

LITTLEBOROUGH CIVIC TRUST



1971–2011



FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

**A MESSAGE TO
LITTLEBOROUGH CIVIC TRUST
FOR ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY
FROM OUR PATRON
THE RT. HON. LORD JOEL
BARNETT**

The town of Littleborough will always remain close to my heart. Littleborough is one of seven towns of what once was the Parliamentary Constituency of Heywood and Royton. I was of course, honoured and privileged to be the Member of Parliament for nearly 20 years, until it was broken up by major boundary changes in 1983.

The Trust, and all those involved, deserve the highest congratulations for all that they do in the community. My very best wishes to them and all the wonderful people of Littleborough.

Joel Barnett

WELCOME...

**To a celebration of forty years
of the Littleborough Civic Trust,
its people and its
achievements.**

**We hope you will find
something of interest in this
collection of articles.**

**People who have been active in
the LCT for many years (some
from its inception) share their
memories, including tributes to
those who are, sadly, no longer
with us.**

**We also have some interesting
and amusing extracts from our
archives, which illustrate how
much some things have
changed over the years (and
how some things haven't)!**

How the Civic Trust started - A tribute to Keith Parry by Don Pickis



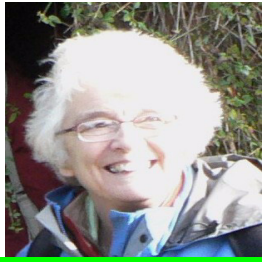
When we came as a family to live in Littleborough in the early 1970s, Parry's shoe shop on the corner of Harehill Road and Victoria Street was well established. Very soon after we arrived, the owner, Mrs. Parry, became ill and her son Keith returned from London to take over day to day running of the shop.

Apart from family matters, Keith welcomed the opportunity to return to Littleborough for a number of reasons. Away in London he had looked back with happy memories to the small bustling village of Littleborough conscious also that it enjoyed the advantages of being on a major rail route crossing the Pennines from Manchester to Bradford and Leeds. Perhaps more important than these were the attractions of Littleborough itself and its easily accessible routes for walkers across the moors and hills.

Keith was enthusiastic to preserve and improve the many attractions in and around Littleborough. He suggested some form of Civic Society. This marked the beginning of what we now know as Littleborough Civic Trust. Perhaps it needed someone who had spent time away from our town to fully appreciate its value. Soon there was a campaign to establish a Country Park at Hollingworth Lake, to restore the Coach House and Steanor Bottom Toll House.

We all owe a debt to Keith.

Looking Back – And Forward Rae Street



Suddenly, Littleborough had the most interesting shop window. When Keith Parry came back to Littleborough from London to run the family shoe shop (where Rebecca's cafe is now and earlier Lincoln Jackson's wonderful emporium), he used his talent to make an attractive shop window. So I stopped outside on a day in 1971; there was a card announcing the formation of Littleborough Civic Society. I got in touch and joined. Up to then I had been a member of Rochdale Civic Society where there were some interesting projects in the early days. I remember a refurbishment of the Coop Museum in Toad Lane, when the lane was being altered. When I first came to live here in the 60s,

the Rochdale market was held on Toad Lane and full of interest and colour it was too. At that time outside the Coop Museum we made a lawn and garden and planted a tree given by the Swedish coop. I can remember learning the word 'degging' that is spraying the lawn with water to get it established. I degged with the best of them!

All changes – the line of the lane was lost, most of the garden disappeared and was flagged. Alas, there has been no pleasant walk created to this world famous museum. The back of the modern market is not a pretty sight. The tree lasted until very recently but has disappeared with the recent developments. Will there be greenery again? I do hope the modern additions to the old building will attract more visitors to the museum with its unique place in cooperative history – and give younger people the idea of the relevance of cooperative principles today.

But from the 70s I turned my attention to Littleborough, because in the years I had lived here I had come to love the town.

I wrote about many of our early projects in the 1992 21st anniversary edition of the LCT Newsletter, so I will try to cover here some which weren't touched on there.

Heritage

All of those who were the founder and early members and joiners up to the present day have loved and cared for the Pennine character of the town which has not been vandalised by any ugly modern developments. One of the themes we felt strongly about was 'stone' and in particular our own Pennine gritstone. This had been widely used for building from the 17th century and through the expansion of the town with the coming of the industrial revolution and the mills in the 19th century. This was especially true of the centre. So it was a real confirmation of our views when working with the Local Authority the Central Conservation Area was established in 1978. Everything takes time because this had first been suggested by Keith Parry in 1974. Now to bring this up to date: this year, 2011, the Central Conservation Area has been extended up Hare Hill Road. Even after those

in the group, some who had lived in Littleborough all their lives, some who were, albeit for 50 years, incomers, walking round again, we were able to see interesting and distinctive features we had overlooked. There are interesting corners everywhere – a tiled staircase in the old Coop building, date stone on the terraces and names (why Bleak Earth Terrace?), a flagstone wall, gateposts, the mill with its history right there....Heritage not to be lost.

[Township Design Statement](#)

One of the more recent achievements of the Civic Trust was to complete, and have accepted by the Local Authority, the TDS. It grew from those first aims of the Civic Trust. It was also a genuine community effort coming from the people's love of the town. Started by John Street, it was guided into completion by Don Pickis, Iain Gerrard, Russell Johnson, Joan and Tony Smith and the late Peter Jackson. Being such a new idea and involving many people it was not without its disagreements and stumbles. But it was completed and a handsome book produced and is a tribute to a few hard working members. (Copies still available). This brings us to the here and now as it has several times to my knowledge been referred to in recent planning applications; that is officers would take into account, for example, TDS recommendations for sympathetic building materials or scale of new developments.



