The Norwich Society

NEWSLETTER 122 NOVEMBER 2010

Chairman's Message

We live in difficult times. The Eastern Region Development Agency is no more, and the bid for the City to be a Unitary Authority failed, as did its bid to be a City of Culture. But all is not dark.

We have been much encouraged by three **recent legacies**, totalling nearly £60,000. This is a precious sum and we will spend it wisely, so we have set up a special committee to consider bids for funding short-term objectives and special opportunities. The process will be competitive and we shall be looking for matching funding, for in cooperation with others we can be so much more effective.

We have recently launched a simplified and modernised website with a new venture – an **open forum** for members and non-members to discuss topical issues. The first will be on the **night-time economy** – the flattering name for the huge influx of drinkers into Norwich on Friday and Saturday nights. A second is the proliferation of **street clutter** in the City centre, with 'A' boards and signs all over the place.

Next on the list is the care of the many **listed properties owned by the City**, since it is now clear that the City has little or no money for their repair and maintenance. So if we are to do something about Howard House or 41 All Saints Green, to take but two examples, new funds will be needed. We shall be arguing that the City should sell some properties to new owners to make them fit to be lived in, so releasing new funds.

We shall also be keeping a very keen eye on all new developments. There is a possibility that the redevelopment of **Anglia Square** might start in 2011. We think that the current amended proposal has deficiencies that could be modified even at this late stage. We shall continue to press for developments that will not be regretted in 50 years, learning from so many of the things that were done in the nineteen-sixties.

Our activities continue to grow both in their range and in their attractiveness. Some tours, for example the tour of St Peter Mancroft, have been repeated because of demand, and we launched a new tour during Heritage Open Days to demonstrate what the Norwich Society has achieved in the City. The Society is financially stable, and has an increasingly important role in these hard times in mobilizing support for the care of the priceless heritage we have in this splendid City.

Derek Burke

See what we mean!

We rest our case!

Web Forum

The Norwich Society is the oldest independent group that champions the heritage and character of the city. We are a Voice in the City.

In order to be more responsive to your views and those of others who are concerned enough to find our website the Executive has approved a new facility: an on-line FORUM.

It's easy to use: on the HOME Page there is a band of options just under the Norwich Society title and 'Forum' is the eighth along, or second to last. Follow the instructions to send in your comments by e-mail; they will be monitored and then posted on the website.

Topics will be ones that affect the large majority of people. The current issues are:

- Concerns about the spread of the Night-time Economy in Norwich
- Street clutter

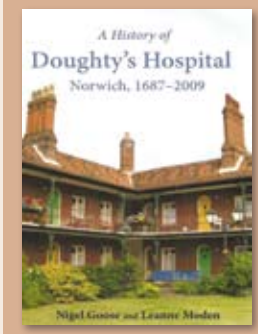
Become part of 'A Voice in the City' by contributing to our new facility and add your comments and ideas about current issues affecting Norwich.

www.thenorwichsociety.org.uk

Peter Bentley

BOOK REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF DOUGHTY'S HOSPITAL



In the late 1680s the executors of William Doughty of Norwich sought to purchase land in accordance with his will 'in some convenient place in Norwich', in order to found an almshouse, or hospital. The bequest was £6000: £600 for the land and construction of the building, the balance for the purchase of land elsewhere in Norfolk, the rents from which would cover the hospital's running costs and the residents' allowances.

Doughty's Hospital still occupies its original site in St Saviour's parish, and is now the subject of a new book. The authors, one of whom (Nigel Goose) is an expert on English almshouses, have made extensive use of primary sources, both national and local. But don't be fooled: this is no dreary compilation of facts. It is a fascinating account of social welfare (both state-sponsored and philanthropic) in England and Norwich. It depicts the lives of the residents of Doughty's, and the staff and trustees who strove tirelessly to ensure the hospital's continuance in the face of financial difficulties, staffing and resident problems, planning issues*, the need to adjust to changing expectations and attitudes of the residents, and the accelerating pace of social and health and safety legislation. Despite the changes in its 300-year existence, Doughty's has remained true to the wishes of its founder: to provide accommodation and care for elderly men and women unable to support themselves.

This well-written book is not just a history of Doughty's, it is a valuable source of information on local social welfare trends. It has an extensive bibliography for those who wish to pursue issues of interest to them.

