



Pickering & District Civic Society

Reg. Charity 502630

Newsletter

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Message from the Chairman

Strange choice of new chairman if you ask me. I'm not awfully keen on social networking (either the old fashioned sort or modern 'face book' tosh) and avoid grand social functions if humanly possible. I prefer 'doing' to 'talking about doing' and have never been any use at delegating, generally working on the premise of 'If you want a job doing properly, do it yourself'. I can only think I wasn't taking enough notice to move swiftly out of the way when committee posts were being divvied up among the usual suspects.

Firstly, I would like to thank Judy Dixon for her leadership and efforts as chairman over the last three years. There can be few people in Pickering that don't know Judy from at least one organisation at the heart of Pickering life, perhaps without realising that she is massively contributing to a whole host of others at the same time. Next, I would like to thank the committee for their continued support at the heart of the society - most of whom have been serving for a considerable time, .

Don't expect change for the sake of change under my leadership. I spent enough time as a civil servant to know that 'new brooms' and major reorganisations were invariably for effect and rarely achieved anything positive, while costing a fortune. I've always preferred progress by thoughtful evolution. When all is said and done, we are reliant on the time and efforts of a handful of busy people and our achievements will always be constrained by that limitation.

The Civic Society can only be effective by gaining the trust and respect of various authorities we come into contact with. To do that we must use, and preferably pool, our knowledge and experience to produce sensible and well balanced arguments, then present them effectively. Easier said than done of course!

Rest assured that we will continue working hard to protect and enhance Pickering and the environs and would appreciate all the support and expertise that the membership can offer.

I can guarantee that every one of our members will be an expert in one or more areas, so all I ask is that you don't let it go to waste.
MP

Flood scheme latest

When the last newsletter was issued, the Pickering bund scheme had just had the rug pulled out from under it. We have continued to apply pressure wherever possible, but little tangible progress has been made. Our views, suggestions and comments formed the basis of a parliamentary debate by Anne McIntosh MP (see our website for a transcript), but the bureaucratic wheels grind slowly and there has been no feedback. The Reservoirs Act and its associated guidance is likely to be amended, but the timescale is likely to mean that the £1.2m RDC funding could be lost.

The EA has responded predictably. They have reassessed various possibilities for flood protection that have been mooted over the last decade. Most of these are totally impractical and/or vastly above any realistic chance of funding and therefore should have been dismissed instantly. It would help if the EA could be pragmatic enough to concentrate solely on DELIVERING what was do-able and affordable, but that's not how they work. The realistic options are:

1. Return to what was suggested by the RFRG - a series of simple, cheap bunds, but with storage capacity of each kept below 10,000 m³, meaning they would fall outside the remit of the Res Act. Reasonable levels of protection from failure of the bunds would still be essential, but not to the ludicrous 1 in 10,000 flood event level.
2. Amend the Res Act and guidance quickly enough to build the bunds as per EA's plans. This would need a great deal of commitment at the highest levels of government and seems a

forlorn hope. There is also the danger of 'knee-jerk reaction' legislation, which generally benefits no one.

In my humble opinion, that leaves 1. As the only sensible and workable option, but I have to convince the EA of that.

On the plus side, the other partners in the Slowing The Flow scheme have been looking to see what can be done to extend flood protection by other means. More Woody Debris Dams (WDD) have been built, with more planned in Levisham Beck. The amount of woodland planting will come under scrutiny again to see if there is scope for more. Two mini bunds in conjunction with WDD have been constructed by FC in Sutherland Beck on the R Seven catchment. These were completed by a local contractor at minimal cost, minimal fuss and working in very difficult terrain. Monitoring equipment is in place to assess how effective these will be. Unfortunately, all these small schemes will only represent about 10% of the floodwater storage capacity offered by the bunds.

I expect we will be fighting an uphill battle until the next major flood once more concentrates the minds of officialdom. Then how much will the damage cost and will lives be lost? What monetary value will bunds have then? **MP**

Green Neighbourhood Challenge

Our joint involvement in this initiative, along with KMEG has resulted in some interesting meetings. The challenge is ostensibly to produce an 11% reduction in the team's energy usage - not an easy task for a team who have aspired to this for years. I consider the learning opportunity to be more important and also to spread the message much wider. Those who wantonly waste gas, electricity and water will invariably also be the greatest consumers of our world's resources - the 'throwaway society'. They will have a much greater negative impact than the positives we are capable of. But how to change THEIR ways is the real challenge. Cost tends to be a great motivator, so those nice benevolent energy companies are really doing their bit... currently about 20% annually.