[Rae and John Street \(standing\) with other members of one of the “interest groups” set up to carry out research for the TDS](#)

[Saving Buildings - Successfully](#)

It was the LCT which took the initiative to save Steanor Bottom Toll House even though it was just over the border in West Yorkshire. To help we even created a new Civic Society which eventually with the sums raised after saving and converting the Toll House into a compact dwelling, was able to give small grants to a diverse group of heritage ventures for a vintage bus to playing fields to the Friends of Littleborough Rail Station, on both sides of the border – Lancashire and Yorkshire united!

[The Coach House](#)

When we were searching for a central meeting place for local groups, the Coach House (a listed building) which had been stables for the Falcon pub, came empty. Well that is a little misnomer as it was full of the dusty tools of the joiner's trade as England's, the family firm, had used the building for generations. (You can still see their handsome joinery work in the staircases in some of our Victorian houses, such as Hare Hill House). After a public meeting it was decided to try for the conversion of the Coach House into a Community and Heritage Centre. Despite many problems with fund raising, but with the help of many local groups, especially the Townswomen's Guild, and individuals, it got off the ground. But I can remember Don Pickis still painting the walls on the day of the official opening! Of course we did lose some buildings despite our best efforts – the warehouse by the Canal comes to mind and much earlier the manager's house at Shore Mill, which had been used as a Community centre but contained the most wonderful art deco tiles.

[‘The Story of Littleborough’](#)

Complementary to the TDS, the Civic Trust produced the book, ‘The Story of Littleborough’, for the Millennium, edited by John Street, with help from John Kay, Peter Jackson and Peter Cryer. Local photos and sketches were collected and sorted by Chris Lord and George Kelsall; indeed George Kelsall, apart from running a much loved bookshop at the heart of the community, has been a central part of all LCT's major projects. Again this was a compilation of so many local people's memories, photos, old letters and records. It was a great success and made a goodly profit which was shared between local charities. Copies are now scarce; indeed we heard recently that one had sold for over £35 – original price £15.

[The Railway](#)

One feature which we cherished was the old coat of arms for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Tucked into one of our newsletters from 1982 is a letter from the Division Civil Engineer for British Rail (now a distant memory, but what efficiencies there were in having a national public operator) apologising for the delay in having the weeds scraped off the coat of arms at the Summit tunnel portal. I wonder if he did it himself? The letter is addressed to Allen Holt, one of our keenest members, who wrote the handsome book ‘A Pennine Pioneer – the History of Summit Railway Tunnel’.



We have had years of deterioration of the structures of our historic railway line and station. We lost the comfortable waiting room on the Manchester side, but managed to keep the ones on the Leeds side when they were included in the Central Conservation Area. But we could hardly say that this wonderful piece of national history has been celebrated by either the local authority or the private operators. But, now, after all these years of 'official' neglect, thanks to the energy of the members of the Historical Society, the station buildings are being renovated. The volunteers have even incorporated old date stones found round Littleborough. At the same time the more recent Friends of the Station have contributed flowers, herbs, children's work and a mosaic. The rail future looks brighter, although we are still waiting for a ramp for easy access and shelters which are shelters.

[Green Spaces and Trees](#)

I once chatted to the Littleborough Urban District Council local planning officer and he described the area round Town House as the 'green heart of Littleborough'. There have been some developments there, but by determined efforts we have managed to keep that open space. I think Gordon Harvey, the enlightened mill owner and founder of the Beautiful Littleborough Society would smile at that. Gordon Harvey was one of the three nationally known outstanding residents – the others being Enid Stacy and Jessie Fothergill – all honoured by the LCT with blue plaques. Gordon also started the Littleborough Tree Planting Society – one of our newsletters reproduced an early tree planting (autumn 2001) in 1903 behind Town House when several hundred persons turned up. Well, we have tried to follow in their foot steps; not so many folks, but plenty of enthusiasm.

Judith Schofield, Jill Roberts and others had earlier planted a tree nursery on Fothergill and Harvey land – now it is a pleasant copse. And Jill it was who wanted a wild flower meadow on the former Gas Works site on Hare Hill Road. Some individual trees we have had planted include a red hawthorn and a cherry at the Coach House, a rowan at St. Mary's school and one of which I am especially fond, the medlar in the Square. It was nearly lost one year when the council maintenance team chopped it back unknowing as to what it was. It was planted by Glynn Ford, some time our MEP, who had Italian connections, and offered this unusual tree for planting on Lancashire Day. It took and flourished. Does anyone know any good recipes for its fruit, the medlars?

[Hollingworth Lake Country Park](#)

This is a green space of which we can all be proud. Back in the early 70s this hundred year old recreation area had become distinctly shabby, litter strewn and traffic bound. The Civic Trust decided to try for the new status of 'country park' so it could be tidied, the traffic regulated and countryside activities developed especially for children. Working together to draw up a report for the Countryside Commission was engrossing and we all learnt much more about the Lake, its wild life and the user groups. It was another area where we had to work hard to make sure any new buildings, particularly the Visitors'

Centre, were a sympathetic design. It was also sometimes difficult to explain that we didn't want a fun fair, that this was different from 'town park' and that the area had always been but could be further developed as a 'green lung' for the large urban populations to west and east. With support from our MP Joel Barnett (now Lord Barnett) and the Greater Manchester County council, we got there and the Country Park was officially opened in 1974. Now people can't imagine the time when it wasn't there. It has proved a huge attraction for families and peoples of all ages and abilities. It goes on developing: now there is a sensory garden near the centre and a new enviro-gym (the children just think it is a fun play area!) for children around the far side, wild flower meadows, new tree plantings and numerous walks and children's activities – like so many of our loved recreation areas it now has its own 'Friends' group. Of course, the work isn't finished. There is still a crying need for a safe pedestrian way from Ealees dam to the Rakewood Road turn off. Everyone should be able to walk safely untroubled by traffic in a Country Park. There is no doubt that resident and visiting motorists would be pleased too. Most motorists don't want to be nudging pedestrians!



