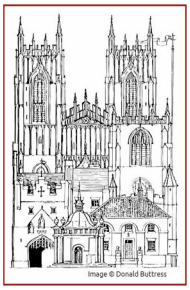


Newsletter:

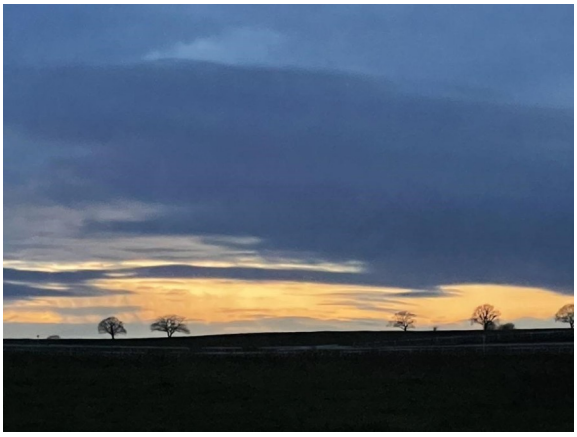
February 2024

http://www.beverleycivicsociety.co.uk/

BEVERLEY CIVIC SOCIETY
Founded 1961

Chairman's Remarks

We were delighted with the number of members and guests (110) who attended our January talk. Thank you, and we hope the intermittent heating didn't spoil your evening.



Winter light over the Hurn - *Dick Lidwell*

For our next meeting we are lucky to have attracted the Chairman of Civic Voice to speak on Thursday February 11th at St Mary's. Martin Hamilton is also Director and CEO of the Leeds Civic Trust so has considerable experience of working within the wider Civic Movement.

As you may know the Society is a member of Civic Voice, in addition to the Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies (YHACS). We are therefore part of a much wider community of Societies and individuals who care about our built heritage, seeking to both conserve and promote wider knowledge of our inheritance. Martin will talk about the objectives and work of Civic Voice. These include providing workshops and training sessions, lobbying Parliament, and mounting publicity campaigns: 'A Collective Voice is a Powerful Voice'.

Our membership of YHACS gives us more knowledge of, and insights into Yorkshire issues, at quarterly meetings in the towns and cities of the members, and through their newsletters. The most recent meetings were in Richmond, and the AGM on 27th January in Harrogate. These provide opportunities to network with like-minded people, discover initiatives undertaken and discuss common problems; plus, often a bonus talk by the host local society about the town and its distinctive features.

Membership of these two organisations includes us in this greater Civic Movement.

Dick Lidwell

Night over Willow Grove's lake - *Dick Lidwell*

Planning Matters

What a delight to see our Market Cross restored without those trails of lighting wires!

Market Cross – *Dick Lidwell*

Other matters:
As you'll be aware, the erection of poles by Connexin and MS3 to provide fast broadband in Hull and East Yorkshire, is a real issue. The Society, along with Beverley Councillors, was invited by Graham Stuart (our Vice President) to a meeting at Beverley Town Council offices with Connexin to discuss the matter.

Under current legislation Connexin and MS3 do have the right to install poles without applying for planning permission; but as we had been advised previously, Connexin confirmed that they would not be installing poles in all the Conservation Areas.

See Connexin's page below describing the process they follow when erecting poles.
https://help.connexin.co.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/20862758155281-How-does-the-pole-planning-process-work

Before you read this article Connexin will have held a pubic consultation/briefing meeting for the public on Monday 22nd January from 1-5pm at the Armstrong Centre in Armstrong's Way which we hope you may have attended.

Courtesy Graham Stuart's Office

If you feel strongly about telegraph poles in residential areas, you may like to sign this petition to exclude telegraph poles from permitted development legislation
https://petition.parliament.uk/signatures/140344909/verify?token=yrLqJT9PEsTO8rdc1UC6

ERYC Biannual Planning Meeting:
On the 16th January the Society's Planning Group met Stephen Hunt and Richard Broadhead (Principal Conservation Officer). These meetings provide a very useful and welcome opportunity to discuss matters 'face to face'. Major topics included:

- Progress on the new **Local Plan**; this was subject to a review by the Planning Inspectorate last November, and the authority is awaiting the feedback and will be holding a final public consultation later in the year before formal adoption.
- Similarly the **Design Guide** is in its final review by the authority, and is likely to be put before cabinet for adoption in the Spring. We are looking forward to its adoption which will provide sound guidelines for new developments.
- **Review of Conservation Areas**: within the East Riding there are 109 Conservation Areas with some not having been reviewed for many years, whilst the Beverley ones were reviewed more recently. When the Beverley review is started the Society will be consulted.
- The **Park and Ride**: this matter is still under review in particular in the light of changing work patterns, so no decision has yet been made by the Cabinet.

