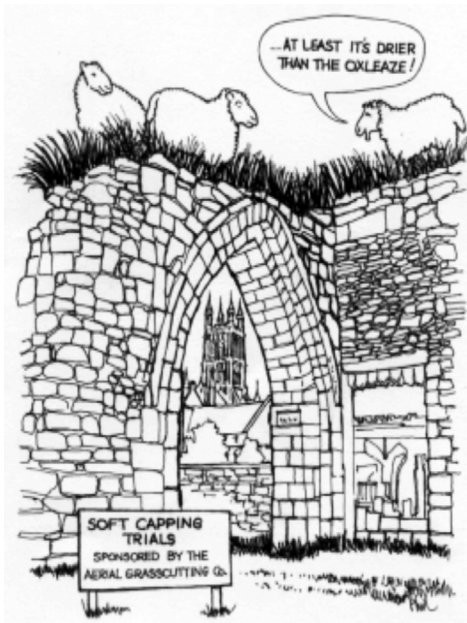


Annual Reports

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, 2005, by Robin Morris



*The match I think will prove to all,
What a splendid club ours is,
To put into the field two such good teams:
Three cheers for T. G. Smith.
May Gloucester Football flourish still,
For many years to come.*

CHARITY FOOTBALL MATCH, 1886

In my view there is only one shed in Gloucester which is worth keeping. This is, the SHED at Kingsholm from which the supporters of Gloucester RFC understandably spew out sufficient venom to keep all invaders at bay. It would be a brave outsider who would be imprudent enough to step foot on such hallowed grounds. It is an honourable tradition, which has been in existence since the Roundheads of Gloucester repulsed the Cavaliers during the English Civil War.

What has made me think of this is the advance of the ubiquitous shed throughout the whole of Gloucester. I have to drive daily along St Oswalds Road and in the last few months there has been a serious outbreak of ugly sheds on what used to be the old cattle market site. It seems to me that every way you look in Gloucester there are rows of sheds. There is a serious outbreak all along Eastern Avenue and in an even more unsightly outbreak in the Bristol Road - Tuffley area of the city. I suppose the most unfortunate sheds in the City are those at the Peel Centre where a big opportunity was missed to make something of the canal bank. I appreciate that there have to be areas set aside for business but it is just that those sheds at St Oswalds Road are so dominating and ugly and those at the Peel Centre are so insensitively located.

We have had something of a set back this year in so far as 66 Westgate Street is concerned. We had hoped that a developer had been found who would take over the project. For a variety of reasons the negotiations did not come to fruition. In view of the great cost of a complete restoration we are considering the possibility of dealing with the matter along the lines, which we used for the Theatre Vaults. In this case, a steel cage was inserted internally. This limited the use of the upstairs floors but meant that the ground floor could be put to commercial use and the building stabilised for the future. This is not an ideal solution but it may well be one that we have to adopt in the light of the limited funds available and the limited economic usefulness of the upper two floors. This would mean that the ground floor could be put to commercial use and the upper storeys would be available for public inspection under suitable supervision.

This year has also seen the completion of the works to improve the pedestrianisation of Eastgate Street. You will remember that I was critical of the original scheme and I am personally happy with the alterations, which have been carried out. We now have a clean uncluttered surface. One criticism, which has been

voiced is the removal of the cast iron lamps. When I raised the issue with Roy Salisbury who is the contractor carrying out the work he indicated in the nicest sort of way that if I wanted them back I would jolly well have to do it myself. I gathered from what he said that it had been a very difficult operation to get them out. Our Council of Management appreciates that the lamps were reproduction but considers that we should have been consulted.

The National Civic Trust has initiated a move to declutter the streets of our main cities from all the unnecessary signs and any other obsolescent items. This has been discussed by our Council of Management and we have decided to support the initiative. The survey group is actively pursuing the matter and I hope to have a progress report from them shortly.

We have had a disappointment however so far as the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company is concerned. We were invited to suggest suitable names for the short list for the board. We submitted what we considered to be two very good nominees i.e. Colin Nyland and Hugh Worsnip. Neither nominee was successful in reaching the short list. In the circumstances I was instructed to write a letter to Greg Smith, which I have done. A copy of the letter follows this report. It seems very odd to us that the Urban Regeneration Company would not wish to have on its board a representative from Gloucester's main environmental group. We have an experienced group of people working within the Trust and representing a wide range of skills.

During the year we have also been looking at the possibility of involving ourselves with the cleaning and restoration of Raike's Statue in the park. The City Council has commissioned a report on the statue, which would seem to indicate that whilst it is not in a state of disrepair it does require some cleaning and attention. The members of the Council of Management have expressed the view that perhaps something can be done to improve the base upon which the statue stands and also the landscaping immediately surrounding it. I saw the restoration of a statue of Sir Francis Drake on the Hoe at Plymouth and was impressed by the workmanship of the contractors. I accordingly wrote to the Plymouth authorities and they in turn supplied me with the detail! The firm in question is local and it may well be that they would be the suitable company to undertake the work as and when it is commissioned. The matter is in its early stages however and we will be able to keep you informed of the progress through the Newsletter.

Congratulations to our guides who this year achieved 30 years of service to the community. The energy and commitment of everybody involved is amazing. Looking at Colin's programme for the coming year, there is going to be an interesting and challenging range of activities.

My thanks to everyone for your continuing membership of the Trust and for your contributions to our activities. Thank you also to the many people who write to me throughout the year drawing various matters to my attention - You act as a kind of conscience for me - and I am grateful.

Letter

10 February 2005

Greg Smith
Chair, Gloucester HURC
Gloscat
Cheltenham Campus
Princess Elizabeth Way
Cheltenham
Gloucester GL51 7W

Dear Greg

At its recent meeting, the Council of Management of the Gloucester Civic Trust was very disappointed to hear that neither of its nominees (Colin Nyland and Hugh Worsnip) had been successful in reaching the short list for the board of the Gloucester Heritage URC.

The Civic Trust has been, for more than 30 years, the principal guardian of Gloucester's built heritage and the most active pressure group in promoting regeneration and making sure that new buildings are of a high standard of design and construction.

From its membership of more than 400 local people, the Trust staffs the Tourist Information Office in the Docks, trains and provides more than 60 tourist guides for the City, organises the annual Heritage Open Day and provides a panel of architects, archaeologists and urban planners to advise the City Council on design issues in planning applications.

In conjunction with the city council, it has formed a company, Gloucester Historic Buildings Ltd., which has bought, renovated, and returned to good use several historic buildings which would otherwise have been left derelict, damaged or destroyed. In short, the Civic Trust is the only voluntary body, springing from the people of Gloucester, which has ACTUALLY EVER DONE ANYTHING about regenerating historic Gloucester!

Perhaps more importantly, the Civic Trust has been able to engender at least some civic pride amongst a population understandably cynical about the unfulfilled promises made on urban regeneration in Gloucester over the last 30 years.