

# LEICESTER CITIZEN

THE JOURNAL OF

# LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

[www.leicestercivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.leicestercivicsociety.org.uk)



Photo: Copyright Ben Ravilius

## No.25 July 2011

**NEW GUIDED WALK. WIND UP THE WILLOWS. STREET OF FLAME. COLD WAR JETS. HERITAGE OPEN DAYS. AWARD COMMENDATIONS. ROMAN LEICESTER. EMACHS CONFERENCE. LEICESTER & SWANNINGTON RAILWAY. POWYS CASTLE TOUR. REGENT COLLEGE. TOO TALL BY FAR. PLUS REGULAR FEATURES AND MUCH MORE.**



# LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

Founded 1971

Patron: Olwen Hughes MBE. M.Phil. Dip.Ed. FRSA  
President: J.B. Josephs MA (Oxon.)  
Vice-President: The Very Reverend Alan Warren MA  
*Provost Emeritus of Leicester*

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 502932

MEMBER OF THE HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM

MEMBER OF THE EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC & HERITAGE SOCIETIES

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**SOCIAL SECRETARY: TRUSHA CHAUHAN.**

**And Committee Members SUSAN BARTON, MARGARET SCOTT & STUART SIMMONDS.**

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**NICK KNIGHT: Stoneygate Conservation Area Society.**

**City Council Conservation Advisory Panel: *Position vacant.***

**RICHARD ALLSOP, ANN ALLSOP & TIM SAVAGE: Conservation Assistants.**

- **CAMPAIGNS TEAM**

**BEN RAVILIOUS, SUSAN BARTON & STUART SIMMONDS.**

- **PUBLICATIONS and EXHIBITIONS TEAM**

**STUART BAILEY, GORDON GOODE, SIMON HARRIS & JENNIFER MACGREGOR.  
*The deadline for Leicester Citizen No.26 is 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2011.***

CREDITS: Ben Ravilious, Winifred Swingler, Stuart Simmonds, Pick Everard, Trusha Chauhan, Signature Senior Lifestyle, Nick Knight, BBC, Rob Perrin, National Gas Museum, theleisureguide.

The opinions expressed in LEICESTER CITIZEN are not necessarily those of the editor or Leicester Civic Society.

Front Cover: The King Street Crescent dates from 1810 but is very difficult to photograph in the summer due to the dense tree cover. We think you will agree that Ben Ravilious has managed it beautifully. A photograph chosen for this front cover for no other reason than your editor loves it.

## JULY to OCTOBER EVENTS DIARY

Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> July	<u>EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC &amp; HERITAGE SOCIETIES</u> . General Meeting with Bull Bridge & Saw Mills Area Civic Society in the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. Guided Walk after lunch. Contact Stuart Bailey or Howard Wilkins for details if you want to join us.
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> July	<u>ROMAN ARMY DAY</u> : Join the Legions of Imperial Rome at the Jewry Wall Museum. Part of the Festival of British Archaeology. 11.30 - 3.30 pm. Admission Free. Fun for all the family. See the advertisement for details.
Wednesdays 20 <sup>th</sup> & 27 <sup>th</sup> July	2.00 pm on both days. <u>TREASURES OF THE MUSEUM</u> : Join Stuart Bailey for a free guided tour of his favourite treasures, as part of the Festival of British Archaeology. See the advertisement for details.
Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> July	10.30 am. New Guided Walk: <u>CITY OF THE DEAD – SECRETS OF WELFORD ROAD CEMETERY</u> : £3.00. See the advertisement for details and use the Bookings Page. Bookings are open now.
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> August	7.15 pm. Society General Meeting: Regent Club, Regent Road. Members welcome.
Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> August	<u>COLD WAR JETS</u> : Self-drive visit to the Bruntingthorpe Jet Aircraft Collection with Geoffrey Pool. Admission £4 (Under 16's free) See the advertisement.
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September	<u>SUMMER COACH TOUR to POWIS CASTLE, MONTGOMERYSHIRE</u> : Liable to be very popular. Discounts for members. See back page advertisement and the Bookings Page for full details. Bookings are open now.
Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> September	7.15 pm. Society General Meeting: Regent Club, Regent Road. Members welcome.
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> September	<u>ENGLISH HERITAGE OPEN DAYS</u> : Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> & Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> at All Saints Church, Highcross Street, Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> at Bishop Street Methodist Church & Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> at The Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. 10.30 - 4.00 pm on all days. Meet your Civic Society - a touring exhibition. See the advertisement.
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> September	10.30 am. Guided Walk: <u>ROMAN LEICESTER</u> : £3.00. See the advertisement for details and use the Bookings Page. Bookings are open now.
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> October	7.15 pm. Society General Meeting: Regent Club, Regent Road. Members welcome.
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	<u>EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC &amp; HERITAGE SOCIETIES</u> . Annual Conference at Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester. See advertisement for full details and use the bookings page. Bookings are open now.
Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	7.00 - 09.30pm. Meet the Ghostly Engineer at Abbey Pumping Station. Adults £3.00. Advance booking essential. See advertisement.
Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> November	7.15 pm. Society General Meeting: Regent Club, Regent Road. Members welcome.

**MEMBERS MAY WISH TO HELP SAVE THE PLANET - AND SAVE THE SOCIETY SOME MONEY - BY OPTING TO RECEIVE FUTURE COPIES OF LEICESTER CITIZEN, INCLUDING ALL SOCIETY ENCLOSURES, ELECTRONICALLY. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO READ YOUR JOURNAL WITH THE ADDED PLEASURE OF SEEING THE COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR - AND BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE. PLEASE JUST EMAIL OUR CHAIRMAN OR TREASURER IF YOU WISH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OFFER.**

## The Chairman's Page

Momentous things have happened since I last wrote a "Chairman's Page" and 1<sup>st</sup> March seems an age ago. Firstly on 21<sup>st</sup> March was the news that we had been successful in helping to save Aylestone Meadows Nature Reserve from destruction. Special mention must first go to Neill Talbot of Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust for his uncompromising professional approach to the problems created by Leicester City Council's ill-prepared and ill-considered proposals. Special mention must also go local resident and Local Access Forum member Andy Brookes for his tireless energy. However the triumphal ornaments go to Aylestone Meadows Appreciation Society under the leadership of Anne Hayto, originally formed as a quiet group of local residents coming together to do just that, but who, finding themselves in the front line against the football pitches rose to the challenge and conducted an excellent professional campaign. Later in this issue some other well known characters get involved.

