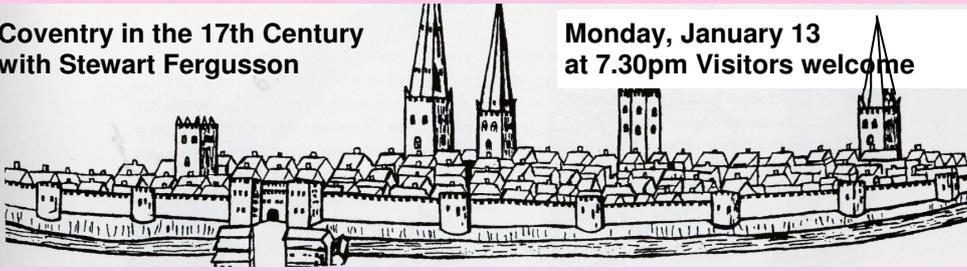


THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

Coventry in the 17th Century
with Stewart Fergusson

Monday, January 13
at 7.30pm Visitors welcome



January 2014

Drapers' Hall presentation

Last month we had the opportunity to discuss in detail the plans for Drapers' Hall with the Trust's architect David Mahoney. Clearly the design and layout has been well thought out enabling the old building and extension to accommodate a centre for the learning, practice and performance of music. We look forward to seeing more



research into the décor of the Victorian building and liked the 'curtain' walls of the new hall and glazed entrance and foyer opposite The Herbert. Significantly the Higgs Charity has now purchased Brown's to be refurbished as a café/bar making the remaining open space eminently suitable for outside performance. All in all we were impressed with the visionary scheme and look forward to seeing a formal planning application.

High speed in Coventry

A plan developed by civil engineer Colin Elliff and his team puts forward a convincing argument for a high-speed network that would be both cheaper and more politically acceptable than anything drawn up by High Speed 2. It could see High Speed trains arriving and departing at Coventry's Rail Station.

The main building block is a single Anglo-Scottish spine route, with spur connections to outlying cities. As an alternative to HS2 it appears to keep our city at the heart of a future modern rail network. Turn over for a more detailed look at the proposal.

Sweeping the cobwebs away

According to recent reports our city will be making a bid to become a Capital of Culture by the 2020s. The first opportunity would arise in 2021 for the UK City of Culture. The second comes two years later with European Capital of Culture in 2023. It's an eminent ambition and one our Society supports wholeheartedly, but the city needs to sweep the cobwebs away, look at the opportunities objectively and lay down some firm foundations over these coming months.

Clearly there's not a moment to lose. Kingston-upon-Hull, recent winners of the bid for the title in 2017 started long ago to make its bid. As well as championing the poetry of Coventrian Philip Larkin who was university librarian in Hull for three decades, Hull produced a campaign video emphasising the city's 'Golden Rules': Don't go thinking you're something you're not; don't go thinking that you're better than anyone else, or that anybody else is better than you, and don't shout about it, **CITY OF CULTURE** get on with it. Not a bad set of watchwords.

Here in Coventry when the idea was revealed in a full council meeting, cross-party councillors agreed it could enable Coventry to display its universities, creative arts institutions, and artistic and cultural talent to the world. There also appeared to be a healthy appetite to champion our unique medieval heritage.

Cllr Lynnette Kelly, cabinet member for business, enterprise and employment, said: "The council would "undertake a scoping exercise to set out plans" for the two bids." Cllr Tim Sawdon said: "There are so many things the city has got to show off and is so damned awful at doing so."

The Society will be looking at possible ways to make a positive contribution to the debate that will take place soon. If you are interested in working with us please contact the Chairman or any member of the committee.

Continuing saga

The continuing saga of Asda's attempts to build a new supermarket in Cheylesmore took another few twists last month when the original planning permission was quashed by judicial review - swiftly followed by Asda's announcement that it will re-submit the planning application.

Coventry city council's planning committee initially approved the application in January last year, in the face of strong opposition from local residents and traders, but a judicial review has now ruled that the council made an error in the wording of a letter sent out to residents to inform them of the decision.

Asda, which owns the now derelict site of the old Cheylesmore pub, responded with an immediate confirmation that it will re-apply for permission to build the store.

Contacts

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If Twitter is your thing, you can follow us at <https://twitter.com/#!/CovSoc>
We also have our own page on Facebook.
You can also follow us there at <http://www.facebook.com/CoventrySociety>

More news and views on our website: www.coventrysociety.org.uk

Patently better plan than High Speed 2

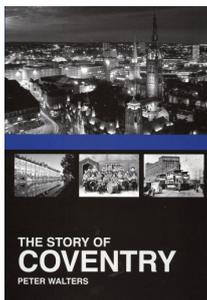
The High Speed UK group's plea: Parliament must not let HS2 be built when a patently better plan is available.



