

Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society

Registered Charity 246145

Newsletter March 2017



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CHAIR'S REPORT

As the first signs of Spring start to appear, Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society has never been busier.

April 2nd will find us providing support for the Greater Manchester Marathon and hoping yet again to win the Community Prize.

Our big project this year will be National Civic Day which marks the 50th anniversary of the Conservation Area legislation on the weekend of 17th June. Now that the Conservation area appraisals and management plans are completed, our only difficulty is making sure they are complied with. The absence of a Conservation Officer is very difficult for everyone. The Neighbourhood Business Plan for the town centre will be part of the local elections in May but in the meantime a Design Group is meeting regularly with local architects, planners and The Civic Society commenting on Planning Applications. We are grateful to the Chair, Damian Utton of Pozzonis.

As Altrincham Forward ends we are in touch with the Business Improvement District now rebranded as Altrincham Unlimited .

Civic Voice, our parent organisation, is urging submission of buildings for their Community Assisted Design Awards and we have submitted Station Buildings, Market House and the Conservative Club which has turned the old Working Men's Conservative Club into an excellent addition to the Market Quarter. It is hoped this will form a future award when the public realm is completed.

Thanks must go to ATCP, representing the business community, Friends of Altrincham Interchange and Ann Yearsley representing the Broadheath community. We continue to work with One Trafford in respect of their three contracts, Environment, Highways and Asset Management, hopefully in a positive way.

Work is about to begin on the new health and well being facility and library on the old hospital site.

Many thanks as always to the hard working committee and other partners within the town.

Judie Collins, Chair

ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE

The Interchange has finally got into an established pattern of operation after the redevelopment which allowed it to re-open for business just over two years ago.

From that positive statement, it could be concluded that after £19m of redevelopment that all has been running with few if any problems since that time. In some respects that may be true but in others that, regrettably, is not the case and this is precisely where the Friends of Altrincham Interchange continues to have an important role in trying to improve the experience of the travelling public when using the Interchange.

Some problems are not too difficult to resolve such as the adequate supply of water to keep the public toilets operating without having to be taken out of commission in periods of low rainfall.

They are designed to be supplied by harvested rainfall but it was discovered that the top-up valve installed had to be manually operated; this has now been replaced by one that kicks in automatically when the level drops.

Another recurring problem was the unreliable operation of the lifts which went on for some months. The root cause was eventually established and their reliability has risen to that which should reasonably be expected. Other problems have proved to be rather more challenging to resolve such as the floor on the decking on the new bridge. It had achieved the status of being a saga. From 31st October until about Christmas, passengers wishing to catch a train towards Chester had to traipse around to Platform 3 to gain access to the bridge to cross the track to reach platform 4. A request from the contractors to be allowed to close the bridge completely in order to do the work was refused and just as well as the 2 – 3 week job lasted until 17th February, a weekend under 16 weeks. For all this time the contractor's skip had taken up one of the disabled parking bays adjacent to the exit from platform 4. The problem originated from the inability of the glazing panels as fitted to keep out the rain resulting in the ingress of water causing the original tiles to lift. The new contractors are confident that the work now completed will be up to the job!

The original revised lay-out of Stamford New Road opposite the Interchange was drawn up in great detail by Trafford Road Engineers but in practice it proved to be less than ideal, especially for the taxi drivers. The layout was re-assessed and some revisions made in consultation with the taxi drivers and everybody's now 'happy'. All drivers, however, now have an additional obstacle in the middle of the road (right beside the taxi rank) to negotiate which is intended to tell everyone that 'You're now entering Altrincham Town Centre' – a very good idea these days when the only concept many drivers have of where they are is by listening to the instructions of their satnav.

The Interchange must cater for all modes of transport and one that is growing fast is cycling. The new cycle hub was finally opened a little late after a few minor problems had been resolved and the slow take-up has accelerated so that it is now regularly 30-40% of its design capacity. Lest anyone's cycle develops a fault it has an in-house cycle servicing facility!

Altrincham proudly celebrated its success in the North-West in Bloom in 2016 and the Interchange had plans to support the impressive displays around the town. Efforts were thwarted by the powers that be but the Friends and the Community Rail Partnership for the Mid-Cheshire Line are determined to 'have another go' in 2017; it will, however, need the co-operation of those whose land is involved.