The Aylestone Meadows campaign does however demonstrate how difficult it is to win when up against the institutions at work inside Leicester City Council. By February of this year the tide was turning heavily in our favour. English Nature refused to withdraw their objection to the lack of a management plan for the so-called compensation land, Europa Nostra came out strongly in our favour, the Leicester Local Access Forum (who hadn't even been consulted in the first place) came out strongly against the proposals, a solicitor's letter paid for by AMAS, ourselves and others, demolished the case against retention of the nature reserve, and Sir Peter Soulsby as local MP elicited a response from the Chief Executive that there was no way works could be commenced before the 5<sup>th</sup> May elections. On top of all this the anti-petition comfortably sailed past the 1,500 necessary to take the matter to full Council and the planning officer, whilst dutifully producing a recommendation in favour, attached to his report no less than 28 conditions that made the football pitch proposals all but impossible to achieve. Despite all of this Councillors on the Planning Committee voted against the scheme by only one vote, and with one abstention. I ask what will it take to produce a result in this committee that actually reflects the clear wishes of its electors and the professional advice of third parties?

Secondly on 25<sup>th</sup> March the European Environment Impact Assessment Directive became UK law, obliging Councils to require an application for planning consent in respect of all demolition. This was recommended by the Quail Report as long ago as 1974, but the Government of the day put it firmly on the shelf, where successive governments, not wishing to hamper developers, have left it. The Directive also requires Environmental Impact Assessments for the proposed loss of any building of "significance" and we have already argued that this must include the buildings on our Local Interest List, as Government guidance so defines them. I'm sorry if this all sounds vaguely boring - and you will get more of it later - but it is hugely important.

Thirdly on 5<sup>th</sup> May the local elections returned Society member Sir Peter Soulsby as Leicester's first City Mayor, and our very own Su Barton as a councillor for Western Park. Sir Peter's Manifesto spoke of a new age for the quality of our City that involved working ever closer with the Civic Society and the Victorian Society and we look forward eagerly to this election pledge bearing fruit over future months and years. Things have however not got off to a good start with the threat of an increasing sprawl of badly designed student apartment blocks threatening to engulf large areas of the City. Both of our universities may have first class Departments of Architecture, but the only impact on the streets of Leicester seems to be the generation of flat-pack design by speculative developers making our city appear increasingly like an Eastern European workers suburb.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May came our Fortieth Annual General Meeting, an historic occasion by any standards, which also witnessed the post of Conservation Officer for South and East Leicester filled by Dr. Margaret Scott. Of course this is Leicester so Margaret had to hit the ground running and has already become embroiled in all manner of planning application rows. She joins Stu Simmonds in Leicester West and Central, and Nick Knight in Stoneygate Conservation Area Society. After an interval of two years we are at last fully staffed. However Su Barton as a councillor is now entitled to attend the Conservation Advisory Panel in her own right so we are actively seeking a new representative to this important local body.

Finally I regret that some of you will be receiving a membership reminder with this edition of Leicester Citizen. As you read on you will see that your team is hard at work. There is a lot happening and a lot for us to do. But we cannot do it without your continued support. Please renew your membership now.

Thank you

***Stuart Bailey***

## **EVENTS PAST & FUTURE**

### THE 2009 CIVIC SOCIETY AWARDS

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April: Reception, Presentation Ceremony and Dinner at the City Rooms. Our guests of honour Sir Peter and Lady Soulsby presented awards to winners who were clearly jubilant at their success. This was yet another successful awards event, due to the enthusiastic professionalism of the team at the City Rooms.

### IN SEARCH OF THE SAXONS

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April: Jewry Wall Museum. The Anglo-Saxons of Ledecestre were duly located by visitors who were fascinated by this ancient culture as presented to them visiting re-enactment groups.

### CIVIL WAR

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April: Highly popular guided walk. Walkers were enthralled by how different - and how much more dangerous - a place Leicester was in May 366 years ago.

### 40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May at the Regent Club. A large turn out of members for an historic occasion. Thanks to the Regent Club for an excellent post-meeting buffet and to our enthusiastic Social Secretary Trusha Chauhan for organising the popular raffle that helped cover our costs. This is a format we shall certainly adopt for future years.

### DAY TOUR: BOSTON

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May: This very popular coach tour was a sell out. Many thanks to Ernie Napier of Boston Preservation Trust, who was an expert - and quite inexhaustible guide.

### THE LEICESTER HERITAGE FAIR

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June: We were joined by The Victorian Society, Leicestershire Industrial History Society and Leicester Museums Technology Association for our best Heritage Fair to date. (Four new members!) Many thanks to members Stuart Bailey, Jennifer Macgregor, Gordon Goode, Paul Southwood and Tim Savage who helped on our exhibition stand.

### ROMAN ARMY DAY

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July: Join Friends of Jewry Wall Museum for some massive family fun to launch this year's festival of British Archaeology. Have your swords, shields and helmets issued and be trained to join the Hadrian's Wall garrison by our expert centurions. Join in the military parade and inspection by a visiting senator from Rome. See the advertisement for more details.

### THE FESTIVAL OF BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July: There's something on every day at Jewry Wall Museum this year. Bigger and better than ever before. Limitations of space make it impossible to give you all the details here, but pick up a leaflet (bright pink) at The Tourist Info Office, any of our City Centre Museums or contact Stuart Bailey direct.

### CITY OF THE DEAD - SECRETS OF WELFORD ROAD CEMETERY

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July: A brand new guided walk. An estimated 200,000 Leicester people are buried at this great necropolis. See the advert - use the bookings page.

### COLD WAR JETS

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August: Join Geoffrey Pool, one of the aircraft owners, for a guided tour of this unique jet aircraft collection. Bring a picnic or a barbeque to enjoy a great day out. See the advertisement for full details.

### DAY TOUR: POWIS CASTLE, MONTGOMERYSHIRE

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September: Truly exotic! Robert Clive transformed this grim medieval fortress perched high above the Severn Valley into a paradise of great halls and gardens with the loot of his Indian campaigns. This is liable to be another very popular tour. See the advert on the back cover and use the bookings page.

### HERITAGE OPEN DAYS.

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September: Once again we shall be joining in this national celebration of our heritage with an extended display of our work at All Saints Church, Bishop Street Methodist Church and The Secular Hall.