LCT members with Kate Sutton of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (right) braving the weather to plant up the Flower Meadow with bulbs

Newsletters

I must put in a word for the newsletters which have been, and still are, produced with such devotion. They may hardly have been glossy magazines, but they contain a wealth of fascinating information about Littleborough. Without them so much would have been lost. We have had an inspired chain of volunteer editors – they deserve our thanks.

Welcoming the New

While so much of our activity in the LCT has been concerned with preserving the past, we have welcomed new developments. We know we can't stand still. We are pleased if a new estate or house is sympathetically designed or there is a forward-thinking industrial site converted to sustainable energy.

I regret that in this brief article I cannot mention by name so many of the members of the Civic Trust who have contributed so much in their spare (which is never spare!) time. I have such happy memories of all those who have worked together over the years. All our achievements came about because of cooperative and volunteer efforts. We don't need any lectures on the 'big society'.

I have only mentioned some of the work we have done over the years, but as Betty Pickis who served as Chair, Minutes Editor and active member for so long, who liked breaking into parody, said in 1979:

"If you can keep your cool when all about
You see the folly of our human grab and greed
(The way we've squandered all our world could offer
And for our children's children took no heed.)
If you can justify your lack of action
In speaking out against the wrongs you see,
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it
And it won't amount to much, I'm telling thee!"

(With apologies to Mr. Kipling)

Betty would have been pleased at all that the Civic Trust has achieved in the last ten years and like us all from those early days glad that there is so much new energy and activity to carry on preserving our unique Pennine heritage, the stone houses, bridges, date stones and walls and our open spaces and greenery. She also said, which many of us would echo, "There is still a lot to do". In the years ahead, the Civic Trust and other local amenity groups will be needed as never before, if we are to preserve our green spaces, our open moors and our Pennine heritage.

The opening of the Coach House in 1983 by Lord Barnett.



Mr. Edward Kellett-Bowman (MEP for East Lancashire) with George Kelsall, Lord Barnett and Keith Parry (LCT Chairman)



Don Pickis (LCT Treasurer) and Betty Pickis (LCT Vice Chairman) with Leslie Stevens of Fothergill and Harvey (who provided the initial capital for the restoration)

FROM THE NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES
WINTER 1996/97

The Superloo is Coming to Littleborough

No longer in the pipeline, it is rumoured - more than rumoured - that the Superloo is on its way to Littleborough and will soon be installed in the Square. After considerable consideration as to the siting of this exciting new facility, taking into account cost, the necessary pipework, aesthetics, environment and so on, those responsible have done a U-bend turn and are now flushed with success, having decided to demolish the existing toilet block and site the black and gold, cast iron, self-cleaning convenience in its place.

Spending a penny - or maybe 10p with inflation - will now give the people of Littleborough not only cleaner, more hygienic and hopefully more comfortable surroundings, but may also provide the odd moment of entertainment, as when my mother tried out a Superloo in France in the summer; having achieved a rather nervous entry into the object, (with the unhealthy belief that this loo might not like the English and could start the self-cleaning process with her still inside), she pushed a handle thinking to lock the door. This was the emergency exit mechanism, which swung the door wide open...

Not only might the new loo enhance the look of the Square, (we are told it is a replica of the loos in Chester's conservation areas, and therefore aesthetically acceptable), it might also serve to slow the traffic down...

(Author Unknown)

RIP the Superloo, April 2011!

DID YOU KNOW?

The origins of the LCT logo



The logo was designed in the early days of the LCT.

It was the winner of a competition held among local primary schools.

It includes stylised outlines of typical mill buildings, a chimney and a tree, together making up the letters “LCT”

The Tree Group

Judith Schofield

Does anyone remember Jack Hollingrake's shop at Gale on Todmorden Road? When I lived in Littleborough and the children were very small I seemed to spend a lot of time pushing a pram up and down Todmorden Road and we always called in at the shop at Gale. Jack was a Master Baker who made the most fantastic pies, cakes and bread on the premises. He had many tales of Littleborough and used to tell of the many days when you couldn't see Blackstone Edge for the smog.

It was due to this pollution that the Beautiful Littleborough Society, formed in 1916, chose to plant many Manchester Poplars. These trees grew quickly and were resistant to pollution and soon provided a green background to this valley. Unfortunately after 70 years many of these trees became gangly and dangerous. They can suddenly cast large limbs and many of them had to be cut down. So in order to try and compensate for this loss of trees, a small sub Group was formed from the Littleborough Civic Trust, the Tree Group.

Jill Roberts, Pauline Hopkinson, Dan Docker and myself researched trees, planting options, grants, land and promotional opportunities. The end result was a small plot of land, granted by Fothergill & Harvey, funded by a grant from British Gas, fenced with the practical help of Oldham & Groundwork Trust. Rochdale Council also gave us some tools and seedlings. We printed information sheets, bought whips (tree variety) and collected seeds; we dug, sowed, planted and weeded our plot. We bought and distributed the infamous Root trainers (Google them!). We had a Civic Trust Committee visit to a Forestry Commission tree nursery and had a guided tour as to how they grew their trees (I don't think they feared the competition). We sold the Root trainers, compost and seeds, acorns etc together with instruction sheets at local fairs and gave them away to schools. We planted whips at Summit, Shop Wood, Chelburn, Barkers Wood and other sites. We worked with BTCV on hedge laying along Coronation Walk and planted bulbs - daffodils, crocuses and any other bulbs we could get from donations - I remember Gordon Riggs being generous, and spending hours planting whole sacks of bulbs up, down and around the area.

The trees were not a massive success—at the end too much effort was required—but I believe it did play a small part in helping to improve the environment, Dan ended up with a job in Tree Surgery and we enjoyed ourselves. May LCT continue trying to play its part!



