



Beverley and District Civic Society ¹

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2016

The Executive Committee of the Beverley and District Civic Society

At our Society's AGM all of us who are part of our Executive Committee feel encouraged by the support from our members. This year's AGM on 13th October last was no exception. The AGM gives our chairman, treasurer and secretary the floor for a few minutes to report on the work we have been doing over the past year.

We also listen to what you, our members, say to us at the AGM. During the Executive meeting for November we discussed a plea made quite strongly to us at the AGM: we were asked to inform you what subjects the monthly Executive Meetings were dealing with. So we decided to respond by offering a quarterly summary of matters discussed by the Committee. Here is a brief summary of the three months Sept/Oct/Nov 2016:

Parking on Westwood (a very long running subject)

Rights of Way in Beverley town

AGM preparation and delivery

Annual Dinner, location and date

Open Meetings Group – discussing possible speakers for our open meetings and then taking forward booking.

Development Group – looking at plans, for buildings and larger developments, and considering proposed changes of use, and influencing the judgements of ERYC, developers and local citizens.

Deteriorating condition of the plaque on the outside of the South wall of St Mary's church that tells the story of two Danish Soldiers who died in Beverley.

History boards – will be placed to enlighten visitors to our town (and us).

Pasture Masters' boards – near the town along York road, that need maintenance.

Expert advice – that we can give, and also seek.

Coronation Gardens – additional, and maybe inappropriate, plantings.

The new Annual Lecture in commemoration of Margaret Powell who was important in promoting the preservation of the town.

This listing is our first attempt to fulfil that request of one of our members and is chosen by me,

Gerald O'Callaghan, the Minute Secretary

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With Gratitude to Jill Jones

After many years of service on the Civic Society Executive, Jill has recently taken well-earned retirement at the age of 88. Long-standing members will be aware of the special contribution she made in her unique way. Over many years the Society has benefited from Jill's warmth and wisdom as well as her specialist knowledge as an architect. Her commitment to both preserving Beverley's heritage and to promoting good modern design has been unstinting. She has given much of her time to the Development Subcommittee in its work on planning matters. As Meetings Secretary for a number of years she was responsible for the annual programme of Society talks and she also arranged the summer outings. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm have never deserted her and she still remains an active Society member.

The Crocus Fields of Beverley

When I was a child born in Beverley 80 years ago, if you mentioned a walk to the crocus fields in Spring, every other child knew where to go: through Westwood gates at the top of Cartwright Lane, up past Lowsons Mill where Mr and Mrs. Wilson farmed, along the boundary of Westwood, past the golf club until you came to a gate leading on to a narrow trackway, skirted on its right by a pair of cottages covered in tar and known as the Black houses, whose frontage faced directly on to Westwood. Beyond the Black houses lay the boundary of the chalk pits and to follow the track was to come past the slurry pits of noxious waste from Hodgsons Tannery, an area forbidden to explore by every caring parent. The trackway continued on to Queensgate Road emerging near Jocks Lodge. It has now been realigned and cuts through to the same trackway but nearer to town.

The crocus fields, there were two of them, were thinly covered with crocus and it was deemed a nice walk in Spring to view the crocus and to walk down a Sunday dinner. So far as I knew all trace of the original trackway and the Black houses has all been mined away and this little relic of an older Beverley has passed away unrecorded, until recently I was browsing through a book by Eva Crackles, the 'Flora of the East Riding', published in 1990. In it she records Crocus L. S. Vernus, Spring crocus an introduced species, which was collected in 1861 and 1898 and was reported as still there in the late 1930s. J.J. Marshall recorded that, according to tradition, the species had formerly been cultivated near Beverley to produce saffron, the climate being unsuitable for the cultivation of Crocus Sativus (Marshall, 1892). Miss Crackles was unaware of the exact location. The stamen of the crocus produced saffron used for medicinal and culinary purposes and as children we all firmly believed that the monks planted it. As all trace of it has now gone owing to mining, not only from the face of the earth, but the face of the earth has gone too, I will continue to hold on to that belief. I wonder if there is anyone else who can add to my memories?

Berna Moody

Where was Lady Gee's House?

In January 1649, in the Painted Chamber at Westminster, King Charles I was on trial for his life (*spoiler: he lost*). He was accused of making war against Parliament, the first charge being his action 'particularly upon or about the thirtieth day of June, in the Year of our Lord 1642, at Beverley in the County of York'.