### ROMAN LEICESTER.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September: The welcome return of one of our most popular guided walks. Includes a grand tour of the Roman Baths and guided visit of the Jewry Wall Museum to view its splendid treasures. See the advert and use the bookings page.

### EMACHS CONFERENCE

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October: The prestigious annual conference of the East Midlands Association of Civic & Heritage Societies comes to Leicester this year. The venue is Jewry Wall Museum and distinguished speakers are being planned. Admission is free but EMACHS need to know how many will attend to avoid overcrowding. Use the bookings page. This should be an entertaining and informative day for those interested in conservation issues - which of course all Civic Society members are.

THE GHOSTLY ENGINEER:

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October: Join Leicester Museums Technology Association for a few Halloween scares at Abbey Pumping Station. See the advert for details.

Advance notice is given for the following events, which will be advertised fully in Leicester Citizen No. 26, due to be published on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011, and on the Civic Society website.

FOOTSTEPS OF THE LEGIONS

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November at 7.00 pm. An evening at the Jewry Wall Museum. Join Stuart Bailey for a closer look at the amazing military phenomenon that was the Roman Legion. £3.00 including refreshments. In addition the ruins of the great second century Bath House will be fully illuminated and there will be time to explore the Museum afterwards. Bookings open on 1<sup>st</sup> October through the Jewry Wall Museum only on 01162-254-971 please, as this is a Leicester Museums event.

THE LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY SKITTLES MATCH.

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November at The Black Horse, Narrow Lane, Aylestone and including traditional pub supper. Following last year's triumph of incompetence come along for some more pre-Christmas mayhem.

OLD LONDON ROAD -THE ROMANCE OF LEICESTER

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> December: Shake off those post-Christmas blues. Explore a fantasy world of Irish Ballads, Victorian Detectives and Venetian Cathedrals on this popular guided walk that will finish at The Old Horse for much needed refreshments. The Tourist Info Office will be taking bookings but you will still be able to book through Leicester Citizen from November onwards.

2012 ANNUAL DINNER

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012: Full details to follow but put the date in the back of this year's diaries now. The excellent restaurant at The Regency Hotel is to be visited again by the popular demand of many members.

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# CITY OF THE DEAD



Ben Ravilious

## THE SECRETS OF WELFORD ROAD CEMETERY

A New Guided Walk by Stuart Bailey

**LEICESTER'S VAST VICTORIAN NECROPOLIS IS FULL OF FASCINATING PEOPLE, THEIR SPLENDID MONUMENTS AND THEIR HUMBLE GRAVES. IT IS ALSO A WONDERFUL WILDLIFE HAVEN. JOIN US ON THIS JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

**SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> JULY 2011. 10.30 to 12.15pm.**

**CEMETERY GATES. WELFORD ROAD.**

**ADVANCE BOOKING ESSENTIAL: SEE THE BOOKINGS PAGE**



Picture: Winifred Swingler

## WIND UP THE WILLOWS

“Perhaps you would remind me,” remarked the Badger rather testily, “just why we set out on this particular adventure?” “Now Badger”, replied the Rat in his most reasonable tone, “you did agree that this afternoon we would go and look for the compensation land”. “What is the compensation land?” said the Mole, perhaps rather worryingly, as he was the one with the map. “Don’t start all that again” Badger retorted, “I have already explained what is involved. May I remind you that I was the only animal here to join with Mrs. Hayto and Aylestone Meadows Appreciation Society?” “Yes Badger,” said Mole. “And may I also remind you I was the only animal here to appear in Town Hall Square waving a placard?” “Yes Badger”, said Rat, who liked to think of himself as the most highly organised of animals and was beginning to resent Badger stealing the limelight. “Not a happy predicament for a retiring old gentleman - but there you are”. “No Badger”, said Rat and Mole together and they trudged on in silence.

“Oh dear!” said the Mole suddenly. “I say you chaps I seem to have the map upside down. It’s all these red lines. I think if--” “Do you mean to say we are lost?” Badger interrupted. “Oh

dear”, said Rat, “and I was hoping to find the mitigation land”. “What’s the difference between compensation land and mitigation land Ratty?” asked Mole. “I don’t really know,” replied the Rat, beginning to lose patience. “No! And neither does anyone else”, said Badger, patience clearly lost altogether. “Well I’m off back” he added and made good his word that instant.

The three animals trudged back gloomily in the general direction of Aylestone Church. But soon the sun came out across Aylestone Meadows and by the time they caught sight of dear old Otter teaching young Portly to swim by the Pack Horse Bridge good spirits were restored. “I could just do with a cream tea at King’s Lock Cottage”, said the Rat. “Rather”, interjected Badger, beaming at his two friends, “Moley can pay – after all he was the one who had that wretched map upside down.”

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## STREET OF FLAME

Right: Hitchcock’s Flour Mill, North Lock, 1840. Powered by water. (The leet is still visible in this recent photograph above and below Hitchcock’s Weir) Steam power was introduced in 1905. City of Leicester Buildings of Local Interest List.

Below: The same on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Yet more of our heritage falls foul of an ‘accidental’ fire. Leicester Civic Society says that unless arson can be proved, the owners of commercial properties subject to fire should be liable for the full costs of the Fire Service and associated environmental clean up operations. Only this may prevent future ‘accidents’, owners being made fully responsible for the security of their property.

Photo: Stuart Simmonds

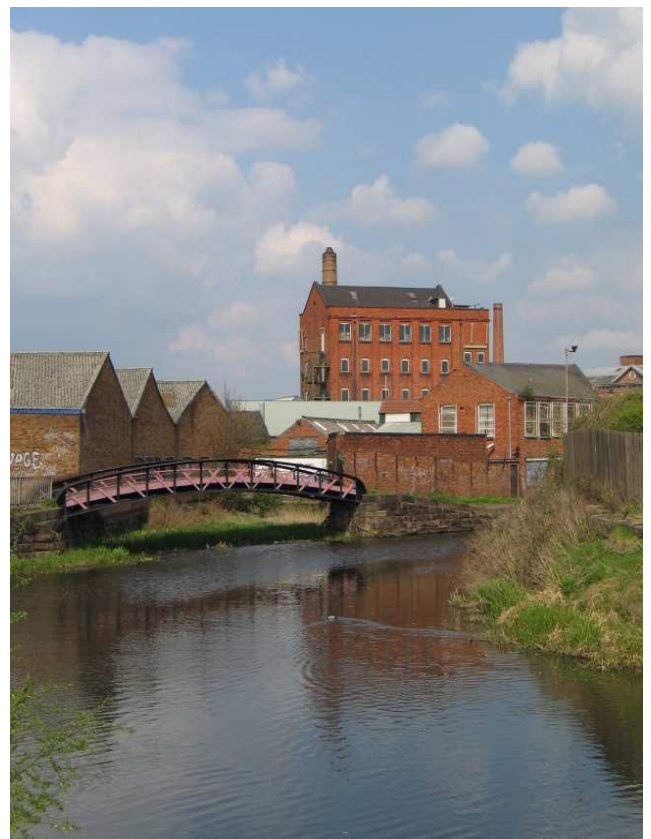


Photo: Ben Ravilious

LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

## COLD WAR JETS

AT BRUNTINGTHORPE AIRFIELD

SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

At 1.00pm.