LCT Trees (clockwise from top left)
 Flowering cherry, Littleborough Coach House;
 Maple, Littleborough Square; Medlar, Littleborough Square.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

The Littleborough
Coach House
congratulates LCT on
reaching its 40th
anniversary. Best
wishes from Heather
Gudgeon, Secretary

Well done Littleborough
Civic Trust. The Canalside
Development Group values
your efforts to keep
Littleborough as a
Destination Point for those
passing through the Pennines.

Congratulations to LCT on
a fine record of
achievements over the
last forty years. All good
wishes for your future
endeavours. George and
Ben Kelsall, The Book Shop.

Lets put up
another Banner in
Littleborough to
tell everyone
about your forty
year achievement.
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Trust and thank you for
all your efforts both in
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Online.**
Happy Birthday, we
hope to be
reporting your
successes for
another forty years.

Reminiscences

Geoffrey Sutcliffe

It doesn't seem a long time - although it's probably 30 years - since walking up Harehill Road I caught up with a small group of walkers led by the late John Hindle and Marjorie Haigh and asked if I could join them. I was made welcome and that was the start of a very enjoyable, rewarding and long-lasting association with Littleborough Civic Trust. In those days as the walking group grew we also enjoyed biannual weekends in the Lake District each spring and autumn for many years.

Over the years I have also led local walks and an annual walk into Wharfedale in the spring and, for a few years, a walk into Derbyshire in the autumn.

For a number of years I was a member of the LCT committee, meeting at the home of Rae and John Street and also at the Council offices in Harehill Park. I took over the office of Treasurer from Beryl Jackson and eventually handed over to the late Peter Jackson (I don't think they were related).

Although not usually involved in the printing of the Newsletter I remember that the antiquated equipment caused the then editor, Roy Prince, considerable angst.

One project that Roy and I did was to test the purity of the water in the River Roch from its source above Summit to Smithy bridge. From memory we were surprised at the purity of the water revealed by the presence of indicator species.

There were numerous projects - the Toll House, Coach House, clearing up Shop Wood, the C.T wood, driven by enthusiasts like Don and Betty Pickis and Keith Parry and others whose names - to my shame - I cannot recall.

Lincoln Jackson was a mine of local information and could also be relied upon for an amusing anecdote.

Best wishes to the current LCT Committee in their environmental work and work for Littleborough.

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Jill Smith-Moorhouse

Relates her memories in this letter to Russell Johnson

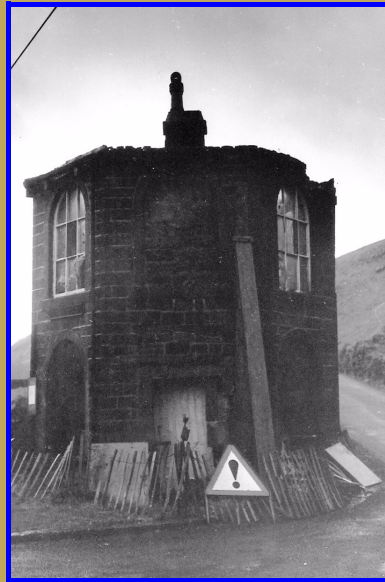
Dear Russell,

I was a young teacher in Bury, Lancs. in the 1970s. when I came to live in Littleborough, having moved up from Hampshire with my then husband Ian who had secured a job in Manchester. We had a nice Victorian terrace in Bury and sailed on Elton reservoir with the club there, but I wanted to move to somewhere more rural. A teaching colleague mentioned a cottage he knew for sale in Littleborough, owned by a rather eccentric man, full of antiques. As Littleborough is on the edge of the built up area, we decided to have a look. The cottage was at the top of Ealees, next to the canal, and was owned by Bobby Beresford. He was Littleborough's answer to Billie Holt of Todmorden. Bobby, a bachelor, also owned a gypsy caravan which he kept and lived in sometimes under the railway arches. Billy Holt lived at Kilnhurst in Todmorden in a lovely 16th century house. He was a real character and rode his white horse around the area selling his books. He sold his house to a friend of mine and moved into his barn in later years, when he married.

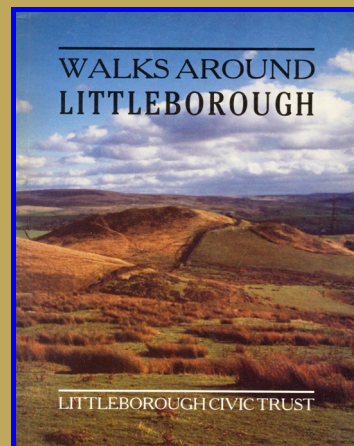
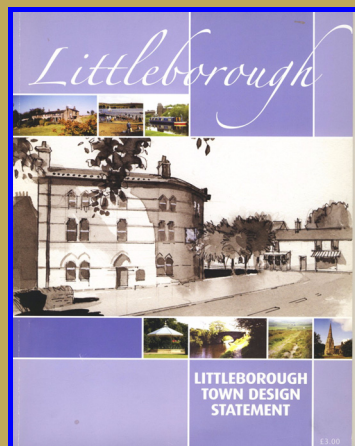
We bought the house in Ealees for £4,400 including the contents and set about modernising it. It had an underdwelling and you couldn't imagine a whole family living down there but they did. It was in a lovely position being next to the canal but near the centre for shopping, and on the edge of countryside for walks — for example to Hollingworth Lake. My neighbours at the bottom of Ealees were Lynn and Derek Jefferson. Lynn fostered children and Derek had his own small company near Rochdale producing cleaning materials. They became good friends and I soon found out about the Civic Trust. I joined and met very friendly people who made me feel very welcome, and showed me the area. Rae and John Street, Betty and Don Pickis, Lincoln Jackson who had the everything shop in the village and Keith Parry who was often heard on radio Manchester and was instrumental in starting the renovation and opening up of the Rochdale canal.