For King Charles, on the other hand, the first hostile act of the Civil War was the refusal of Sir John Hotham to allow the royal party into Hull, with a confrontation at the Beverley Gate on 23rd April 1642. On this day the king withdrew to Beverley for the night, but where he stayed is not known, nor do we know where he stayed on earlier visits.



Sir John Hotham, 1645 medal.
(National Portrait Gallery)

At the king's trial, thirty-three witnesses were called: the first of these was William Cuthbert of Patrington, who gave evidence that on 2nd July 1642 he was driven from his Hull Bridge house when it was requisitioned by the royalists. Cuthbert went to Beverley, where on 3rd July he saw the king come 'to the Lady Gee's House there', and subsequently he often saw the king in Beverley, with Prince Charles (later Charles II), and the Duke of York (later James II).

The king and his court stayed in Beverley for some three weeks, leaving at the end of July upon his abandonment of the siege of Hull. When the king entered or left Beverley, St Mary's Church bells were rung, and the churchwardens' accounts for paying the bell-ringers show his movements: during July 1642 the king went from Beverley to Lincoln and Newark, and back to Beverley again via Wintringham.

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William Cuthbert, although he is wrong about the days of the week in his account (he was after all describing events seven years earlier) is unlikely to have invented what he saw in Beverley. At the king's trial he was on oath and cross-examined, and his evidence was given unchallenged in a public place. It seems certain that in July 1642 the king and his sons did stay at Lady Gee's Beverley house.



Charles I and his 3 eldest children in 1635, who would become Charles II, James II and Mary Princess of Orange
(Royal Collection Trust)

But where was the house? Lady Gee, born Mary Crompton, was the 2nd wife and later widow of Sir William Gee of Bishop Burton. Gee, who built Low Hall at Bishop Burton, died in 1611, and Mary lived on until 1649. As a widow, she probably left the family home at Bishop Burton when her son married, and she seems to have moved to Beverley, where her father-in-law (William Gee, a rich Hull merchant) had bought property, including a house in North Bar Within.

The tradition (for instance in Sheahan & Whellan's *History of York and the East Riding*, 1855) is that Lady Gee's house was on the site of North Bar House and the adjoining land. George Oliver was more cautious in his 1829 *History of Beverley* writing that 'I am not able to pronounce decisively where this house was situated, unless it was near the North-Bar.'

The existing Bar House is a building of the 18th and 19th centuries: Oliver wrote the older large house was taken down 'within the last sixty years' i.e. after 1769. The only survivors of the earlier 17th century house are the northern garden wall and pillars, which have been rebuilt. But in the Hearth Tax of 1672 the house had 20 hearths, more than any other Beverley house, and there were additional rooms without hearths. This large house and garden probably covered land from the Bar southwards as far as the present Coronation Gardens.

As the largest house in Beverley, it would have been the most suitable place for King Charles and his family in 1642: but it could have been just its size that made later historians choose it as 'Lady Gee's House'. Unfortunately there is no way to be sure: there are very few title deeds for the Gee family, or for the Warton family who owned North Bar House in the later 17th century.

There is another tantalising and unresolved link. When Sir John Hotham was knocked off his horse and captured in Beverley in 1643 he was, according to Gent's 1735 *History of Hull* and later writers, imprisoned in the same house in which the king had stayed in 1642. The account of Hotham's escape suggests the house was near North Bar.

Wherever Lady Gee's house was, the evidence of William Cuthbert given at King Charles I's trial was that the king himself and his sons, two future kings, stayed in a Beverley house in 1642. A unique occasion, never repeated.

Barbara English



Sir William Gee, his two wives and children.
Lady Gee (formerly Mary Crompton) is presumably the one on the right. Monument in S. Choir Aisle, York Minster.
(Photo © Dick Schmitt)

Annual Dinner

We had our usual excellent dinner at Cerruti. on October 21st 2016. Forty-eight members, friends and relatives attended. Our guest speaker was the mayor, Councillor Rob Begnett, who gave an interesting talk about his job at Reckitts and what it involved. Michael Hildyard was master of ceremonies and David Bacon gave grace before dinner.

Next year we hope to go to the East Riding College for our yearly dinner, to be held on 3rd November 2017. Further information will follow in due course.

Wendy Usher-Bacon, the Dinner Secretary

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Membership

Membership subscriptions were due in October. The treasurer and I have checked monies received and at the time of writing 50 members have not paid their annual subscriptions. Please will these members pay at the Christmas meeting or by post, or inform me they do not wish to continue their membership. If members have not paid by the end of December they will be removed from the membership list.

Please try to encourage relatives or friends to join - younger members are particularly needed.

Also do let us know of any public speakers whom you would be interested to hear.