**The interests of the Norwich Society and Doughty's have clashed, for example in 1972 the Society opposed the demolition of two listed buildings in Golden Dog Lane, in order to extend the hospital's accommodation. The Norwich Society lost.*

Nigel Goose and Leanne Moden, **A History of Doughty's Hospital Norwich, 1687-2009**, Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010, £9.95 (paperback).

Eleanor Martin

EDITH CAVELL, a biography by Diana Souhami

Edith Cavell as a teenager

Edith Cavell is the latest book by Diana Souhami, a previous winner of the Whitbread prize. Both author and her subject have local connections and the book was launched at Norwich Cathedral on the eve of the anniversary of Edith Cavell's execution: 15 October 1915. There are other biographies and studies of Cavell, but Souhami's strength lies in her detachment (so reflective of Cavell's own style) and her detailed research of Cavell's hospital working experience and the events that led up to her execution. The inability of diplomats and officials from several countries to negotiate a reprieve rested on a complex knot of 'bureaucracy, protocol and rank', which only the Kaiser could have cut, but 'the Kaiser was left to sleep'.

Edith's father, the Reverend Frederick Cavell, was the vicar of Swardeston. Stern and rigorous in his Christianity, he chose for his wife the gentle and loving daughter of his housekeeper and had her educated for life in the vicarage – a real 'Pygmalion' story. Home life for Edith and her three younger siblings was unrelentingly pious but not entirely joyless, surrounded as they were by the Norfolk countryside.

As a teenager Edith was caught smoking in her father's study, for which crime she was dispatched to a boarding school in Peterborough run by an idiosyncratic lesbian couple. She emerged unscathed but with no prospect of marriage and few choices of occupation. However, the unbending discipline of life in the rectory had prepared her for an altruistic career first as a governess and then as nurse and matron. Larger circumstances gave her an opportunity to fulfil the teachings of her faith.

There was an artistic, perhaps even poetic, gene in the family; Edith had considerable facility with pencil and paint. Jack, her younger brother, was a shy unassertive young man who liked the theatre and could not live up to his father's expectations. Jack resigned himself to 'irksome and poorly paid' work as a clerk in Norwich Union where he wrote 'nihilistic editorials for the in-house magazine' in which 'he brooded on the elusiveness of love ands the immanence of death'. These brief glimpses of his life form poignant marginalia on Edith Cavell's heroic story.

Diana Souhami, **Edith Cavell**, Quercus, £25.00 (hardback).

Vicky Manthorpe

Sculpture

The Society has been much concerned with sculpture and public art during the last few years. Our recent response to the revised plans for Anglia Square emphasised the need for the provision of public art in the early stages of the design and not just as an 'add-on'. Earlier this month Sculpture for Norwich, a charity formed by the Norwich Society and NCAS (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society), hosted a lecture for members of both groups at NUCA (Norwich University College of the Arts). There will be a report in the Annual Review.

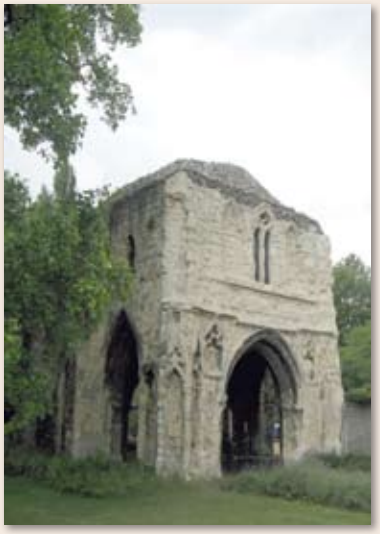
Reflecting this interest, Dr Richard Cocke will be giving a talk at our January City College Lunch about Memorial Sculpture in East Anglia to be called 'A Foreign Field'. The planned unveiling of Paul de Monchaux's Breath as part of the refurbishment of the Memorial Gardens prompted Dr Cocke to choose this subject and he will be looking at the wide range of memorials in the region.

Dr Cocke read PPE at Oxford, going on to the Courtauld Institute where he completed his PhD in the history of art in 1965. He was an assistant lecturer in art history at Cambridge University from 1965 to 1970, then lecturer, and later senior lecturer, at UEA.