The footpath group did a great job walking all the area's footpaths once a year to keep them open. Walks were sometimes 6-7 miles and took in the glorious scenery of the surrounding hills, in all seasons. I have tried to get Calder Civic Trust to do the same here but they are happy to leave it to the walkers groups as it's hard work.

As I said earlier, I met characters in Littleborough, and one favourite was Harold Tate of Parkhill House at Shore (as mentioned in the book "A History of Littleborough Pubs", published by the Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society). I visited Harold regularly and was enthralled with this quiet gentleman who lived in a bygone era. He always wore a Victorian smoking hat and jacket indoors, and the pub inside had been left as it was on the day the doors shut to customers, with glass rummers on the shelves and very basic décor.



Steanor Bottom Toll House — before and after restoration



Harold lived a simple but healthy life with no modern conveniences. He grew his own vegetables and I was often given some produce, lovely fresh rhubarb etc. A cup of tea was offered, and his table was always covered in newspapers, easier than tablecloths. He lived to a ripe old age and the pub was sold and converted into a house.

I became disenchanted with teaching and opened an antiques shop over the border in Hebden Bridge. I met my second husband Grahame there, a local G.P. It was 1975, a red hot summer when we were threatened with stand pipes. We had two sons James and Rupert, now 27 and 31. I have two grandsons: Joshua 7 and Charlie 2. All live locally.

My interest in the community and countryside continued as I am now a member of Calder Civic Trust and Luddenden Conservation Society. We have just been redefining the conservation areas in Hebden Bridge and Luddenden. We have an award winning "In Bloom" group in Luddenden. 450 tree saplings have just been planted (check out www.luddenden.com).

I have been very busy this last 18 months trying to secure the asset transfer of the Civic Institute, Station Rd., Luddenden Foot as a centre for the community as part of David Cameron's idea for the Big Society. We are very short of meeting places locally for groups as several buildings have been closed and converted to flats. The Methodist Chapel closed in January due to lack of attendance. Luddenden Foot is somewhere people tend to drive through on their way from Hebden Bridge to Halifax, but it has a wealth of history, especially relating to the textile mills who employed over 4,000 people. There were 60 shops and a tramway in 1900 but with the closing of the last mills in the 1960s the area declined and council clearances began. However, things are once again on the up and the Civic Institute, which was always used as a place for health and welfare by the previous West Riding Council, is an ideal place to kickstart the community.

The Coach House wasn't our meeting place when I was a member; that is a great asset for you. Meetings were usually held at Rae and John Street's house. Rae and I were in touch last year and you came on a visit to Heptonstall to the museum and Sylvia Plath's grave. We had an enjoyable return visit to you, despite the weather, looking around Littleborough. We were very impressed with your Town Design Statement, and I believe Nick Wilding has been over to give you a film show. I am sure we can go on learning from each other's work.

With fond memories of Littleborough, and a very big thank you for all the help and support you gave me, your kindness and friendship over the years. I was at Hollingworth Lake last week and it was glorious.

Kind Regards

Jill Smith-Moorhouse

FROM THE NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES

Thanks!

John Street breathes a sigh of relief and offers his appreciation for those who helped give the book a great send off

Since our 25th Anniversary in 1996 there has been quite a lot written in the Newsletter and elsewhere about 'the book', but it is still something of a shock (relief) to realise that we did complete it as planned and did end up with hardback and paperback editions at a price most people can afford. Comments to date suggest that the book is welcome and valued by our community; a basic reason for the Trust doing things. I like to think it can have a modest place alongside earlier achievements such as our contribution to the restoration of Stenor Bottom Toll Bar, the creation of the Coach House and the formation of Hollingworth Lake Country Park.

Thanks for help in producing the book are due to so many people. There was the book committee, made up of some of our committee strengthened by the experience of George Kelsall and Chris Lord, John Kay with his cheer and optimism in the commercial and sales arrangements and all things financial. We also had Tom Warburton and the help of the Lions – and Allen Booth with his Council connections. Peter Jackson has worked tirelessly to

care for the money side of the organisation as well as in the detail of making things happen.

So to the launch on the 27th November and a first class evening at the Coach House. My only regret was that we had to limit the number of people attending for reasons of fire regulations (the event was a sell-out). Our patron, Lord (Joel) Barnett and Lady Barnett attended as did the Mayor and Mayoress and Lorna, our M.P. Thanks go to the Coach House and our own launch committee for the fine arrangements, the string quartet for some quality music, the caterers for an excellent buffet and the exhibitors, film and lottery providers.

We still have a job to do in selling the paperback edition and paying back our underwriter, which we are quietly confident in doing.

The writing of the book has introduced us to many people and developed relationships which will be invaluable for our future work. It was particularly nice to see Martha Lord and Archie Bamford at the launch, both over 95 and witnesses to many of the changes catalogued in the book.

Meanwhile, I'd like to wish all our members a very happy millennium break and look forward to some good evenings together in the New Year.

The "Book" is of course "The Story of Littleborough", another notable achievement of the LCT, of which John was editor.

Scenes from the launch of "The Story of Littleborough"



Standing: John Street and Lord Barnet.



Peter Jackson

Following Peter's death in 2007, Don Pickis wrote: "We were very sad recently to learn of Peter Jackson's passing. Over the years Peter has been a strong supporter of our work locally in the Littleborough Civic Trust and was, for many of those years, our Treasurer.

Peter gave of his time generously and I personally valued his help and advice. I found Peter a good friend, generous, helpful and good tempered. Many others locally will miss Peter's cheerful support and encouragement."