The **Lord Roberts Road** planning application was discussed, with the Society continuing to express objections and making suggestions for improvement. The Society's comments may be seen on the Planning Public Access website, and the plans will be considered after consultation finishes on 25th January.

Dick Lidwell

Civic Society Subscriptions

Civic Society subs are now overdue, still at the bargain price of £15.00! We thank those members who have already renewed their subscription.

We will now be removing non-paying members from our database so please pay using one of the listed methods as quickly as possible. We'd hate to see anyone leave us.

May we remind members that bank charges are now in place when cheques are processed and so the preferred method of payments are as follows:

1 - Standing order
2 - BACS transfer via web banking app
3 - By debit or credit card using SumUp at a monthly meeting
4 - Cash at a monthly meeting
5 - Cheque

If you would like to pay at the next monthly meeting, this will be at the meeting on 8th February in St Mary's Church.

JOHN COURTNEY OF BEVERLEY
The life and times of a Georgian gentleman

In last month's newsletter Pamela Hopkins gave a brief extract from the remarkable diary of John Courtney which offers a fascinating insight into the life of a Beverley gentleman in the Georgian period. Written in four volumes, the original forms part of the archive collections of the University of Hull, housed at Hull History Centre. The first two volumes, covering the period from 1759, when Courtney was a bachelor living with his widowed mother in Walkergate, to his marriage in 1768, have been published: Susan and David Neave (eds) *The Diary of a Yorkshire Gentleman*, Smith Settle, Otley, 2001. After a twenty-year gap the diary resumes on 1 January 1788 and ends on 13 June 1805. He died the following year.

John Courtney's father, the son of a London stonemason, had pursued a successful career with the East India Company, culminating in his appointment as Governor of Surat. On returning to England he met and married a young widow, Elizabeth Bourdenand, daughter of Thomas Featherstone of Beverley. The Courtneys settled in the town and it was here that their only child, John, born in 1734, spent almost his whole life, save for a year of schooling in Wakefield and his time as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge. He read law but did not take up any profession. After a protracted search for a wife he married Mary Smelt in 1768. In 1771 he purchased Newbegin House, a late 17th-century house set in spacious grounds, and it was here that he and Mary brought up their large family.

His diary paints a vivid picture of life in Georgian Beverley. Fulfilling the obligations of his class, Courtney served on many committees dealing with issues such as drainage, turnpike roads, taxation and the Militia. He often dined with other gentlemen of the town, sometimes accompanied by his wife, and occasionally they attended musical soirees or balls at private houses. Courtney was keen on music - he owned a harpsichord and chamber organ and sometimes held concerts at Newbegin House. During race week he could be found on the stand, and in the evening would be at the 'playhouse' to see a theatrical performance. There are accounts of concerts in the Minster and balls at the Assembly Rooms in Norwood. In 1788 the town was illuminated and a ball given to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 'Glorious Revolution'. Courtney's circle included minor gentry, military men, professionals and some of Beverley's more prosperous tradesmen. He was particularly keen to meet anyone with a title and liked to think that his family were related to the Courtenays, Earls of Devon, although there is no evidence whatsoever to support this.

He was devoted to his family (there is a heart wrenching account of the death of one of his children) but not all his time was spent at home. There were business trips to Hull and York, a tour of the Dales and occasionally he went by coach to London, crossing the Humber by boat. Here he visited landmarks such as Westminster Abbey, Sadler's Wells and Vauxhall Gardens. The family took holidays at Bridlington and Scarborough, where sea bathing was becoming fashionable. Sometimes he attended the annual reunion of his old schoolfellows from the grammar schools at Beverley and Wakefield.