We had a very useful meeting about renewable energy. It appears that solar energy is becoming a seriously viable option due to a combination of govt subsidies and rapid fuel inflation. You would do well to investigate further.

The August meeting was about water, with a very knowledgeable and practical speaker from St Nicholas Fields in York. Ivana told us the pros and cons of water harvesting and conservation, with an excellent understanding of the hidden issues which are usually overlooked. The Sep meeting was about

sustainable transport and economical driving techniques. Everyone is welcome to attend the next meeting about waste and shopping at Kirkbymoorside on 18 Oct at 7pm. You're welcome to join us and encourage friends too. **MP**

Overgrown scrub at the Castle

Concerns have been raised about the increasingly overgrown outer margin between the Castle and Castle Bank. There are numerous self-seeded trees that are becoming unmanageable and hiding both the castle and the well-managed trees within the boundary wall. Consequently, PDCS have been negotiating with the town council, NYCC and others to see if this area can be cleared and then properly maintained. Progress has been very encouraging with action imminent. Watch this space. **MP**

Heritage Group of Civic Society. (this is a successor group to the Friends of Pickering Castle)

This summer we have run a series of events in the Castle for families - sometimes it rained, but despite that the events were appreciated by those who attended.

The aim of these events is to get the castle better known and appreciated by the up and coming generations and above all used more by local people once again. It was used as a public park and Pickering recreation area until it was taken over by the Office of Works in the 1920s. One condition of the takeover was that it guaranteed free entry to residents but use by them thereafter sadly declined. Today English Heritage run the castle and of course it needs some public spirited body, with the necessary insurance cover, like the Heritage Group to negotiate with them to organise events.

Themes at the castle have included a Nature day in May with Tom Denny of the Ryedale Natural History Group. Notes were taken about birds seen or heard and wild flowers recorded in the moat edge.

Since then Nan Sykes (our local botanist) visited later in June and made a more comprehensive list which includes a special orchid. We would like to expand on this theme and have thoughts on having a bird watch camera in place. There are lots of possibilities around this theme.

A wonderful Music day was held in June. We enjoyed the music making (from medieval to modern) but as the rain increased we finished the day crammed into the chapel with a wonderful shared concert of instruments - strings, wind and percussion and singing. The Acoustic group would like to make this a monthly happening or at the very least an annual event with dancing too!

An enjoyable if showery Craft day with spinning,

weaving, embroidery and things for children (and their parents to do) along with a small exhibition about the Bayeux Tapestry followed in mid August. We are sure we could expand on this theme for "come and try" simple crafts based on bygone age skills.

On Bank Holiday Monday, English Heritage provided a host of games which were placed around the castle grounds and we took a collection of small games and people just tried what they fancied. Parents particularly enjoyed themselves. The weather was kind and so the picnics were uninterrupted.

The previous summer we had held a painting day which was enjoyed by many. We didn't repeat this but the Vale of Pickering artists took note and ran a painting day themselves with a show of their efforts in the evening in the Memorial Hall so hopefully we started something there.

Each event has a treasure hunt so that there is always scope for energetic youngsters to chase around to look for something!

Each time we have arranged an event more local people than usual have enjoyed their castle which is only to the good.

Many thanks to Julie Hepworth and Irene Hollett for loan of Gazebos but as a result of so much rainy weather we are considering if we should acquire a gazebo of our own.

During the autumn the heritage group will meet to plan for next year. If you would like to be involved in this or have an idea for a day, or would like to help on just one of the themes, we would love to hear from you. **Sarah Roberts 477008 Hilda Sissons 475784**

Judy Dixon 473488 Wendy Borman 477325

The Census Group

This group (independent of Civic Society) was suggested by Betty Halse (formerly of Levisham) just to look at the censuses for Pickering and see how the occupations of the people of Pickering have changed over the last century. In the library reference corner are the micro fiches and a micro fiche projector, which the library staff will help you access. A small group gather in the library on a Wednesday morning about every two months and discuss the findings. It is fascinating to see how the situation changes over the decades. We often discuss how occupations differ ie a huckster, a pedlar and a hawker. What is a puddler and why did Pickering have two in 1871? How many jobs are named which women would do? What was being built with 31 masons in the town? I am sure the findings of this group will aid the study of local history and add to the store of our Town Guides stories. One of our number has a computer map facility which can store the stories of the various

houses in the town at a press of the button. First the stories have to be researched. This will open up the possibilities no end. Ask at the library about the next get together in October. **JD**