Founder member **Roy Prince**
remembers unreliable duplicators, whips and walks

Jean and I joined Littleborough Civic Trust in the early 1970s at a meeting held over a shop in Church Street. Inevitably, I soon found myself on the committee and, a little later, newsletter editor and producer. First of all, the printing was done on a borrowed Gestetner duplicator before we purchased our own “reconditioned” equally unreliable, Gestetner. I was pleased, after a few years, to relinquish the position.

I remember being involved in several of the Trust’s projects. Some were successful, others not. During the 1970s and 80s we were urged to plant trees and the Trust willingly responded. At one time, we were presented with a large number of whips or young saplings which came intermittently during the winter months, tied in bundles and requiring planting at the earliest opportunities. At that time of year, the opportunities came at weekends when a number of us could be available. Sadly, few, if any of those whips ever grew into trees.

About that time, there was a desire to create a tree nursery and land was made available so it seemed sensible to find out about tree planting and management from the experts and after contacting the Forestry Commission we were invited to go along to its centre in the Delamere Forest where whips and saplings were grown from seeds in readiness for planting on the Commission’s land. I think that there were perhaps eight or ten of us who went along and were fascinated by the work being done. We were also made aware that we had spent a lot of time planting, what were most probably, dead trees. Apparently, the way that the whips are cared for between taking out of the ground and replanting is absolutely crucial. Essentially, the time out of the ground must be brief and dehydration even for a short time must be avoided. We had not been able to guarantee these requirements. The whips, dead or dying, were planted on various sites. Three of the sites that I remember were Shop Wood, land off the Todmorden road at Summit and, perhaps appropriately, in Dearnley St. Andrew’s Church grounds. Although our efforts were not very rewarding, I am sure that the knowledge gained proved invaluable to those who went on to set up the tree nursery.

I was, however, involved in a more successful enterprise. I was pleased to have been a member of the team that researched and compiled the walks in readiness for the production by George Kelsall of the book “Walks Around Littleborough” which has been much valued by walkers in past years and is still in use today.

Joining in most of the hands-on projects of the Trust and to have been associated with so many caring people was a pleasure. Although Jean and I are not involved in the Trust’s activities at present, we maintain an interest and appreciate the work that is being done.



Councillor Alan Brett with Fred Dibnah at the re-opening of the Rochdale Canal



The historic station buildings, currently undergoing restoration

Caroline Moss has highlights of the first two years and pays tribute to some of the founder members...

Many meetings were held in 1971 in the front room at our house "Lightowlers" (Mum and Dad were both founder members). At the beginning of 1972 one of the first "open" meetings of Littleborough Civic Society (as it then was) was held, with a discussion on a proposed Civic Centre for the district. Keith Parry (then secretary) chaired the meeting.

At the end of January, 1972 nine people were chosen as committee members for the now renamed Littleborough Civic Trust. There were now eighty-four members with Rae Street as chairman.

In February, Mr. Joel Barnett, M.P. became the Trust's patron. In March the idea of Hollingworth Lake Country Park was first talked about by the County Council. At this time LCT identified areas around Littleborough that could do with improvement.

In April, Mum (Mrs. Betty Pickis) attended a conference in London "Keep Britain Tidy" where it was said that local authorities could do more about litter and the local "anti-litter" drive began. Mum reported back her findings. This was attended by Councillor Mrs. Rosemary Giffin (Honorary President of the LCT).

On Sunday 9th April the first canal clean-up at Pike House took place. A few brave people volunteered (as I did, aged 12!) to help pull rubbish from the canal. Fothergill and Harvey's helped by lending vehicles to cart away the rubbish which we tipped (free of charge) at the Hollingworth Lake tip (now the car park for the information centre). The project leader was Mr. A.C. Harte. As time went by the local scouts joined in and the clean-up was completed by May 1972.

By June the Civic Trust working party, comprising Harry Giffin, Donald Pickis (Dad) and Geoff Wilson (local dentist) met to study plans for Hollingworth Lake Country Park. Also at this time Steanor Bottom Toll Bar was identified as of historical interest.

In October 1972 the third public meeting was held about the proposed country park. M.P. Joel Barnett gave his full support to the Council's fight to get cash aid for a local Civic Centre in November. At this time LCT applied to have Littleborough Square made into a conservation area.

In March 1973 the LCT joined with seven other groups in an attempt to save the Toll House at Steanor Bottom, fighting to have it restored on site.

At the same time a start was made on creating a garden at Littleborough Station approach by LCT volunteers (me again volunteered by my parents!). By May 1973 four people had been appointed to buy the Toll House (Mr. R. Priestley, Councillor Harry Giffin, Don Pickis and Mr. B.

Wilkinson). This quartet with the addition of Rae Street aimed to raise all the money needed to restore the building.

Hollingworth Lake Country Park came a step closer in November 1973 when the working party attended yet another meeting. As we now know everything went according to plan and the Country Park finally started to take shape.

In January 1974 the Canal Group was set up by members of the LCT with the objective of restoring the canal.

What a fantastic achievement in a short space of time. And as we know, LCT went on to acquire the Coach House for the local community, and I can only say how grateful and proud I am of my parents and other local people for their hard work, commitment and unstinting ambition. They are a credit to us all.

WELL FANCY THAT!
(FROM THE NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES)
WINTER 1995

It is a pleasure to announce initiatives that our footpath officer, Tim Wood, has been arranging.

A number of footpath signs (in metal) have been ordered and they are currently with our authority Blacksmith (yes, we do have one!) who has the job of sealing the words / images to the signposts. Twelve of the new posts will be erected in the Calderbrook area, and it has been agreed to place an extra one at the Todmorden Road end of the Coronation Walk, where the Civic Trust recently finished a project of cleaning up the area and planting hundreds of bulbs...

(John Street)

WE ASSUME THE BLACKSMITH HAS LONG GONE!