In 2016 TfGM put forward to the Minister for Transport a proposal that it should take over the control/management of all stations within Greater Manchester, a total of 97 sites. This was not universally supported. There may be some logic where the site provides public transport by more than one means, such as at Altrincham, but to do so at, for example, Hale, would carry little logic – that would mean three bodies involved at a small site: TfGM, Northern Rail (the TOC) and Network Rail (owner of the trackbed).

At Altrincham there are four bodies currently involved, TfGM, both sites and buses, the other two aforementioned and Metrolink. The fact that there are currently so many bodies involved makes site management a real challenge – in an attempt to address this challenge, an Interchange Steering Group has been established but with a certain irony, and reluctance to deny the public a voice, the Friends have been denied the opportunity to become involved. Friends of Altrincham Interchange will continue to strive for their objective and can now be easily contacted via their Facebook page - @foaigroup – all comments will be taken on board.

Ian Stuart - Chairman: Friends of Altrincham Interchange

HERITAGE OF THE ALTRINCHAM AREA

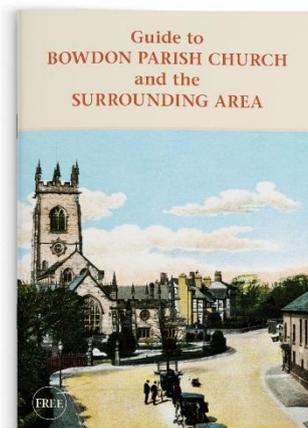


LOTTERY FUNDED

The past year's work on our projects supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund has continued the theme of partnership working with other local organisations and individuals. The Altrincham Area Image Archive is still at the core of the activities.

To kick off the year, the popular calendar featuring more of the historic postcards of the local street scene began to be used by customers of Helgason's Pharmacy, who had been given it as a gift.

On 21st June 2016, our well-illustrated *Guide to Bowdon Church and the Surrounding Area* was published at the induction of the new vicar. Those at the ceremony received copies and it is still freely available at the church, businesses in Bowdon and at the Library and Art with a Heart in Altrincham. The 36-page booklet was written by Judith Miller and Sue Nichols. It includes a handy map showing the historic pathways and green spaces to be explored in the Bowdon area.



The Altrincham heritage trail booklet will be published in 2017, once all the public realm works are completed and the new Health and Well-Being Centre and library on the old Altrincham General Hospital site are well underway.



As part of the Hidden Studios initiative in the summer, photographer Geoff Crossley took photos of the town centre matching the locations exactly with historic views. He then deftly merged them together to create one image. They appeared on shop windows including Art with a Heart, where there was also a complementary display of the original images. A larger format image is on permanent display in the Market House. It combines a photo of it in its new guise as a highly successful and award-winning food, drink and socialising hub with a simple snapshot of the interior taken in 1956.

The Church of St John the Evangelist was opened in 1866 to serve the growing population of the area, encouraged by the new commuter rail route into the Manchester. To celebrate the 150th anniversary, a detailed display was created by local author Stephen Birchall. It was accompanied by a self-guided tour of the features, with a selection of the reprints of 19th century maps and plans also on show. There were two open days with another one planned for mid-December to coincide with the main church service.

Images have also been given out for other exhibitions including one on WWII at Altrincham United Reform Church in Hale, following on from the one they did on WWI. Provision for local history publications and talks is ongoing, for example David Eastwood's booklet *Altrincham Town Hall* and Colin Graham's series of

publications and talks on Altrincham during WWI. Further WWI images were projected behind Altrincham Choral Society's commemoration in November at the RNCM.