The later years of the diaries are set against the backdrop of the war with France, and there are plenty of references to military activity, especially that of the local Militia. There are accounts too of local elections, criminal trials at the Assizes at York, weddings and more commonly funerals. Many of the entries deal with the daily dramas of family life (including unpleasant illnesses, insolent servants and troublesome sons) and there is plenty of local gossip. On 10 March 1792 Courtney wrote: 'This morning I heard that Mr Beverley and Miss Midgley went off last night in a chaise and four for Gretna Green. They went out of the dining room window [of Norwood House, home of Mary Midgley] and walked down Pickhill Lane (Manor Road) in the rain and got into the chaise in Westwood.' Some twenty years later Lydia Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* made a similar plan, but with a less satisfactory

outcome. On their return from Scotland Mary and William Beverley were apparently welcomed back into society as a married couple, although a few weeks later a second marriage ceremony took place, this time at St Mary's church.

Work on an edition of these later volumes of John Courtney's entertaining diary is now underway, with publication perhaps by the end of 2024.

Susan Neave

CREAM K KIOSKS IN BEVERLEY

Last month we wrote about the 'iron stumps', Beverley's pillar boxes. That led to us investigating our famous cream telephone kiosks in Beverley, all currently working. The telephone was a trans-Atlantic patented device, generally associated with Alexander Graham Bell, a Scotsman who emigrated to Canada. Telephones came late to the United Kingdom, as the very conservative General Post Office (500 years old) preferred the older telegraph and refused Bell's offer to set up a UK service. Bell demonstrated his telephone to Queen Victoria at her house in the Isle of Wight in 1878: she wrote in her journal that it was 'most extraordinary… heard some singing quite plainly. But it is rather faint, & one must hold the tube close to one's ear.' Bell and the Queen recorded their mutual dislike (he wrote to his wife 'humpy, stumpy, dumpy' with red coarse hands, and she wrote in her Journal 'very pompous'): but she did buy two telephones for £50, and perhaps started a fashion. In any event the private house phone soon became a privilege of the rich, and in time public phones were to be found across the land, an essential part of everyday social life, until replaced by the ubiquitous mobile.

Cream K6, Grovehill Road
Kloskk Tyrer

Red K6, St Paul's Cathedral
Wiki Commons

K8, Lairgate *Kloskk Tyrer*

Why does Hull and its environs have cream and not Post Office Red boxes? As the General Post Office initially refused to run telephones, a great variety of local telephone companies with a miscellany of call boxes started up. In 1912 the Post Office (claiming a communications monopoly) took over all the companies (excepting Hull alone). Hull first rented, then bought, their own services and could put up their distinctive boxes but not in Post Office Red and not carrying the royal crown. From 1924, their first kiosk in Victoria Square, Hull ordered the modified K boxes, at first directly from D.G. Somerville & Co who made the K1, and later (seemingly through the Post Office) from the Carron Iron Works of Falkirk. Hull still has a K1 of 1927, in Trinity Market. 'K' stands for Kiosk. Beverley has sixteen K6 Mark 2 kiosks (made 1939-1968) and one K8 kiosk (made 1968-1983).

For the curious, here is a summary of the K series. 'Kiosk' is a Turkish/Arabic word for something like a small summer house. K1 was made of concrete panels with a wooden door: K1 Mark 2 (1927) had larger windows and a more elaborate roof.

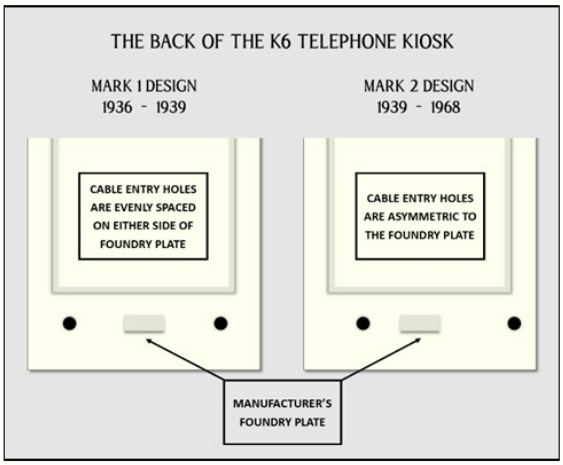
K2 was the first box designed by the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, made of cast iron with a teak door and a 'cup' handle, rated in a 2015 poll the greatest of all British designs.