*A guided tour of this unique aircraft collection with Geoffrey Pool.*

*Bruntingthorpe is ten miles south of Leicester off the Welford Road.*

*Bring a picnic or barbeque and your camping chairs for this fascinating afternoon with Geoffrey, who owns one of the jet aircraft on display.*

**TRY YOUR HAND  
AT THE CONTROLS**

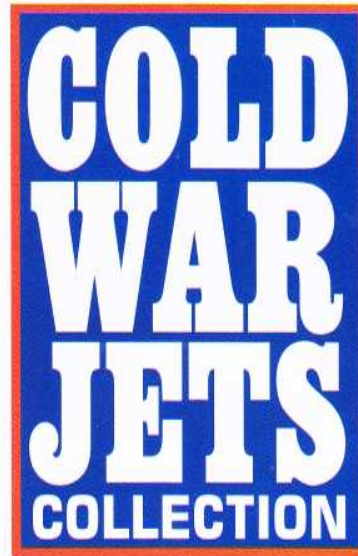
*Something for kids of all ages!*

*Admission £4.00. Under 16's free.*



Lightning  
Preservation  
Group

**BRUNTINGTHORPE  
AIRFIELD**



**SOUTHERN  
LEICESTERSHIRE**



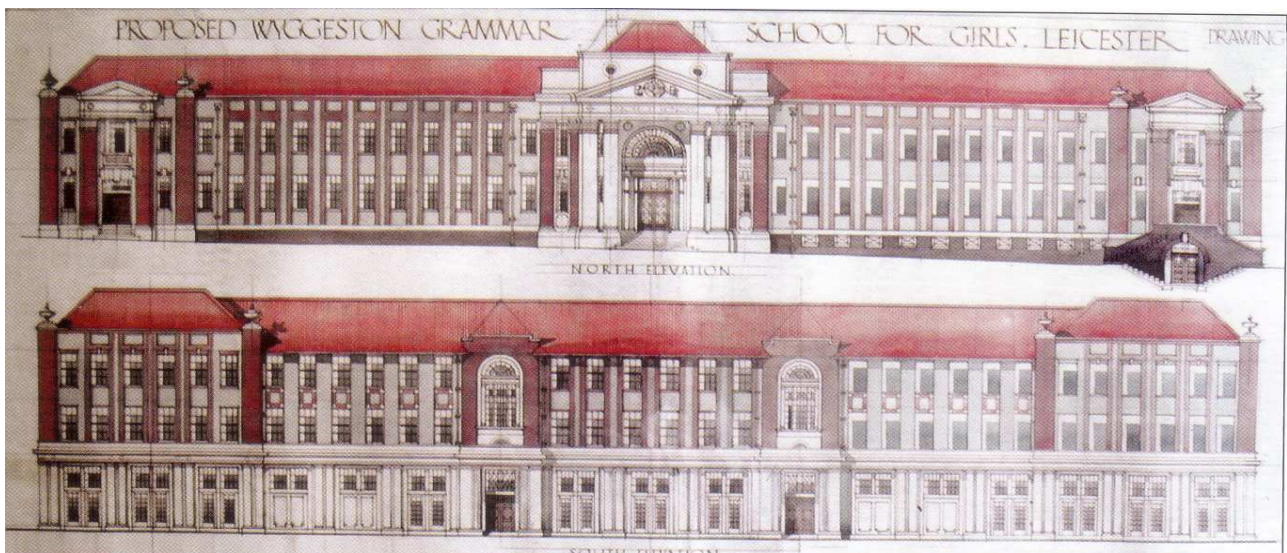
Phoenix  
Aviation

## REGENT COLLEGE

In 1928 Wyggeston Girls School commissioned architects Symington and Prince to design a new school on the large block of land owned by the Corporation of Leicester, bounded by Regent Road, University Road, Lancaster Road and De Montfort Street, and occupied at the time by their school playing fields and allotments. They could have fitted the school into half the space but they chose to make a great landscape statement by erecting their new building in the very centre.

This important greenfield site is now under direct threat from land hungry Leicester University who wish to build a new medical school across the playing fields bordering University Road and Lancaster Road. Leicester Civic Society applied to English Heritage to have this magnificent building listed on 15<sup>th</sup> May. The planning application was made on 27<sup>th</sup> May. Even worse than this application is the fact that planning consent was granted to Regent College in February 2009 to build a massive extension up to Lancaster Road but fortunately they lacked the money to do so. However selling this huge chunk of land to the University will give them the funds to go ahead, and so we get two new buildings to fill what has always been open land leading down the hill from Victoria Park and the De Montfort Hall.

Leicester Civic Society has objected to this application and it is hoped that members of the Wyggeston Girls School Association and local residents on Lancaster Road will do so as well. We need wide public debate on this issue.