Wendy Usher-Bacon, the Membership Secretary

Report on the Society's Public Meeting, 15th September 2016

“Iron Age Settlements in East Yorkshire” By Karen Adams

Karen Adams, who is an independent archaeologist working in East Yorkshire, gave an interesting update on the results of excavations relating to the pre-Roman Iron Age. She described the constant progress being made in studying the remains found in ancient graves and other sites, even from fragmentary evidence. Recent analysis is providing a clearer picture of a society more advanced than previously understood.

Iron Age sites may be found through the remains of round burial barrows showing up in crop markings, but in East Yorkshire there are also many square barrows indicating the occupants belonged to the La Tene culture which originated in Switzerland. Locally this is called the Arras culture after the farm on which the first square barrows were discovered. These barrows were found at Wetwang, Garton Slack, Rudston, Kirkburn, Danes Graves, etc. Referring to one of two well-known chariot burials at Wetwang, where in 2001 a rescue dig revealed the grave of a tall woman of 35 to 45 years, buried with her chariot, Karen Adams pointed to the significance of her possessions such as a mirror, glass beads and coral from the Red Sea which indicate the distant trading links of the time. Other surprising discoveries from graves of warriors include fragments of chain mail and protective leather wear previously associated only with much later times.

At South Cave in 2002 a sword and dagger hoard produced some very impressive weapons, in particular evidence of a finely-crafted sword and sheath in copper alloy with a sperm whale bone handle, again demonstrating long distance contacts. A replica based on minute analysis can be seen at the Treasure House in Beverley. In 1984, at Hasholme, a large dug-out made from 800 year old oak dating from between 322 and 277 BC was found during canal drainage. Scientific study now shows that it was transporting a cargo of beef and timber, probably through the wetlands of that time. Unfortunately attempts to preserve the boat with a wax spray failed. Karen and other archaeologists excavating Iron Age settlements find that metal working was very common, as well as weaving, and the proximity of drove roads indicate the importance of animals to their farming activities.

A recent dig at Pocklington in 2014 to 2015 was featured in *The Guardian* entitled 'The Warrior Burial'. This rescue dig on the site of a future housing estate revealed an orderly cemetery of 30 La Tene burials containing some high status possessions. With more building developments in prospect in a heritage sensitive area, rescue archaeologists such as Karen are likely to be busy for many years to come.

Rosemary Major

Report on the first Margaret Powell Lecture given by Dr David Neave at the Civic Society open meeting on 10th November 2016



A view of the west end of Norwood showing a group of 'lost buildings', on the right the Assembly Rooms, in the centre two Georgian houses at the bottom of Manor Road, and on the left can just be seen part of the porch of the 17th century Porch House.

Local historian, David Neave, delivered an outstanding inaugural lecture to an exceptionally large audience at St Mary's Hall on Margaret Powell, the woman who taught Beverley to revalue its heritage. He also went on to review some

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of the historic architectural changes within the town over past centuries.

Margaret Powell, dauntless campaigner, arrived with her family in 1964 owing to her husband's job re-location. Mrs Powell "came upon unsuspecting Beverley with the suddenness of a storm cloud" (contemporary quotation from the *Beverley Guardian*). She was no ordinary housewife, but being from a distinguished family of architects, including her great grandfather Sir George Gilbert Scott and her uncle Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, she was imbued with a keen awareness of civic character and beauty. At a moment when the town was facing the implementation of drastic 1960s style road schemes cutting through its centre, her prompt opposition, together with Rupert Alec-Smith of the Georgian Society, helped to turn the tide. "The town should crucify traffic before being crucified by it," she declared. As a Town and County Councillor, as well as a member of the recently formed Civic Society and as Secretary of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, she used every means to help thwart plans to carve up fine streets such as North Bar Within, including the encircling of the Bar by a roundabout. She gave evidence to at least three public inquiries. Her ally, Rupert Alec-Smith, invited along John Betjeman, along with other Fine Arts Commissioners, to join the fray over the fate of old Walkergate which was spared from the most radical plans. However, in spite of protests, the ancient Globe Inn was demolished to make way for the new Sow Hill road cutting through to Saturday Market.

One of Margaret Powell's best known achievements was the rescue of the Friary from destruction, as planned by Armstrong Patents and with the consent of Beverley Council. In the early 1960s, already in a very neglected state, this reminder of Beverley's medieval importance received little public notice until she took up the cause of its restoration. She also spent her own money on purchasing old houses in streets such as Ladygate and Hengate, and by obtaining improvement grants she showed the way to keeping the street scene intact. Her activities brought her into conflict with some local councillors, in particular, Councillor Harold Godbold, who opposed the giving of advice to the public on such grants.