Nicholson Group

Since our mini exhibition in the Memorial Hall last Heritage Weekend 2010 and the printing of Colin Coulson's illustrated booklet "Francis Nicholson - father of English Watercolour Painting", we have been busy on further research into his life and works. If you missed that exhibition, there is a mini one in Beck Isle Museum. The dates of the Exhibition in Ryedale Folk Museum next spring are now known. March 31 to May 20 2012. This is in honour of the bicentenary of Francis Nicholson's Presidency of the Old Water Colour Society which he, with others, had founded in 1805. Prof Gordon Bell has toured the country and persuaded some institutions and individuals to loan watercolour paintings to add to our existing material (mainly lithographs). As far as we know, it will be the first retrospective exhibition of our locally born watercolour painter who made such a special contribution to watercolour painting in this country. We already have four bookings from history or art groups for guided tours of the exhibition! The local WEA is also arranging one with a preceding lecture on Saturday April 28, 10-4, starting in the Memorial Hall and then on to RFM - book with David Clarke 476118.

We are now applying for funds to cover the mounting and travel costs, and to pay for the accompanying materials, leaflets and advertising, but above all for lasting material for schools and students in the area to use next year and in the future, and indeed to help them get to Hutton le Hole.

WEA is also hosting Colin Coulson and Judy Dixon at the their monthly meeting 9th March 7.30 Friends Meeting House to whet your appetites to visit Ryedale Folk Museum- they will describe his progress, with illustrations, from weaver's son in Pickering and student artist in Scarborough to his artist's studios in Whitby, Knaresborough and Ripon, before he took off to London and fame. **JD**

YHACS Autumn Gathering November 5th Beverley.

Representatives from many of the local Civic Societies meet 3 times a year to exchange views, hear a speaker and generally meet each other. Over the last two or three years Harold and I have attended some of these. At the next meeting

Eric Pickles MP the Communities Minister has been invited to speak - he is being appraised beforehand of the topics and questions that are common to many societies but there will be time for questions. If you would like to go, please let me know as the room only holds 40 and we are required to book this time. We haven't had the agenda yet but usually the host society arranges a guided walk or something of special interest in the morning. A short break follows for lunch and the meeting starts 1.30 to finish at 3.30 with a cup of tea. **JD 473488**

ps We receive the Newsletter from YHACS. If members wish to have this forwarded to them, let me know – It's v interesting.

Events

Energy Saving Trust continuing series in association with KirkbyMoorside Environmental Group.

October 18 in Kirkbymoorside - better shopping -not wasting food and local shopping

November 21 10 -12 in Memorial Hall Pickering FINAL EVENT tba

Other events

October 8 2.00pm in Memorial Hall. CPRE invites you to Woodland and Forest Management meeting with Peter Every speaker.

November 19, 9am-1pm in Memorial Hall Pickering GIVE OR TAKE DAY exchange free unwanted good products.

National Planning Reforms

The govt proposals to reform the planning laws with the over riding principle that the default answer to any application should be **YES** has raised considerable protest from various pressure groups. Notable in the van is the National Trust and other heritage groups including Civic Voice, the national group for Civic Societies. Other vocal contributors have been the Society of Antiquaries of London which fears for the loss of heritage assets.

There is also a current campaign by 38 Degrees which lobbied hard against the sell off of forestry assets and was no doubt instrumental in the govt change of heart at the time.

The principle behind the proposed changes is to speed up planning and build more affordable houses. It has been shown to be massively misguided as currently builders hold enough land to build 350,000 houses. 80% of applications pass first time and of those which are appealed 80% succeed. This will be

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thoroughly bad law and have drastic consequences for our environment. Our experience is that large builders and supermarkets usually get their own way. Planning inspectors are prone to make strange decisions in favour of the developer- almost as if they have been instructed by govt to do so. These proposed changes can only make a bad situation worse. **SH**

**The closing date for
letters, notes or articles
for the next newsletter
is 20th November**

*Any opinions, beliefs or views
expressed in this newsletter are
not necessarily those of the Civic
Society*