## **THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT DIRECTIVE.**

On 25<sup>th</sup> March a ruling was made in the High Court that should have momentous consequences. Last year Lancaster City Council gave permission for demolition of the historic Mitchell's Brewery Building. National charity SAVE Britain's Heritage took them to court claiming that the European Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments overruled the Secretary of State's "demolition direction" which exempted demolition from planning controls unless the building concerned was on the Statutory List, within a Conservation Area or a dwelling house. SAVE lost their case but then went to the High Court on appeal. Here they won, the court ruling that the European Environmental Impact Assessment Directive supersedes UK law. Therefore with effect from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011: a) ALL demolitions will require a consent from the Local Planning Authority, and b) Any demolition proposals that are considered to have a "significant" effect on the environment will have to be subject to an EIA. However Leicester City Council appears to be doing nothing about this. In respect of the historic built environment Government Planning Policy Statement No.5 clearly defines "significance" as:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic"*

Whereas listed buildings, all buildings in conservation areas and all housing already require consent for demolition, the Civic Society has already put it to Leicester City Council at meetings on 30<sup>th</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> April that other demolitions of significance must be taken to embrace potential loss of any of the 370 buildings on the City's Local Interest List, and that the significance of these buildings is already clearly identified by Core Strategy Policy No.18 of the Local Development Framework for the City, adopted by the City Council on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010. These buildings now effectively become 'locally designated heritage assets'. However the first application for a 'Screening Opinion' in respect of a building on the Local Interest List, the former Railway Wagon Works on Upperton Road, and about which you will be able to read more later, has been passed by City Planning without any mention of the Local Interest List being made by either the developer or the planning officer. After such a bright start this does not bode well for the future. We shall be taking this further.

## **ENGLISH HERITAGE & LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY**

# **2011 HERITAGE OPEN DAYS**

THUR. 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGHCROSS ST.

FRI. 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HIGHCROSS ST.

SAT. 10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: BISHOP STREET METHODIST CHURCH

SUN. 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: SECULAR HALL, HUMBERSTONE GATE

**VISIT THESE HISTORIC BUILDINGS  
NOT NORMALLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

**“MEET YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY”**

**A TOURING EXHIBITION.**

*10.30 to 4.00pm on each day – ADMISSION FREE*



THE  
2010 CIVIC  
SOCIETY  
COMMENDATIONS



The 2010 Society Awards saw The Central Fire Station on Lancaster Road win in the Restoration category and The Percy Gee Building at Leicester University, just around the corner, win for New Build. These proud achievements were fully recorded in the last issue of Leicester Citizen. But there were six nominations. What of the building projects that came close enough to win a commendation?

First of these must be St. Martin's House, Peacock Lane that along with the Percy Gee Building, went on to win a 2011 Building Control Award. The project to create a new Cathedral Centre faced problems



in how to handle the sensitive conversion of a listed, rambling school building in a conservation area, adjoining such important listed buildings such as the Guildhall and the Cathedral. Project Manager Rev. Peter Hobson and Architect Michael Goodheart of Pick Everard are both to be warmly congratulated on the success of their efforts.

The Equity Works, last shoe factory in Leicester and an important part of our social history could have easily been lost, only being on the Local Interest List, which conferred no

protection from demolition. However, as with the Gimson Houses in 2009, Jamie Lewis Residential Lettings rescued the building from loss and has redeveloped as apartments whilst restoring the exterior.

*Above: Architects drawing of St. Martin's House with the listed 'Field Wall' beyond and The Guildhall in the distance.*

*Right: Members of the adjudication Panel pose in front of the St. Martin window in the new Cathedral Centre. Left to right: Su Barton, Michael Goodheart, (Architect) Stuart Bailey, Mike Westmoreland, Ann Allsop, Richard Allsop and Jenny Westmoreland.*

*Below: Blue plaque on the Equity Works recording its association with Alice Hawkins.*





South Lodge on London Road was nominated under both categories of Society Award - for restoration and new build. Despite retention of the original 1880 house in the scheme, the panel was not impressed by the loss of all interior features. We were however impressed by the new design, a massive building but which cleverly avoided overwhelming the existing house. Consequently Signature Senior Lifestyle won a commendation for their new building.

# SATURDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2011

# ROMAN LEICESTER

*A Guided Walk by Stuart Bailey*

From Jewry Wall Museum at 10.30am

Approximately 75 minutes, plus Museum visit and

## GRAND TOUR OF THE ROMAN BATHS



**Cost: £3.00**

**ADVANCE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. SEE THE BOOKINGS PAGE**

### **FORMER GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY WAGON WORKS, UPPERTON ROAD.**

An application for a 'Screening Opinion' has been made in respect of this building that is on the Local Interest List and which developers wish to demolish for the erection of yet another block of student apartments. The new rulings on Environmental Impact Assessments make screening opinion applications such as this necessary. But despite the City Council quoting Policy CS18 Historic Environment, in its list of policies affecting its decision not to require an EIA as part of any planning application, the building is on the Local Interest List. This is however nowhere mentioned on either application (an omission that should render it null and void) or decision. Furthermore the applicant puts so much detail into this particular application that once granted it will now be difficult for the City Council to refuse future planning consent for the development. This is a very good way that a developer can use the supposed tightening of regulations to pre-empt any objections at the planning consent stage.

We consider this outrageous. The application was submitted on 12th May and passed on 25th May in record time and with no public consultation.

Leicester Civic Society will oppose any application that involves loss of buildings on the Local Interest List, and will fully support local residents groups and other heritage bodies in their opposition.

# STONEYGATE CONSERVATION AREA SOCIETY

[www.stoneygateconservation.org](http://www.stoneygateconservation.org)

A boy aged ten or eleven, one of the eight children of a teacher, comes to a growing industrial city to attend a new school that has opened there recently. He lives with and is adopted by his aunt and uncle and after leaving school he joins his uncle's firm. By the age of twenty-four, he is running it. His approach is conservative but he understands his market, is technically innovative and is good at keeping his customers and his employees satisfied. Before long he is able to reinvest his profits, open new premises and move his young family into a large house in the city's most select residential suburb.

The profile of one of Asia's new generation of manufacturing entrepreneurs? Not quite - a Leicester man, no less; Thomas Fielding Johnson, Victorian industrialist, philanthropist, founding benefactor of Leicester University and long-time resident of Stoneygate.



In the age of 'The Apprentice', Fielding Johnson's story should make interesting reading for any aspiring young business person. From being the second son of a country schoolmaster, he became head of a worsted spinning firm that supplied more yarn to the British Army during the Great War than any other in the country. At its height, the Fielding Johnson Company ran mills in Leicester at West Bond Street and Ross Walk and in Nuneaton at Anker Mill and was an important local employer. But Fielding Johnson wasn't just a captain of local industry. As a young man worried by the threat of French-led invasion, he was a founder member of the Leicester Volunteer Rifle Corps, which later became part of the Territorial Army. As a father he sent his youngest son to be educated at Rugby School, whose curriculum had been reformed by the pioneering educationalist Dr Thomas Arnold of 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' fame.