K2s were installed (mainly in London) from 1926. They were large, heavy and expensive, so Scott modified the design as K3 (in concrete): many K3 were made but very few survived, as the concrete proved brittle.

K4 was Post Office designed with a letter box and stamp machine attached, known as the Vermilion Leviathan: only a few were installed. K5 never went into production.

In 1936, with Scott again as the designer, the K2 was simplified as K6, made of cast iron with a teak door, and produced to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of George V: in 1939 K6 Mark 2 was brought out, distinguished from Mark 1 by the position of two holes for cables either side of the maker's plate (see illustration). K6 was the most widely distributed of the K series: every town and village with a post office could apply for one.

K1 Mark 2 kiosk in Saturday Market, Beverley, 1967. *Rob Simson*



Kloskk Tyrer

K6 (left) and K2 (right), St John's Wood Terrace, London *Wiki Commons*

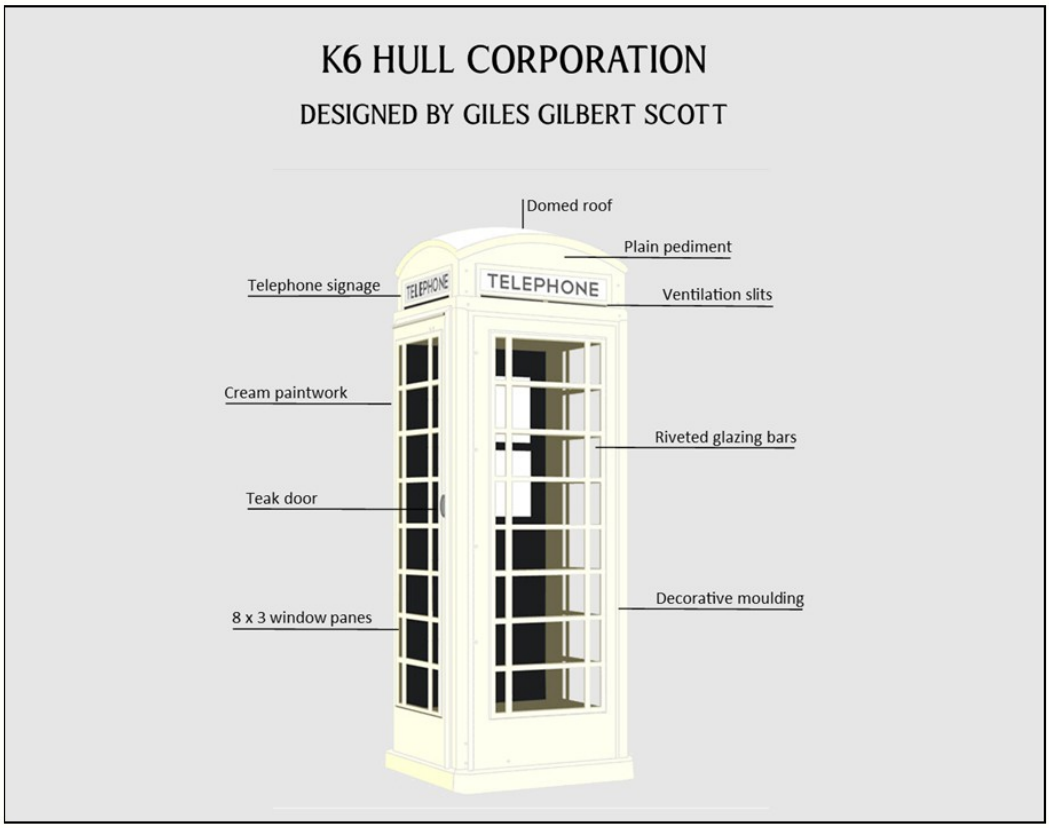
K7 never went into production. K8 designed by Bruce Martin was an attempt at modernisation, that never became as beloved as the Scott kiosks. Few survive (there is one in Beverley on Lairgate near Beverley Memorial Hall).

After Post Office Telephones was sold to British Telecom (BT) in 1981 and privatised, the K series was replaced by the BTKX series and those of other service providers such as Mercury. The universal use of mobiles has now removed the search for new kiosk designs.

Many K6 have been adapted as book exchanges, libraries, tourist information centres, coffee bars, shower cubicles, and, a very common reuse, defibrillator stations.