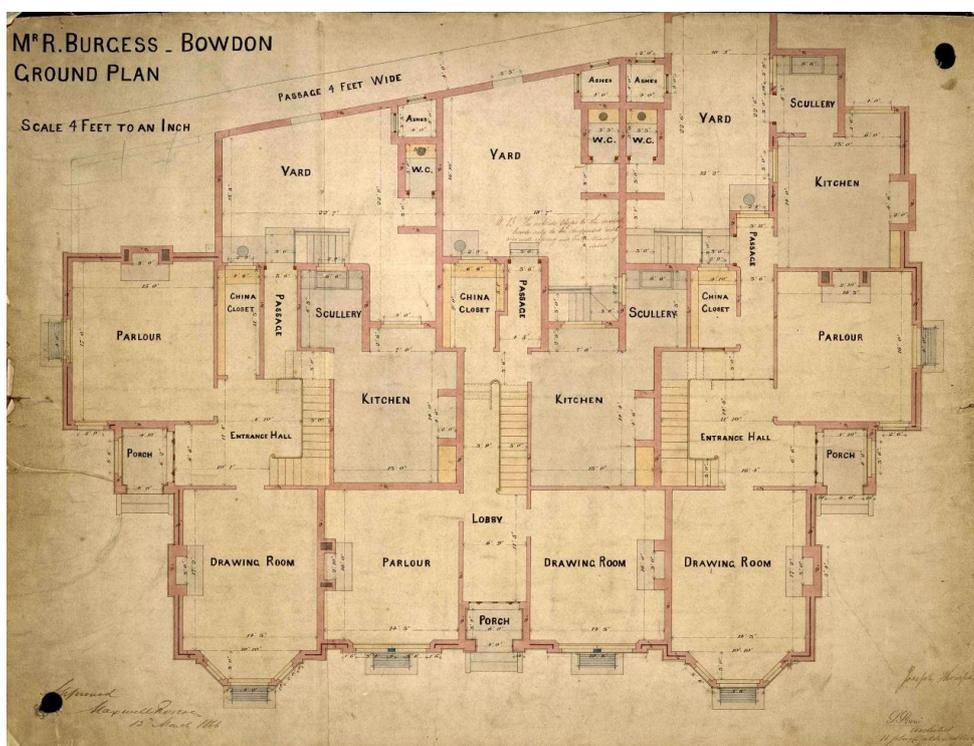
The Altrincham Area Image Archive has also been a source of inspiration for the themes and visual content for the artwork and public realm of the new square to be created between the covered market and the new library (currently Pott Street).

The complex software behind the interactive plans page of the Altrincham Heritage web site has finally been completed and the technical issues resolved. This means that the methodical task carried out by volunteers of matching the plots of the 1852 Board of Health Plans to the related images and data, is now underway. Two new pages, 'Views from on high' and 'Events', have been added which will showcase more of our digitised images. They include photographs taken by local photographer Ian Gee, who kindly donated his collection. Some are of the great Altrincham Show on the Devisdale, dating from 1958. The web site is now due for completion in 2017.



The projects described above were supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the final £5,000 tranche of the £50,000 grant being paid in July 2016.

The remainder is primarily being put towards the digitising of historic material which continues to be offered up. This includes two more albums of local photographer and historian the late Douglas Rendell, covering his time as an official naval photographer during WWII. There is also a set of building plans for some white brick houses on Delamer Road so typical of the area.



They were created in 1866 by Russian-born architect Peter Pons, who also undertook the designs of the 1870 facade of old AGH being retained in the new building.

Sue Nichols, Project Coordinator

Students and Graduates we need your help!

The society is eager to encourage young people, college students and graduates to become involved with various ongoing projects. We look forward to hearing from you - please send us a tweet or email us with your views, suggestions and skills you could contribute.

NEWS FROM OLDFIELD BROW COMMUNITY

Last Year on the Brow – an update from Friends of Cow Field

Mike O'Neill – September 2016

2016 was a busy year for the community groups on Oldfield Brow. We are now meeting regularly with other local groups and organisations, all of whom have been a great help and support. Principal among them are Friends of John Leigh Park, Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society, Christians on the Brow, G-Force, Seamons Moss Community Association and Trafford Housing Trust. We've also had tremendous support from local Green Party candidate Dan Jerrome, and have met with Fields in Trust to discuss the future for Cow Field. We heard from Thwaites in September that they "will commence works on the Bay Malton (despite the planning appeal being incomplete) hopefully in November but at the very latest in the New Year. They have also issued Heads of Terms to the operators and expect to be able to announce further details before works commence." We would like to have had more contact with other key bodies such as Trafford Council, Oldfield Brow School, and our ward councillors but expect to work towards achieving that sooner rather than later.

We have submitted Asset of Community Value applications to Trafford Council both in respect of The Bay Malton and in relation to Cow Field and the Allotment Gardens and are awaiting the outcome of those applications.

Potholes have been a major issue on some roads in the Brow, the problem exacerbated by heavy construction vehicles associated with housebuilding in Arcon Place (**see picture right**) and in the major work enlarging Oldfield Brow School. Through our efforts we have had some success in getting potholes attended to, though the repairs are of low quality and not all potholes have been filled.