Finding new uses for old buildings became Mrs Powell's abiding aim. For example, the Ladygate Brewery was converted to become the Headquarters for the Girls Venture Corps, and in 1984 the Friary was brought to life again as a youth hostel.

Astonishingly, all Margaret Powell's battles on behalf of the town occurred within ten short years. In 1974 she moved with her husband, Leslie Powell, to live in Cornwall, where she remained until her death in 2014.

Rosemary Major



Margaret Powell in 1965



Margaret Powell standing outside her home, Trewoofe, at Lamorna, Cornwall

Forthcoming meetings...
... which will be in St Mary's Parish Hall,
and all meetings will commence at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated

Thursday 15th December 2016

Chris Blackburn
 The Mercy Ships
 This will be followed by wine and mince pies

Thursday 12th January 2017

Eve La Pensee
 The Medieval Hansa, the great port of Hull and today's Hanseatic League

Thursday 9th February 2017

Andy Karavics
 Sledmere Gardens - A look at the colour of the garden as it develops through the year

Thursday 16th March 2017

Arthur Credland F.S.A
 Marine Painting

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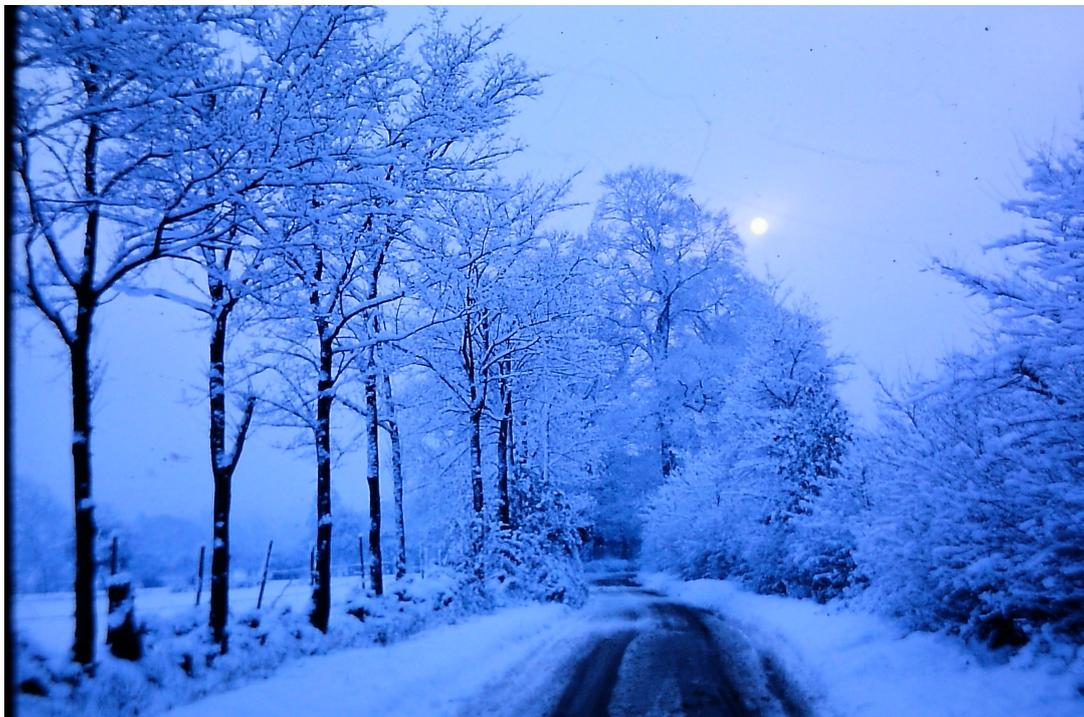
Please send material by email if possible: this saves re-typing. However, if you do not use email all contributions and letters, no matter how brief, are welcome.

The deadline for copy to be included in the Spring 2017 Newsletter is
Tuesday 28th February 2017

Please note this date in your diary if you are likely to contribute

Quarterly deadlines are always the last days of February, May, August and September, unless advance notice is given otherwise

Over a third of our membership now receive this newsletter in electronic form via email, thus saving valuable Civic Society resources for other use, not to mention the distributors' time and shoe-leather. It is appreciated that many do not use email or prefer to receive their newsletter in hard copy form; but if you are willing to join the e-circulation list, please could you let me know via the above email address. Many thanks.



Affiliated to Civic Voice and Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies

www.beverleycivicsociety.co.uk