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY (2)

Happy 40th
Birthday and
thanks for all your
hard work and
here's to another
forty years from
Mark and Dawn at
The Rake Tapas.

**LEAF (Littleborough
Events and
Associations Forum).**
We seek to encourage
all local organisations
to work together for
the good of
Littleborough and the
Civic Trust is a main
player in this.
Happy 40th Birthday.

*Thank you LCT for all the
time and effort your
volunteers have put in to help
and support the people of
Littleborough, the
community, its character and
its heritage over the last
forty years. May you long
continue to do so,
From Lavender Lane
Flowers.*

Happy 40th birthday
to Littleborough Civic
Trust and thank you
for all your efforts
both in the past and
for the future from
Hooson and Stuttard,
Opticians.

The community owes Littleborough
Civic Trust 40 years worth of
thanks and praise for the never
ending endeavours to protect the
people and preserve the heritage
and character of Littleborough
**From Liam at Liam's Quality
Meats.**

Michael Farrell recalls having to take the rough with the smooth with the Footpaths Group.

Well they say life speeds up as you get older and that's certainly true. I was on the sub-committee organising the Trust's 21st birthday celebrations and that sure doesn't seem like 19 years ago - but there you go. I think it proves the strength of the civic idea and the community spirit in Littleborough that the Trust has kept going and continues to thrive even though the national organisation has bitten the dust. Each time someone you thought was indispensable has departed new faces have arrived to continue the good work.

I wasn't quite there at the start (being only 6 at the time); I joined in 1977 and was active until shortly before getting married in 1997 when I left the area. Although involved in many areas of the Trust's activities (older members might recall my stint as newsletter editor from 1983-1992) my main concern was always the Footpaths Group.

The Footpaths Group was set up (as a sort of sub-group) in 1972 following an open meeting on rights of way with the main players being Fred Harte, Lincoln Jackson, John Hindle and Bert Cannon (all now deceased). It started a programme of fortnightly walks to check on local footpaths which has run (interrupted only by foot and mouth in 2001) to this day, an astonishing achievement. I have never heard of any other walking group independent of the RA, HF or YHA which has managed to sustain that level of activity for so long.

I joined as a 12-year old in January 1977 to get in shape for a youth hostelling holiday at my school that summer. I knew about it from a family friend, Brian Clarke, and had actually been with him when he joined the Trust at an exhibition in Smithy Bridge a year or so earlier. Not long after I joined Brian actually became Footpaths Secretary as John Hindle was preparing to get married for a second time. Under Brian, the Group produced three walks leaflets for the fledgling Hollingworth Lake Country Park but these were later taken over by Greater Manchester Council and the routes altered to appease local landowners

In those days the walks were easy going and well-attended with turnouts often exceeding 30. However John returned to the post in the autumn of 1979 and was concerned that the walks leaders were avoiding difficult or contentious paths and so devised a three year plan of pre-ordained routes ensuring every path in the area (plus Wardle and Milnrow too) would be covered. John had already compiled all the maps before putting the scheme to the other leaders

who felt obliged to accept it (a common tactic for getting your own way in voluntary groups).

In fairness to John his scheme was upholding the original principle of the Footpaths Group and it was worth trying but there was a price. It meant every walk was likely to have some difficult obstacle to surmount (on one we had to get a rather short lady called Marjorie Haigh over a high stone wall) or a confrontation with an obstinate farmer like Danny Mills at Rakewood. The routes being concerned only with maximum coverage also seemed illogical on the ground e.g. visiting the same farm three times or having too many descents then immediate re-ascents. The older and less committed members left us in droves for easier going groups in Rochdale and one committee member departed telling John in no uncertain terms what she thought about the new arrangements. Concurrently, John's hectoring letters to the local authority incessantly re-reporting the same blockages and constant criticism of the wardens at the country park for their inaction were making us deeply unpopular and negating any benefit from the scheme.

When John resigned in frustration in the summer of 1982 we abandoned the scheme at the first opportunity and went back to letting the volunteer leaders choose their own walks. We also decided not to have a formal Footpaths Secretary, the unspoken reason being so that John would never have a post to reclaim. Informally, I used to put the walks programme together and Joe Taylor has done it since I left. John remained involved at a gradually diminishing level until his health gave way in the mid- nineties. He was at heart a very decent guy but could often be his own worst enemy.

The Footpaths Group has generally run its own affairs (while generating a useful flow of subscriptions from people who weren't necessarily in sympathy with the Trust's other aims) and not got too involved in the main organisation's politics. But of course walking with the Footpaths Group hasn't normally been about controversy. It's often been great fun with some real characters taking part and leaders knowing that their past misfortunes will come back to haunt them. One leader who's still with us knows that his unscheduled return to the starting point in Grassington at lunchtime will always be recalled. My own cross to bear was a walk on the moors to the east of Blackstone Edge in June 1987. Calderdale MBC had recently put out a leaflet advertising the fact that this area was largely urban common so the tracks that crossed it could be walked despite not being rights of way. I thought this would make an excellent walk, somewhere right on our doorstep yet completely unfamiliar. Unfortunately the

afternoon was wet and misty and the track we were following towards Green Withens Reservoir just petered out in the heather. As a consequence we ended up roaming around the moors lost for some time. To make things worse we had an old guy, Alf Ward, with us who wasn't that well off and so was insufficiently equipped for a prolonged walk in the rain. His condition was beginning to cause concern but thankfully I did eventually manage to get back on track. I've never attempted to repeat that particular walk though!

Margaret Edwards The Stone Head

Two years ago a group of LCT committee members worked together to raise the profile of the LCT and its achievements. Whilst researching the restoration of the Littleborough Coach House, we discovered that one of the founder members, Don Pickis, had unearthed a carved stone head amongst the debris in the semi-derelict building. We were told that unfortunately the head was damaged during subsequent building work. After that the trail went cold, we had a mystery – we could not trace the head! .