Shortly after retiring Dr Cocke was invited to coordinate a survey of public sculpture (defined as visible from the public highway) in Norfolk and Suffolk for the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, under the auspices of the School of World Art Studies at UEA. The survey, which began late in 2005 with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was completed in March 2008. There was three times more sculpture than the initial estimate. Now more than 860 entries, with extensive photographic coverage, can be found at www.racns.co.uk

Dr Cocke was a member of the Norwich Society's Planning Appraisal Committee for many years, and as its Chairman from 2004 to 2007 initiated the Biennial Design Awards. With his wife, Sarah, a professional photographer, he prepared a booklet on **Public sculpture in central Norwich** for the Society.

Site Visits



The Conservation and Development Committee had two site visits this autumn. The first, in September, was to **Bishop Salmon's Porch** (Grade II*) in the grounds of the Bishop's Palace, Norwich. The monument is on both English Heritage's 'Buildings at Risk' list and that of Norfolk County Council; it is deemed to have 'badly decayed stonework' and 'water ingress at upper levels'. The visit increased the committee's concern that the erosion of the stones and the damage to the interior will continue while the damp and lack of protection from rain and wind remain unaddressed. As a result the Society has written to the Church Commissioners.

The second visit was early in October to the **Bluebell Allotments** situated off The Avenues just beyond the Ring Road. Through the good offices of Fiona Tibbett, the City's Allotment Officer, we were invited by Cicely Haines, one of the allotment-holders, for a guided tour of this richly atmospheric place created in 1924 by Captain Sandys-Winsch, Parks and Allotments Superintendent from 1919 to 1953. English Heritage has expressed an interest in designating the Bluebell Allotments a conservation site because of their social and horticultural interest.

They are a superb example of urban agriculture. Each allotment was large enough to provide vegetables for a family for a year, but the soil was not good and arrangements had to be made for regular manuring. The huts, which each serve four allotments, were pre-fabricated by Boulton and Paul and unlike modern sheds can store 8-foot canes upright during the winter. The allotments were planted with fruit trees, many of which are now rare varieties, and the Society of Friends helped provide vegetable seeds to those suffering financial hardship. Ms Haynes has been researching the history of the allotments and is seeking encouragement and support to produce a booklet.

Vicky Manthorpe

Exterior (top) and interior (above) of Bishop Salmon's Porch. *Photographs by Rory Quinn.*
A track among the Bluebell Allotments (middle) and one the Boulton and Paul sheds (right). *Photographs by Roger Last.*

Elm Hill

We were delighted that *The Daily Telegraph* picked up the *Norwich Evening News'* story on the Elm Hill cobbles and not only ran a story but also an editorial which in turn stimulated letters from readers. Apart form the satisfaction of reaching such a wide audience, the coverage underlines the national importance of Elm Hill and the need for the Norwich Society to maintain its pressure on the City and the county to pedestrianise the street and to get the necessary repairs completed. Further, we should continue with a pro-active policy to emphasise that it is the entire street that needs to be conserved.

Nightmare on Elm Hill

Elm Hill in Norwich is delightful. Many of its houses were built soon after the city's great fire of 1507, though one or two are older. The street has its share of picturesque overhanging timbered buildings, but the joy of the place is variety: flint and brick, studwork and nogging, with mullions and sashes, doorcases and dormers. "There is not a single house," says Pevsner, "which could be disturbing." Yet in the 1920s, the street was nearly demolished by an uncaring council. Today we know better.

Or do we? Something ugly has intruded into this agreeable cityscape. The cobbled road has been dug up and filled in again with an asphalt surface. It might sound trivial, but such an unsightly patch is indeed the carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend.

Elm Hill is no special case. A thousand streets and roads throughout the land have awoken to find badly finished roadworks. They jolt car suspensions and blight the view. The answer is not centralised control but local enforcement of road-excavators' obligations.

Peter Bentley, Chairman of the Friends of Elm Hill and our Vice Chairman, reports that as a result of our joint lobbying numbers 29 and 30 respectively have been repaired and refurbished but number 39 (where the first floor was declared unsafe) has still to be restored. The thatch on the Briton's Arms remains a priority, as does the replacement of the street lamps.

You will be glad to hear that the cobbles have now been put back.

PB/VM

The old elm tree (died 1979) in Elm Hill, Norwich, from an LNER station poster, 1935

An asphalt outrage on the cobbles of historic Norwich

SIR – I can think of several medieval punishments I should like to see visited upon those who inflicted the asphalt outrage on ancient Elm Hill, Norwich (Leading article, August 19). Road surfaces are important in old streets.