Fielding Johnson and his second wife Agnes belonged firmly to the socially conscious professional Victorian middle class. They were 'do-gooders'. Both had first-hand experience of personal loss and were particularly involved in projects to improve public health. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the Leicester Royal Infirmary for thirty-one years; she was its first ever woman member. He was a long-standing Trustee of Wyggeston's Hospital and the Sutton's convalescent Charity for discharged hospital patients. She was a nursing superintendent in the early days of district nurses and a leading supporter of the Leicester and Leicestershire (Bond Street) Maternity Hospital. Husband and wife were also actively involved in other voluntary work. She was a manager of Wyggeston Girls' Grammar School. He served as a Justice of the Peace for Leicester and the county, was a town councillor for almost a decade and was even, for a time, a prison visitor.

This alone was probably enough to guarantee the Fielding Johnson's place in Leicester's 'Great and Good'. But Thomas had one last surprise up his sleeve; a gesture that seems to sum up his singular character, his lifelong values and his relationship with his home town. Two years before his death and aged 91, he purchased a 37 acre site including the old County Lunatic Asylum overlooking the southern edge of Leicester so that a University College (which we now know as Leicester University) should be established. The amount involved (£40,000) represented a significant slice of his personal wealth and would, by even the most conservative measure, be equivalent to over a million pounds today. Had he reinvested it in building land instead, it could have been worth many times that.



What would Lord Sugar think of all this? He might have difficulty understanding why someone with an obvious flair for business would spend so much time on so many financially unrewarding projects. Having said that, the Alan Sugar Foundation is noted for its work in supporting educational charities and Lord Sugar is a very public supporter of Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Perhaps not so different, then.

Despite its great historical significance to the City, the Fielding Johnson's family home in Stoneygate "Brookfield" on London Road is not listed: its only statutory protection comes from being in Stoneygate conservation area.

Since the 1970's it has been the centrepiece of the DMU's Nursing and Midwifery School but following a recent decision to move the school to a site near the Newarke, it was put up for sale, together with its seven acres of grounds. A development brief approved by the city council provides for the retention of the house itself and the construction of a



series of two and three storey homes at the rear of the site on land which is currently a car park.

Given its recent history, development of the site was always likely at some stage and, according to the 'Leicester Mercury', a number of parties have already registered an interest. Stoneygate Conservation Area Society's principal concerns are that the house should be preserved, that it should be put to an appropriate and sustainable use and that the view of it from London Road, across landscaped gardens, should remain uninterrupted. We look forward to seeing developers' proposals.

*Nick Knight*

## EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC & HERITAGE SOCIETIES

### 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Conserving our Historic Environment.  
Lessons from the Past - Prospects for the Future”

SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER

10.00am to 4.00pm

JEWRY WALL MUSEUM, LEICESTER

Full programme to be published but speakers from English Heritage & Leicester City Council are promised. The conference is free but places are limited, so advance booking please. See the Bookings Page

#### **AND NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS**

##### ALDERMAN NEWTON'S TOMB

Congratulations to the Old Newtonians Association on their superb restoration of Alderman Gabriel Newton's Tomb in All Saints Church Yard. The monument of one of Leicester's great benefactors, which was rather battered and overgrown, is now splendidly restored.

##### CHURCH of St. GEORGE

Congratulations to St. George's for gaining a HLF Grant of £106,000 for restoration of the church roof. We hope that restoration of the 1827 church by William Parsons, and its beautiful churchyard - a green lung at the heart of St. George's conservation area - can now follow with cleaning of the church building and resurfacing of the public walkway that winds through the yard.

##### EAST GATES COFFEE HOUSE

Congratulations to the Victorian Society for their success in getting Edward Burgess's handsome 1885 coffee house on the corner of East Gates and Church Gate added to the statutory list.

##### WESTHILL ROAD

Congratulations to Leicester City Council, local councillors and residents for successfully fighting the owner's appeal against refusal of planning consent for a garden grabbing bungalow on the hill above Western Park. We won!

##### WHEATSHEAF WORKS

Congratulations to developers who submitted a first class design for new residential development of the largest listed building in Leicester. Well done.



*The first Leicester West Bridge Station, third oldest passenger railway station in the World but demolished needlessly in 1969. BBC*

