been to see it. A further grant of £30,000 has been obtained by Riversmeet to both create some permanent artwork relevant to the site, (£10,000), and to provide ongoing educational activities, again relevant to the site. A specific planned activity is a story telling event on the site as part of this year's Heritage Open Days.

Heritage Open Days, 7th to 10th September

The Civic Trust has again managed a programme of activities for the Cockerthouth area for this year's HODs. We are producing a booklet containing the full details of the Cockerthouth events which will be available from the TIC. Details of all national events, including ours, will be listed on the national web site from later this month, www.heritageopendays.org.uk.

Our 'flagship' event this year is the Conservation Area 50th anniversary exhibition at the URC on the Saturday, 10am to 4pm. I hope that many of you will be able to attend. The other events are:

- Castle tour, Friday 2pm
- Isel Hall tour, Thurs & Fri, 2pm & 3pm
- Masonic Hall, Sat 10am to 2pm.
- Banks Ironmongers, Sat 10am to 3pm
- Percy House, Thurs-Sat, normal opening hours
- Wordsworth House (NT), Sat 11am – 4pm

- Confluence Area Story Telling, Sunday - times to be advised.

Please note that the castle & Isel Hall tours are by advance ticket only available from the TIC as from 1st August.

Reporting of faults, by John Dent

In the past there has been some difficulty in finding the best way to get some action on things like potholes, blocked drains and faulty street lights. Cumbria County Council Highways have introduced a new on-line service for reporting faults which it hopes will speed up the fixing of such things.

To report a fault go to their website

www.cumbria.gov.uk. Under the "Roads, Travel and Parking" section you will find "Report a Problem/Issue". Enter that area and choose the appropriate type of fault and follow the instructions.

I tested the system by reporting a pothole on Windmill Lane and within a couple of weeks it had been filled in and I received an email from the County Council confirming that.

Another way of getting action on an even wider range of problems is by going to the www.fixmystreet website. Enter your postcode and follow the instructions to report the problem. Using that also works (I've tested it) and there is a follow up system to report back if the complaint has been addressed or not.

Telephone Kiosk Clean-up, by John Dent.

In 2013 an advertisement for the Lakes College was firmly adhered to the telephone kiosk in Market Street just off Market Place. A year later it was noted on one of our "Walks of Pride" that it was still there. Some attempts by someone had obviously been made to remove it but that only made it look even worse. We contacted BT to ask them to take off the advert and clean the kiosk but did not get any reply. A couple more attempts were made to communicate with BT but to no avail. Some members of the committee tried to remove it but they could only "scratch the surface". It seemed we were going to be stuck with a very untidy looking kiosk on one of the paths taken by visitors from the car park into the town.

In June of this year, I sat down at the computer determined not to move until I had discovered a way of asking BT to clean the kiosk (It must have been raining that day!). After trawling through many, many pages and paths on their website I finally found what I thought might be the right department to complain to. I sent off an email, crossed my fingers and waited, not really expecting a reply. But I was wrong – this time I had found the right person to take action at BT. They replied stating that the kiosk would be inspected, cleaned and the phone checked within 5 days. If the advert could not

be cleaned off they would replace the glass. True to the promise everything was cleaned and the phone replaced. It just goes to show that with a little perseverance anything is possible! The photos are clearly a before & after!



- You have probably noticed that the flower containers in Main Street looked 'awful' this year after the daffodils had died and until the summer planting in June. This is because Allerdale BC have decided to discontinue the Spring planting across the Borough as a cost saving exercise. We have suggested to the Town Council that they could look to fill this gap to improve the looks of the town, possibly seeking donations. The Town Council are looking favourably on this and consider that they should be able to fund it.



This photo shows how we like to see Main Street in the Spring & Summer, decorated with flowers

Other Issues of Interest

- We have objected to the proposed pedestal signs for Lidl as being over intrusive at the perimeter of the Conservation Area and not necessary for their business.

- Following the County Council work on Main Street, we checked what had been done against our snagging list that we had compiled following the main contract work a few years ago now. We are pleased to report that virtually all of the snags had been addressed. However, we are still disappointed that no repairs have been undertaken to the pavement on the south side of the street, as originally promised.

- We expressed concern again to Cumbria CC about 'A' boards that are obstructing pavements, especially for wheelchairs and prams, and particularly outside Lifestyle Repairs. Some improvement has been achieved.

- We participated in Daffodil Day again this year. We had a stall and led a couple of walking tours. We didn't get many on the walks but they were well received. On the stall, we had a display on the Conservation Areas which created some interest. We also sold £110 worth of books, so it was a worthwhile day.

- We led 4 castle tours during Cockermouth Live, the first since the repair of the banking & the first with no restrictions since the 2015 flood damage. The weather was kind and we took a record amount in book sales over the weekend, £178. We also took £156 in donations which as usual have been divided equally between the 3 charities, Cockermouth Community Hospital, Hospice at Home West Cumbria and Cockermouth Civic Trust.

- We have agreed to delay the AGM this year until the December, (mince pie) meeting. This is because our Chairman will not be available for the November meeting.

And finally:

We like to provide those of you on email with electronic copies of this newsletter, our updates and reminders, the weekly bulletin from Civic Voice and any other bulletins of interest from Civic Voice, **if** you have positively elected to do so. Key to this is that we send out this information from our personal accounts on a distribution list that contains over 50 addresses. What is not practicable for us to do is to have separate distribution lists for the different publications. so you are either in or you are out.

A couple of times recently, someone has tried to remove themselves from the Civic Voice email distribution.. However, since they are receiving forwarded emails, this action has the effect of deleting our own personal names from the Civic Voice distribution, so we have to re-engage. Could you please refrain from doing this.

If you no longer wish to be on our email distribution, could you please email our Secretary, John Dent, and make this request.

Phil Campbell, Chairman