We should confess that we are interested in the designs of the kiosks, but ignorant about the changing machinery of the telephone itself. 'Press Button B' remains a familiar command from the past, as it gave you your money back. Beyond that….

Defibrillator in an disused K6
Wiki Commons

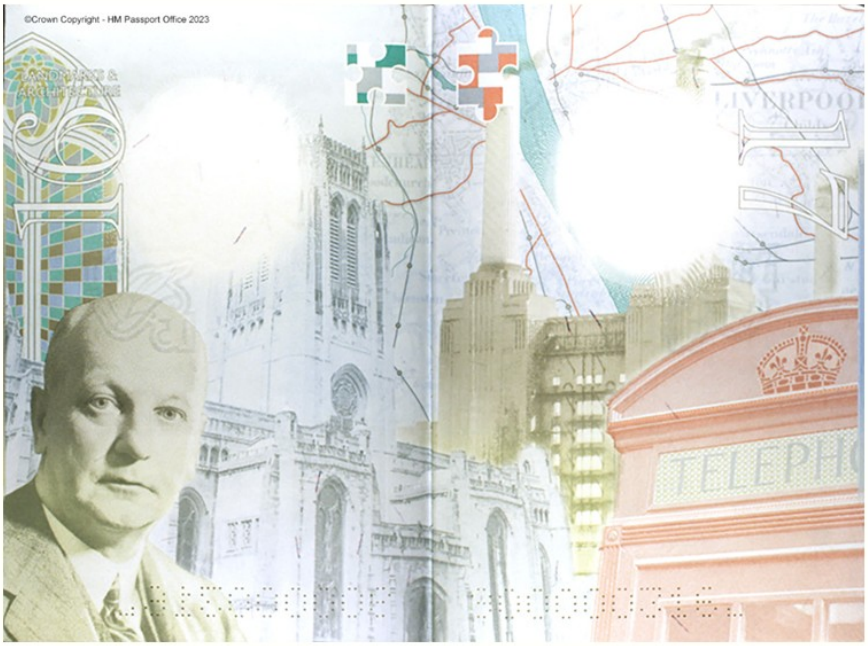


The great designs of K2, K3 and K6 all came from Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, distinguished by the shallow dome of the kiosk roof. The Scott family and most commentators believe that the inspiration for this shape came from the Grade I listed Soane family tomb in Old St Pancras churchyard.

Bird's-eye view of the Soane Family Tomb (1816), by George Basevi, a pupil of Sir John Soane. Painted in the year of its erection, Basevi has here removed the tomb from its graveyard setting and imagined it nestled in a tree-laden valley. *Wiki Commons*

Scott was later a trustee of Sir John Soane's great Museum. If you have spare time at St Pancras or Kings Cross stations, the churchyard (now called St Pancras Gardens) just up the road is a special place, housing the empty tomb of Beverley's Mary Wollstonecraft (her Shelley descendants moved her to Bournemouth), and a monument to Thomas Hardy.

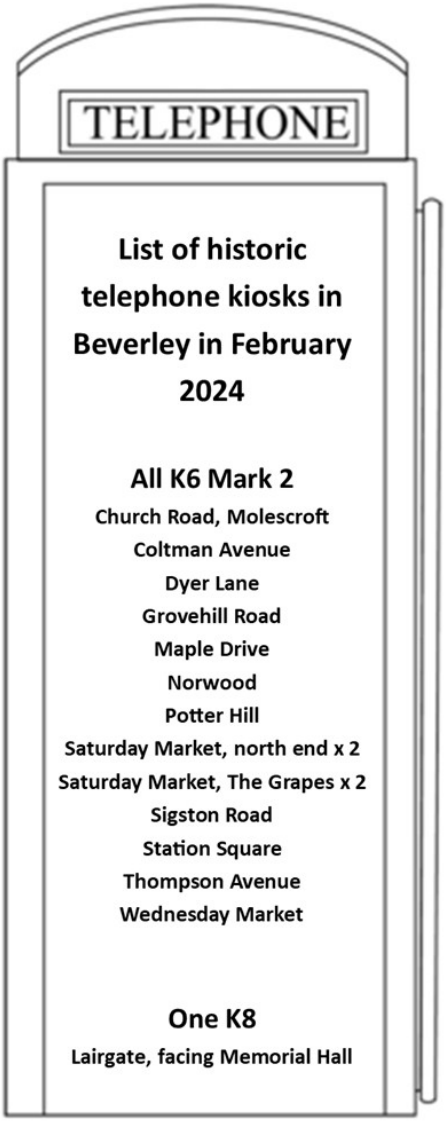
The Scott dynasty of architects (the subject of our Society's Annual Margaret Powell lecture by David Neave on 14 November 2024) created famous buildings all over the world. Kiosk designer Sir Giles Gilbert Scott was the uncle of Margaret Powell, who saved Beverley from horrendous traffic schemes such as demolishing North Bar and half Hengate. The family fame endures, for here is a page from the 2015-2020 UK passport: in the foreground is Scott and his K2 (you can see the reeded decoration missing from the K6) and in the background his Liverpool Cathedral and Battersea Power Station.