In the relatively few cases that granite setts have been replaced by asphalt in a London street, a diminishment of visual character has resulted.

Geoffrey Tuffs
London EC2

SIR – Tarmac is ugly and unacceptable in such a historic medieval street as Elm Hill, but it was during recent work to install a new substation there that the workers, on returning to complete the job, found that the cobble stones had "vanished".

We are informed that as soon as suitable replacements are found, all will, hopefully, be restored to its former state.

The Norwich Society will, no doubt, maintain a close watch to ensure this happens.

P.A. Lamb
Norwich

A view worth fighting for

Forthcoming Events Booking Form Enclosed

Wednesday 17 November 7.30pm
Society Evening Third Wednesday Lecture
Music Room, Assembly House, Norwich
All HEART
Michael Loveday, CEO, talks about the activities of the Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust.
No booking necessary. Guests £2.50 at the door.

Wednesday 8 December 8pm - 10pm
Society Christmas Party
47 St Giles, Norwich
Desserts, wine, raffle, entertainment.
Members £15. Guests £18.

2011

Wednesday 19 January
12 for 12.30pm
Norwich Society Winter Lunch
City College, Ipswich Road
Lunch at the Début restaurant with a talk by Dr Richard Cocke.
A foreign field: Memorial sculpture in East Anglia
Members £15. Guests £18.
Numbers limited

Wednesday 16 February 10.30am
Society Morning Third Wednesday Lecture
Music Room, Assembly House, Norwich
The Colman Family and their work
Rod Spokes talks about the personal and social history of Norwich's renowned philanthropic dynasty.
Coffee available from 10am.
No booking necessary. Guests £2.50 at the door.

Wednesday 16 March 10.30am
Society Morning Third Wednesday Lecture
Music Room, Assembly House, Norwich
History of the Jews in Norwich
Talk by Maureen Leveton, WEA lecturer, and Sophie Cabot, medieval specialist.
Coffee available from 10am.
No booking necessary. Guests £2.50 at the door.

NEW

Sunday 20 March 9.30am
Rosary Road Cemetery Walk
With June and Jim Marriage.
One of the finest Nonconformist cemeteries in the country and a superb testament to Norwich worthies and characters.
Coffee and a donation to the Rosary included.
Members: £7. Guests £9.

Wednesday 20 April 7.30pm
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Music Room, The Assembly House, Norwich
Butrint: Conservation and Challenge at a World Heritage Site
A talk by Brian Ayers.
No booking required. Members only.

Now-And-Again Group

The Now-And-Again Group meets on the third Wednesday of the third month at 3.00pm at the home of Tam Woolsey-Brown (01603 617301) who, with Margaret Jacob, organises the group. There has been a tendency to think of these teas as women-only events but that is far from the case. These are **briefing sessions**: vital for keeping in contact, letting you know what's coming up in the months ahead and when we are likely to need help with envelope stuffing, stewarding and catering. But more than that it is a great opportunity for members to let the administrator know their views on everything from the events programme to traffic and development and to ask how various issues are being handled within the Society. In future, when possible, I will invite a committee chairman to come along to explain their current concerns. The next meeting is on 15 December at 3pm. The cakes are scrummy!

We often need more help with various campaigns and at the minute the Membership and Development group needs one or two more people who can give talks and handle PowerPoint presentations (or be willing to learn). We also need people who would be willing to take committee minutes on a regular basis or as back-up to the people who are currently doing it but can't always be there. Some committees meet in the morning, others at 5pm. It's a good way of meeting new people and finding out what's going on. You would need to be comfortable with word processing.

VM

STOP PRESS

Local Listing

The Local Listing Steering Group is delighted to announce the panel of experts who have kindly accepted its invitation to review the Local Listing data:

Richard Cocke, Senior Lecturer, Fine Art, UEA (retired).

Hugh Feilden, Conservation Architect.

Bill Wilson, Historic Buildings Consultant.

Design Awards 2011

The Planning Appraisal Committee have begun preparations for next year's Biennial Design Awards which will be held late September or early October.

Your nominations are an essential part of the process and a nomination form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please take a look around the city or your area during the next few months and send in the name and address of any buildings you think worthy of consideration.

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The Executive Committee of the Norwich Society welcomes items submitted to this Newsletter but does not hold itself responsible for the views expressed.