1. Glenfield Tunnel: The tunnel was 1796 yards long and, at the time of its construction the longest railway tunnel in the world. The vents were an antique and obviously experimental collection. All bar the 1893 vent at New Parks Boulevard were very narrow or with tapering bore, wider at the tunnel roof. Two were construction shafts, evidenced by the spoil heaps still around them. In later years the tunnel was gated to prevent trespass by either farm animals or people, with tunnel keepers stationed at each end.
  2. The narrow bore of the tunnel created problems. I remember my former boss, Mr. Graham Balment, Chief Clerk at Leicester London Road Booking Office recalling his days as Stationmaster at Southam Road & Harbury on the Great Western Main Line between Leamington and Banbury. He was once consigned goods to be sent to Leicester West Bridge that required two vans of their own. Consulting the route in his books of reference he discovered the existence of the tunnel at Glenfield and further obtaining the profile of this tunnel he discovered it to be of too narrow a bore for any goods van he had ever come across. The branch itself was of no use as it only provided mineral trucks to the tunnel gauge; all other vehicles having long since vanished when the line was closed to passenger traffic in 1928. A search was instigated. Eventually two suitable vans were located on a remote corner of the Southern Railway system, and duly despatched to Southam Road. This is an interesting example of how the railway was organised to function as a common carrier before the 1968 Transport Act removed that requirement.
  3. Platforms: From 1849, with the opening of the Midland Railway line from Knighton to Desford linking the L&S to an increasing national system, the section from Desford to West Bridge functioned as a branch line. This included the stations at Ratby, Glenfield and West Bridge. Like most early railway stations in this country and like most continental stations to this day, they had very low platforms. Access to trains was by running boards on the carriages acting as steps. The junction station at Desford had a split-level platform, the branch half being constructed at a lower level to accommodate West Bridge trains. Even after rebuilding of the three branch line stations to modern standards in 1874 and 1893 this extraordinary platform arrangement survived and was still in situ when Desford Station closed in 1963.
  4. Innovation and survival: Early railways had firstly to discover that which became an accepted fact on later lines. The Victorian historian Clement Stretton (Not always reliable -so take this with a pinch of salt) describes an accident involving a train hitting a hay cart on the crossing at Thornton, which led to the directors calling on George Stephenson to devise some means by which approaching trains could advertise their presence better than the standard stage coach horn then in use on locomotives. Stephenson went to a musical instrument manufacturer in King Street, Leicester and the steam whistle was invented. The distant sound that was to haunt our landscape for the next one hundred and thirty years was born on the Leicester & Swannington Railway.
  5. The Midland Railway rebuilt both Ratby and Glenfield stations in 1874 (the latter to the east of the level crossing) It rebuilt the eastern portal of the tunnel and a new Leicester West Bridge Station, behind Tudor Road, in 1893. But a simple brick hut at Ratby laid claim to being the world's oldest railway signal box and the original buildings at West Bridge, Leicester were the third oldest surviving railway station in the world. All of these features were destroyed in the 1960's and 1970's.
  6. An oddity: I have in my possession a rectangular glass dish 3.5 X 2.25 by 1.5 inches deep. I inherited this from my godfather Mr. Reginald Garlick of Kirby Muxloe. His father was signalman at Kirby Muxloe Station (1849 -1852 named Braunstone Station and closed finally in 1964) for many years and this dish functioned as an ashtray in the signal box. When he retired Mr. Garlick took the dish with him as a keepsake. The story goes that it was from Glenfield and was originally a salt dish that was part of the luncheon set for a platform collation in honour of the distinguished guests on the first train in 1832. Picture the surprising scene for the people of Glenfield. Salt dish and other table ornaments wink in the July sunlight as Mr. Stephenson's train, minus locomotive chimney that had been knocked off, bursts from the tunnel and coasts through the new station to enable sooty dignitaries to wash at Rothley Brook before the enjoyment of their refreshments!
- However my salt dish may have to be taken with a pinch of salt as well, as this may not be quite true. Accounts of the opening on 17th July 1832 when planet class locomotive "Comet", designed by George Stephenson and manufactured by Robert Stephenson & Co. of Newcastle, transported to Leicester by sea and river, and driven that day by Robert Stephenson himself, confirm that "Comet" did indeed lose its chimney in the tunnel and that it stopped at Glenfield Station for passengers to wash off the soot at Rothley Brook. However they clearly state that the stopping point for a collation to be served to the dignitaries was the then terminus at Bagworth -not Glenfield. So the folk memory that comes down to us with the dish is out by a couple of stations. The dish was featured in BBC's "History of the World in 100 Objects" in 2010.

(Update of article originally written for "Civic News" No.74, the newsletter of Leicester Civic Society: August 2002)

# LEICESTERSHIRE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## Out Now on CD

Few people seem to know that the Leicester to Swannington Railway was one of the oldest railways in the world. This new publication, the work of many authors under the editorship of LIHS member Keith Drury, brings together a wealth of material, including hundreds of previously unpublished photographs. It includes all the new material relating to the railway system between Leicester and Swannington which has been found by our Society over recent years, including all the operations and companies associated with it,

We've designated it as the 'compendium' as it holds everything we've found – an eclectic mix not to be missed! And we hope there will be more to come. There's a whole Appendix tantalisingly entitled 'Untapped Resources' still to be explored!

## The Leicester to Swannington Update 2010: Compendium

An e-publication by  
Leicestershire Industrial History Society



LIHS members £5.00, Non-Members £10. Plus £2 P&P. From David Lyne. Hon. Secretary LIHS, 10 Somerville Road, Leicester LE3 2ET. Tel 0116-291-9706. email [lihs99@ntlworld.com](mailto:lihs99@ntlworld.com)

### IN MY OPINION

*Nick Knight*

Following the recent announcement by Tesco that it intends to appeal against the City Council Planning Committee's refusal of permission for a proposed new store in Belgrave - a decision taken against the recommendations of City Council planning officers - a correspondent to the Leicester Mercury 'Letters' page suggested that, in future, planners and Planning Committee should co-ordinate their decision-making. He argued that this was an obvious way of preventing developers from winning appeals and seeking awards of costs which the Council could ill afford to pay.

I disagree. Removing the 'Chinese wall' that currently separates planners and councillors would actually result in poorer decisions and a weaker planning system.

What is needed is for the Planning Committee to rise to its responsibilities. Planning officers work within strict local and national policy guidelines and operate in something of a vacuum. The Planning Committee is valuable because it allows important planning applications to be further scrutinized by elected councillors in the light of up-to-the-minute social, cultural and economic factors. There's nothing wrong with Committee members opposing officer recommendations as they did in the Tesco case but if they do, it's their duty to ensure that their decisions - however they reach them - are based on sound planning considerations and are defensible at appeal.

It's in all our interests that officers and Committee should remain independent of each other and that both should function effectively. That said, Committee Members' actions need to be motivated by more than just a personal opinion, a political allegiance or the wishes of a few of their constituents. If they are unable or unwilling to accept this, they should be replaced because they are wasting our money.

+++++

### THE RICHMOND ARMS

*Stuart Bailey*

Following disasters such as the loss of The Bowstring Bridge and Pump & Tap, and the near disaster of losing Aylestone Meadows Nature Reserve, more and more local people are taking their heritage into their own hands. This chimes with Government strategies such as the 'Big Society' and the forthcoming Localism Bill. It also chimes with the new Government Planning Guidance PPS5: Planning & the Historic Environment. In all of these emphasis is put on heritage assets that are not formally designated but are important to the local community. In this instance a Mid-Victorian corner pub, sadly much altered, certainly not listed, nor within the Aylestone Village conservation area, was so important to the people of Aylestone that many of them reacted with a 'campaign' to prevent its loss. Sadly the City Council were not up to handling this but they must learn and learn quickly. There will be more of this from the people of Leicester. The Civic Society will support them as the EIA Directive now requires planning consent for demolition.

THE FESTIVAL OF  
BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY  
JULY 2011 JEWRY WALL MUSEUM

**SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JULY  
ROMAN ARMY DAY**

**11.30 - 15.30**

Massive fun for all the family with Roman Army training. Have your swords, shields and helmets issued and be trained to join the Hadrian's Wall garrison by our expert centurions. Join in the military parade and inspection by a visiting senator from Rome. Exhibitions on Roman Leicester, Roman arms and armour. Talks and demonstrations by experts. Activities throughout the day.