All our Beverley K6s are Mark 2, made by the Carron Ironworks, Stirling, a company that also made pillar boxes, although Beverley's Victorian box is by Handyside. The Carron company was founded beside the River Carron in Scotland in 1759, one of the first factories of the Industrial Revolution: by 1814 it was the largest ironworks in Europe. Among many other things, it made guns for Nelson's navy, called 'carronades'.

Scott's much-loved kiosks lasted for many years. But when British Telecom took over the telephone services in 1984, it carried out a ruthless campaign of destruction of the traditional kiosks, in pursuit of a 'corporate image', replacing them (as the Chairman of the Fine Art Commission wrote) by 'shoddy, flimsy, badly designed substitutes', designed in America. Opposition was fierce, and the K2 and the K6 have remained the public image of a telephone box: but thousands were lost, scrapped, vandalised or dumped in long grass.

Carron company logo
Wiki Commons



Times have changed: to buy one of Scott's K6 telephone kiosks would now cost you £2000-£3000, and a K2 around £20,000, if you could find one (they are sold 'with postage'). In some places, including Beverley, K6 still remain, an outstanding and greatly loved design. And from 1986 about 3000 of them in the UK became Grade II 'Listed Structures'. Our cream boxes are maintained in good order by KCOM and have some protection from being scrapped, but are not yet listed. Hull telephone company under its latest name KCOM was sold to an Australian investment bank in 2019 for £627 million.

'Out of Order', public sculpture by David Mach, 1989.
K6 boxes in Kingston upon Thames.

Conservation Areas

In its January talk, the Civic Society was delighted to welcome Richard Broadhead, the East Riding Conservation Team Leader, to tell us more about the nature of Conservation areas, how and why they are designated and the impact they have on planning decisions.

In defining a Conservation area, a key aspect is considering not simply individual buildings, perhaps of historical interest or significance, but areas or groups of items which as a whole have a link with our local or national history. Such areas might be aesthetically pleasing or visually attractive but more importantly they tell us something about our past. Thus, Conservation areas are diverse in character, size and history.

Conservation areas were first introduced in 1967 under the Civic Amenities Act. The first to be designated was the historic core of Stamford in Lincolnshire as an area of special architectural and historical interest. In order to illustrate the diversity in Conservation areas he then gave a couple of examples of Conservation areas which were very different in character. Lavenham in Suffolk was designated as a result of its history and its highly decorated timber framed buildings. A different aspect of British history was celebrated with Ancoats in Manchester. Here the mills, factories and terraced houses provided a microcosm of British industrial might and expansion in the 19th century.
Another designated area is the village of Silver End in Essex. This has been identified as a model village, established by Francis Crittall for the manufacture of window frame components. The village highlights early modernist architectural design.

What purpose do Conservation areas serve in legislation and planning policy? They were defined in legislation in 1990 as being areas of special architectural or historical interest. Local authorities must identify these areas and consider how they might be preserved and enhanced. So, any planning application which might impact upon such historical assets must have a clear and convincing justification for alteration, harm or loss.

This does not mean any planning application which has an implication for conservation is automatically refused. The job of the conservation team is to consider if the benefits of the plans submitted outweigh any damage or harm. Such planning applications might include elements such as cladding, tree felling or extensions. Proceeding without appropriate permission can lead to prosecution, additional works or a reversal of the work undertaken.