After quite a lot of hunting it was found and with the generous assistance of Rochdale Heritage Services it is now on display at the Coach House. We were also fortunate in contacting one of the few experts on stone heads, John Billingsley, who came and spoke about his research. These rare, primitive, archetypal carvings are found in Calderdale and parts of Yorkshire. We are privileged to have our very own Stone Head in Littleborough Coach House and to have played a small part in securing for it a safe and appropriate display.



The mysterious stone head

Some notes and memories of the Trust

Rita Kay

Having come to Littleborough in 1952 to live at Abbanks Cottages Centre Vale Todmorden Road, sadly demolished many years ago, we both liked Littleborough from the start. Coming home from a family outing to Todmorden we saw that a vehicle had run into the empty neglected Toll House on Todmorden Road and demolished the door, we stopped and had a look. I went inside as I had always admired the building. I felt quite upset at the state it was in. I later rang Todmorden Council and was told The Council had no responsibility for the building as it was privately owned. Reading the Rochdale Observer later I noticed an announcement of a meeting to form a Civic Society; the meeting was to be held at The Empress Hall, Butterworth Street. We duly went to the meeting which was quite well attended in the very unusual building. Keith Parry was in the chair. I asked my question about the Toll House only to be told by Keith that because the Toll House was over the border it was of no concern to Littleborough. I am always pleased whenever we pass that this was proved wrong and one of my very favourite buildings was so wonderfully restored. Keith could be a very formidable Chairman.

We joined the Civic Society as it was then. Donald was very active in the Footpath Group being a founder member, with John Hindle Lincoln Jackson, Bert Cannon and Fred Hart. He also took a very active part in the famous Canal Clean Up when John Street used his considerable climbing skills to remove rubbish to the bank. (I have the Observer dated Wednesday 12th April 1972 with the photograph in.)

We also enjoyed the late John Hindle's trips. We went to Browsholme Hall, and how it rained all day. John who was a wonderful organiser and had everything booked to the finest detail had stops at Clitheroe market and several other interesting places but the rain never stopped. Another unforgettable trip was to Ironbridge Museum, I think that was my favourite—we lost Jack Trickett. Mrs. Trickett (Phyllis) was getting quite worried when out he popped from an oven! The trips were very enjoyable several seats being taken by John's family: his mother Mrs. Hindle his Aunties Mrs. Windle and Jessie Jowett—all members of the Trust. Mrs. Bennett who lived at Heald Close used to bring Tupperware containers of hard boiled eggs and distribute them around the coach! (we always took picnics).

Barker's Wood



Barker's Wood was Rochdale's first community woodland. The land on which it stands (off Starring Road in Littleborough) was originally a field, 1.5 hectares in area, used for grazing. It was donated to RMBC by its owner, Mrs. Marjorie Barker, in 1990. The field has links with Littleborough's industrial past and adjoins the site of the former Starring Coal and Fireclay works (later Starring Pottery). Clay and pottery remains can still be found there.

With the aid of a small grant from the Forestry Authority, RMBC, LCT and the South Pennine Woodland Project worked together to create the wood. In 1993/94, with the help of over 200 children from local schools, more than 2000 mostly broadleaved trees were planted.

The photograph shows Rochdale Mayor, Councillor Irene Davidson, Judith Schofield, Don Pickis and other helpers carrying out additional planting in the autumn of 2001.

I later worked on the report “A Country Park for Hollingworth Lake” as a member of the committee. We went to the newly opened Information Centre when Joel Barnett MP planted a Royal Oak Tree. The late Alma Harper, a life member of The Trust, roped me in to help with the teas. As I looked across longingly at the Information desk I thought how much I would like to work there (I was a stay-at-home Mum). A week later jobs were advertised and to my surprise I was appointed Information Clerk. I worked there for 17 years! Donald was also appointed the very first Ranger. We had a happy working relationship with the first Warden George Garlick.

An email from Pauline Hopkinson

Hello Russell

The most memorable event which happened whilst I was a member of the Trust was helping Judith Schofield and Dan Docker with the Tree Nursery which was on some land owned by Courtaulds. As a result of this venture some of our young trees were planted by the Trust in Barker's Wood near Starring Way. I walk through this wood, which is obviously enjoyed by the locals because of the well-defined footpaths, nearly every day with my dog and am constantly reminded of the fun we had planting the trees.

The one person whom I shall always associate with the Civic Trust is the late Betty Pickis. She was a delightful person, full of energy, very knowledgeable, talented and had a great sense of humour – I am sure she is sorely missed.

I hope this is of interest to you and I wish you all the best.
Yours Pauline Hopkinson.

Our thanks to RMBC

We would like to thank the many members of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council who have helped us over the years. Naming everyone would be impossible, so here's a collective “thankyou” to all the mayors, councillors and staff who have contributed to the success of LCT's endeavours.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES
SPRING 1998

Lincoln was always there

The death of Lincoln Jackson, just before Christmas, was a great shock to everyone, not least the members of Littleborough Civic Trust.

For many years he was our Membership Secretary and he could tell you immediately who had or had not paid their subscriptions! He also knew the number of members on the roll, who was ill or had left the district and who had just joined. He was a mine of information.

He made himself available at any time on behalf of the Trust and because he was so accessible in his shop in Hare Hill Road, you knew "Lincoln would always be there".

He was also a keen and active member of the Trust's Footpath Group. Personally, I came to rely on Lincoln quite a lot during the time I was Trust Chairman during the 1980's and I found that he was a person you could depend on. If you asked him to do something you knew it would be done - whatever the problems.

Now a little time has elapsed since Lincoln died and we on the Committee are coming to realise his full worth and how much he is missed.

Betty Pickis