The situation with cars dropping off children at the School continues to be a major problem, with the bus having been obstructed on many occasions. Trafford Council have yet to come up with a proper solution and in September an online petition demanding action got 120 signatories and was sent off to Trafford asking (yet again) what they intended to do to sort the problem.

The 4 new build canal side houses in Arcon Place are now finally sold. We're concerned that the houses appear to have very small gardens and that they are canal side, not consistent with providing decent or safe outdoor space for families with children. Retaining Cow Field as informal leisure space and a play area thus becomes that little bit more important!

This year, working with Christians on the Brow, we have held several litter picking events and bulb and wildflower planting events in Cow Field and have really improved the tidiness across all of Oldfield Brow. These events have become increasingly well supported as were a couple of play days held in Cow Field in the summer. We are now applying for a small community grant from Trafford Housing Trust to help us buy tools, bulbs, seeds etc in order to keep improving Cow Field.





(Picture left **Oldfield Brow residents enjoy a litter picking event in Cow Field**)

We have succeeded also in getting Amey (who now mow the grass in Cow Field on behalf of Trafford Council) to let us know when they are going to mow the grass, so we can walk Cow Field and remove any bottles and cans that otherwise end up being fragmented by the grass cutters, creating a major health hazard. We are working also with the local Nisa and with Trafford Council to try and sort out the litter problem outside the store. And we are helping residents to report any concerns they

may have over uncontrolled dogs, dangerously ridden quad and trail bikes, and dog mess in Cow Field and on pavements.

So, all in all, a busy year consolidating community cohesion. We look forward to a refurbished Bay Malton reopening in 2017 after a delay that has been longer than we would have liked. And our main concern is still to get the Oldfield Brow community into agreement with Trafford Council over how to preserve, improve and develop for best use our local green space in Cow Field and the Allotment Gardens.

Mike O'Neill, Resident of Oldfield Brow

PLANNING Review of 2016

Altrincham town centre has seen a surge in planning applications in 2016. This has been caused by commercial property owners and developers applying to change the use of shops, in many cases, from retail to cafes and restaurants. In addition, upper floors have been changed back from offices to residential use. In times gone by a shop would have been run by the owner who lived in the upper floors with family members. It is good to see so many people now living in the centre of the town. More people living in the centre results in more people spending their money here. Even a few modern office blocks and large retail units have received planning permissions to retain retail use on the street level with apartments above.

Altrincham was badly hit by the economic downturn. Many shops were empty, with buildings badly neglected and in need of maintenance and renovation. Altrincham town centre and its surroundings are made up of several conservation areas. This means that developers have to follow conservation area criteria when renovating buildings. Trafford Council Planning Department has been strict in the application of these criteria, the result being alterations and renovations that complement the Victorian and Edwardian heritage without limiting the changes of use.

Several large residential developments have received permissions and some work has already started.

There will be hundreds of apartments for example; Trinity Church on Delamer Road and the former nursing homes further along Delamer Road/Cavendish Road. Other sites have a mixture of a few town houses and apartment block(s). Such an example is at the corner of Ashley Road and St Johns Road, the site of the former YWCA Alexandra House where demolition work is due to start within weeks. Another mixed residential development is behind the retail units 18-24 The Downs with building now in progress.

Phase 1 of The Altair Development on Moss Lane is due to start shortly, with construction of the first apartment block.

Deputy Chair - Paulina Lewis

National CIVIC DAY 17th JUNE 2017

**50 Years of Conservation will be our theme for National Civic Day this year.
Various events are planned including some Heritage Walks.**

Check our website and Facebook pages for more details closer to the time.

Compiled and Edited by Richard Hagon © Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society 2017

Chair: Judie Collins 0161 962 7108

Vice Chair: Paulina Lewis Treasurer: Martin Stone Clerk: Richard Hagon

President: William Speakman V. C. Vice Presidents: Dr Don Bayliss, Vivian Labaton M.Sc.

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Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society Membership Form

To join and support the Society, please fill in the form and post it along with the annual subscription of **£7.00 per individual** or **£11.00 for two living at the same address**, to our Treasurer, Martin Stone.

Name/s _____ Signature/s _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____ (for our occasional updates)

Please make cheques out to 'Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society' and send to Martin Stone,
The Old Vicarage, Ash Magna, Whitchurch SY13 4EA. You may telephone him on 01948 663 220.