What defines an area of special historical or architectural interest? As stated earlier it's not usually a single item but the cumulative effect of a number of elements within an area and these can throw a light on different aspects of British history and society. Some examples include the city centre of Manchester (including the Bridgewater Canal which was the first commercial waterway in the UK) Westminster Abbey and Square, scene of many significant national events, or Chester which retains substantial evidence of a planned Roman settlement, including a nearly complete circuit of surviving Roman walls.

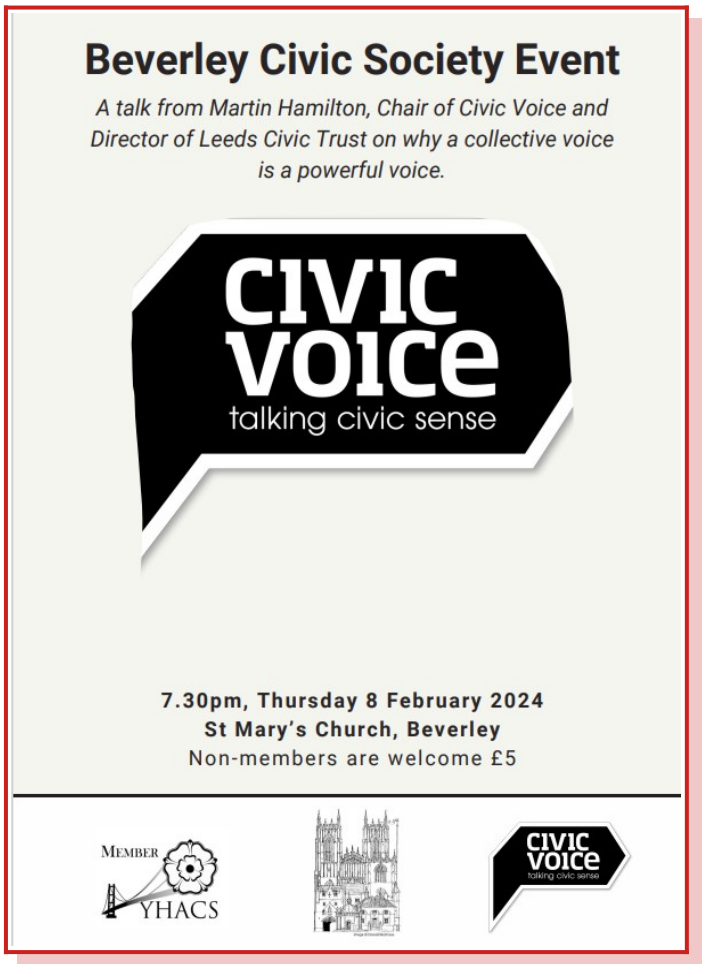
Once an area has been identified it should be appraised regularly by the Local Authority to ensure that it is appropriately supported with its own up to date management plan. Historic England provides guidance for these appraisals which are then drafted by the local planning authority. These draft proposals are then shared with local residents for consultation and consensus purposes. The local authority committee then vote to designate or update the Conservation area.

Inevitably, consensus can be difficult to achieve. So much of what makes a place special is intangible so that it is sometimes difficult to define what is important. As an example, a number of Beverley's exceptional qualities were listed. These included its surviving medieval street pattern, its two major ecclesiastical buildings, and its changing architectural heritage, medieval, Georgian and Victorian. Also

highlighted was its importance in the wool trade, its illustration of the power of the medieval church and the nature of changing economic fortunes over time. These latter aspects are less obvious but are discernible in so much of the town's history.

Within the East Riding are 109 Conservation Areas, believed to be the highest of any UK county. Appraisals exist for all 109 even though some may be out of date. They include such places as Garton on the Wolds, Brantingham and Brandesburton. In Beverley itself the conservation area is so large that it is divided into 9 sub-areas. Its physical size and complex character mean that it is unlikely to be reappraised in the near future.

Richard went on to share his own thoughts about the nature of Conservation areas. Because they are large, they are hard to control. What happens within them are the result of the actions of thousands of people over many years. And those people, the stakeholders, have complex and differing attitudes and requirements. Over time there has been a piecemeal erosion of these areas. But it is also important to remember that conservation is not the same as preservation. It is about managing change not opposing it. So, whilst Conservation areas are difficult to define and manage, their variety and value to people are immeasurable.



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