**ADMISSION FREE**



**WEDNESDAYS  
20<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> JULY**

**At 2.00 pm on both days.**

**TREASURES OF THE  
MUSEUM**

**Join Stuart Bailey for a free guided  
tour of his favourite treasures.**

**ABBEY PUMPING STATION**

**"THE GHOSTLY ENGINEER"  
MONDAY 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2011  
7.00 to 9.30pm**

This year's tour of the eerie basement beneath the pumps and engines falls on Halloween – a ghostly night for a ghostly tale. Are you brave enough to take the lamp lit tour and hear the tragic story of Robert Richardson, The Ghostly Engineer? If so you will need to pre-book tickets on 0116-2995111 and make sure you wrap up warm with sensible shoes as the basement has steep steps and can be damp - like a tomb. But the mighty beam engine will be in steam and the LMTA Café will be serving refreshments to ward off winter chills.

Adults £3.00 (Not suitable for under 10's)

**CORRECTION**

In the last edition of Leicester Citizen we inadvertently said that Abbey Pumping Station Special Events were free. This is not the case. So if you turned up expecting to get in for nothing – you now know whom to blame.

**TOO TALL BY FAR!**

An application has been made to revive the former proposals for 22 and 27 storey towers on Bath Lane that Leicester Civic Society considers outrageous. There is no way that the proposal, which is described as:

*"Variation of condition 43 (approved plans) to amend planning permission 20100610 to amend design of buildings, change the layout and omit the basement car park"*

can be considered as a minor material amendment under Section 73 of the Planning Act. There are fundamental changes proposed to re-vamp the towers to provide over 600 student apartments and an entirely new planning application should have been required.

The proposal violates whole sections of the City Council Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document. In the past the Council got around this by applying the SPD to the eight-storey podium only - which is also outrageous.

There are no less than 23 protected heritage assets forming part of two scheduled ancient monuments and four conservation areas that will be adversely affected by a development of this enormous height on Bath Lane.

## THE BOOKINGS PAGE

Please photocopy this page if you do not want to cut your Journal.

PLEASE RESERVE \_\_\_\_\_ PLACES ON THE GUIDED WALK "CITY OF THE DEAD" ON SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> JULY 2011.

I ENCLOSE \_\_\_\_\_ IN FULL PAYMENT (£3.00 PER PERSON)

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PLEASE RESERVE \_\_\_\_\_ PLACES ON THE DAY COACH TOUR TO POWYS CASTLE ON SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011.

I ENCLOSE \_\_\_\_\_ IN FULL PAYMENT. (SEE ADVERTISEMENT ON BACK PAGE)

I/WE WILL JOIN THE COACH AT \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE RESERVE \_\_\_\_\_ PLACES ON THE GUIDED WALK "ROMAN LEICESTER" ON SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011.

I ENCLOSE \_\_\_\_\_ IN FULL PAYMENT. (£3.00 PER PERSON)

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PLEASE RESERVE \_\_\_\_\_ PLACES AT THE EAST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC & HERITAGE SOCIETIES ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER 2011.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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ADVANCE BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE EVENTS AND SHOULD BE MADE TO: STUART BAILEY, 48 MEADOW AVENUE, LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE LE11 1JT. CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO "LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY".



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir

I have long been a resident of Clarendon Park and love living here but I have seen the urban fabric go downhill with the increasing amount of Buy-to-Let properties. Such housing is often poorly maintained, sash windows are left to rot or are replaced with unsympathetic UPVC window frames, (my pet hate) and wheelie bins abound.

I have lobbied Councillors, our MP and the City Wardens to do something but nothing much seems to change, so I have started to do something myself to try to improve things. I have recently started making and fitting window boxes and hanging baskets for free or for a voluntary amount to cover paint or materials. I have been focusing on Edward Road as it is near my house and it has all the classic property issues mentioned above. Fortunately I have enough scrap bits of material at the moment but I certainly couldn't tackle the whole area on my own. I am doing something for the community, It is a simple thing but it seems to be making a difference.

It is a hope of mine that Clarendon Park may become a conservation area to stop the decline of the housing stock and check lack of care by the hundreds of absentee student landlords. A bit of a pipe dream but at least I am making a start.

Rob Perrin  
Clarendon Park

*(Well done Rob. Our conservation area survey team is halfway through Clarendon Park as we go to print – Ed)*



National Gas Museum

Sir

Did you know that the National Gas Museum is situated right on our doorstep, in a Victorian Building by the entrance to the British Gas site on Aylestone Road? The museum tells the remarkable story of gas from the early manufacture of town gas (made locally from coal) to the discovery of natural gas in the North Sea.

The National Gas Museum Trust runs the Museum with support from British Gas. Enthusiastic curator Maurice Martin is always happy to show people round and have a chat with visitors. According to the leaflet, the museum hosts "the biggest collection of gas and gas related artefacts in the world - It's fun. It's fascinating. And it's free!"

The museum is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 12.00 noon to 4.30 pm. Groups are welcome during normal opening hours or by special arrangement at other times including evenings. Further details can be found on the museum website at [www.gasmuseum.co.uk](http://www.gasmuseum.co.uk). Verdict: A visit is highly recommended, and we should treasure the museum as one of Aylestone Park's hidden gems.

Herbert Epple  
Aylestone Park

*(Thank you Herbert. We'll organise a visit next year – Ed)*

# LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

## SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011

# POWIS CASTLE



*Photo: theleisureguide*

**POWIS IS UNIQUELY SPLENDID. ONCE THE STARK FORTRESS OF WELSH PRINCES, HIGH ON A NARROW RIDGE ABOVE THE SEVERN VALLEY AND TRANSFORMED BY FAMILY FORTUNE INTO A RICHLY ORNAMENTED FANTASY CASTLE. PROUD HOME TO A SPECTACULAR COLLECTION OF INDIAN TREASURE AND SURROUNDED BY TWENTY-SIX ACRES OF UNSPOILT BAROQUE GARDENS DATING FROM THE 1680's, WITH FOUNTAINS, DANCING STATUES & LAVISH HERBACEOUS BORDERS.**

**COACH DEPARTS: HUMBERSTONE GATE (Secular Hall)  
PREMIER INN (Narborough Road)**

**8.00am  
8.10am**

**RETURNING AT 6.50 and 7.00pm**

***DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS - SEE THE BOOKINGS PAGE***

**FULL FARE: £32.40  
CONCESSION: £31.90**

**(MEMBERS £30.40)  
(MEMBERS £29.90) Senior Citizens, Students,  
& Unwaged.**