Claimed environmental benefits:
No loss of property around Euston.
No loss of listed buildings.
Less disturbance to ancient woodlands and wildlife reserves.
Substantial CO2 savings

Subscriptions

Individual subscriptions for the new financial year will remain at £12 per member. However, two changes will take place as from February 1, 2014. Husbands and wives/ legal partners, may become joint members at £18 per couple. Visitors to our meetings will be charged £2.



The Story of Coventry, written, reviewed and presented at the Coventry society meeting in December, by Peter Walters is a compact history of the city starting in Roman times. There was little in the area then but the Lunt Fort and the first serious beginnings were with the Saxon church founded by Osberga. The first recorded history is Godiva and Leofric who founded St. Mary's priory which became the cathedral around which the city developed.

The city first became very wealthy from processing the large amounts of wool produced by the half dozen priories and monasteries founded in and around the city. It was the only city outside London ever to hold parliament and often hosted the reigning monarch. It was the only city in England to build a City Wall after the Romans left and the wall played a large part in making Coventry a significant player in the War of The Roses and the Civil War. The Gunpowder Plot was almost

When the prospect of a new high speed railway system linking London with the West Midlands was first announced several years ago the people of Coventry were led to believe they could board a train at Coventry Station and travel directly to Paris at high speed. With the completion of HSI running directly from London to the continent we were presented with plans for a second high speed line. The preferred route described for phase one would follow a route directly to Birmingham through unspoilt countryside in the Midlands. The service would be non-stop. Unsurprisingly the plan would prove highly controversial. Birmingham would see the new service as vital for its economy. But legal challenges from a raft of objectors highlighted a lack of full environmental assessments. Close to home the line would run through Stoneleigh Park, the fringes of Kenilworth and Burton Green. Prospective travellers from Coventry would access the service in the green belt at West Midlands Interchange, Bickenhill, near to Birmingham International! The government says we need HS2 and there's no alternative. Objectors say we don't need a new railway at all. It would be a waste of money.

"They are both wrong," says Society member Les Fawcett who is associated with a group of rail enthusiasts promoting the alternative plan.

"We can achieve the objectives of HS2 at less cost, with less environmental damage, spreading the benefits more widely and disturbing less people," he said. "And most importantly, providing a direct high-speed service for many more towns and cities around the country including Coventry."

So what is this alternative? It's called High Speed UK, researched and designed by a group passionate to see a better railway system linking the north with the south. It's led by chartered civil engineer Colin Elliff, who has worked for 25 years in the rail industry. Les Fawcett highlights the main features and advantages of High Speed UK:

- Ten times as many connections between towns and cities.
- More efficient by connecting cities in strings rather than connecting just a few of them to London.
- Less route miles by using a single south-north spine instead of running both sides of the Pennines, with half as much tunnel.
- Much greater average time saving despite a lower top speed.
- Fully integrated into the network so it delivers passengers into city centres.
- Comes into use quicker with a realistic chance of reaching Scotland by the easier terrain east of the Pennines.
- A sensible connection to St Pancras and the Channel tunnel with four tracks on the southern section to allow more services than HS2. HS2's ambitious 18 trains per hour on day one leaves no capacity for any others ever, including those extra services already proposed by HS2 Ltd,
- Connects Heathrow as part of a comprehensive fan of rail routes to the airport rather than an inefficient HS "spur".

certainly hatched in the city. Coventry has played a significant part in many of the major events of the last 1000 years.

Peter describes the history of Coventry's wealth which has seen major heights with wool, silk, ribbons, watches, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, aeroplanes, engines, gears, machine tools, telephones and artificial fibres. With the possible exception of Birmingham, no other city in Britain developed such a concentrated gathering of precision industries. Each provided the city with great wealth and each came to an end with devastating consequences. We are still recovering from the total demise of Coventry's car industry. Coventry has been a superb generator of wealth creators but a rotten housekeeper.

Peter tells the story with a smooth flow of anecdotes threaded so as to weave a fine tapestry of the city's roller coaster history. This is not a definitive history of Coventry but anyone who loves Coventry will love this book. The book can be bought from Coventry museums or directly from peter@waltersconsultancy.co.uk with a small members' discount.

A Happy New Year to all members and supporters