FCS Falmouth Civic Society

Newsletter

Special edition 2023

It may be a bit late, but last year our Civic Society reached its 50th Anniversary, and it is certainly worth reflecting on some of our achievements over the years.

Back in 1972, one of the Society's founders was Derek Toyne, and Angela Shields went along to interview him and to tap in to some of his memories of those early days.

Then follows a timeline, highlighting initiatives that we have undertaken that have made such a positive contribution to Falmouth.

50 years plus!

by Angela Shields

Just over fifty years ago, Falmouth Civic Society was formed, and I went along to interview the sole surviving founder member, Derek Toyne. It was good to talk to Derek again as I have known him and his wife Barbara for many years. While I did not know Derek when he was at the Art School, I did later when he was up at Pendennis Castle, and we performed 'Living History' there. Derek showed what a fine actor he was, strictly in keeping with his role as the Captain of the Guard during the time of the visit of Queen Henrietta Maria to the castle. Derek in the 1970s was a librarian at the then Falmouth School of Art, and his wife Barbara had also been an actress.



Derek, Librarian in the 1970s, and today (Photos: Derek Toyne and Angela Shields)

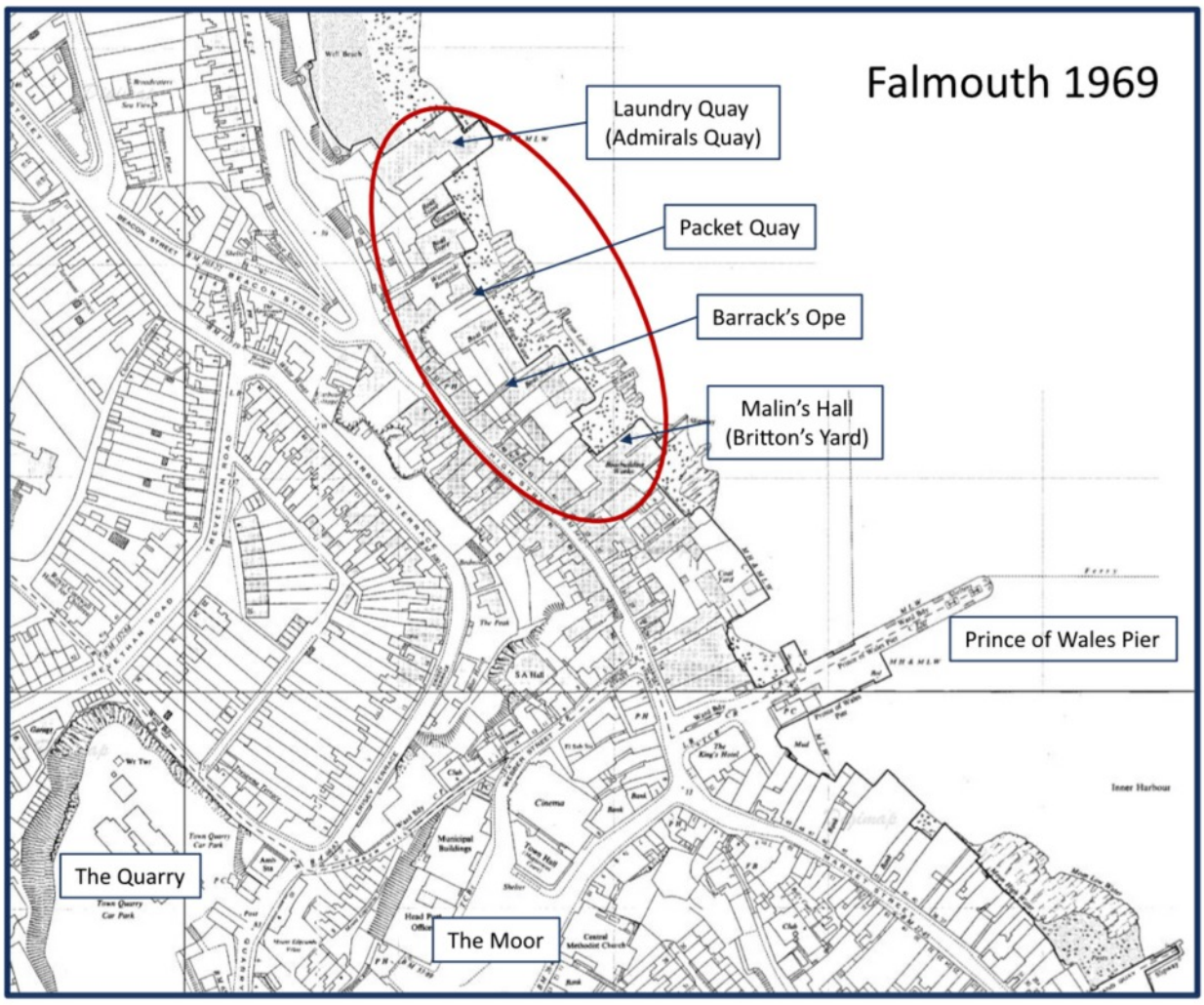
Derek and fellow colleagues, including Francis Hewlett, Hubert Gauss, Robert Toy, Ronald Robinson, Brinley Morris and Peter Markey objected to the redevelopment plans for the waterfront from the top of the High Street that were proposed in 1972. Falmouth Town Council wanted to knock down the waterfront buildings at Laundry Quay (now Admirals Quay) and develop the harbourside as far as Malins Hall (the old Britton's Yard area). Much of the area had already been cleared as part of slum clearance in the 1930s, and further demolition came in the 1950s. Derek commented that the Town Council had more power at that time.



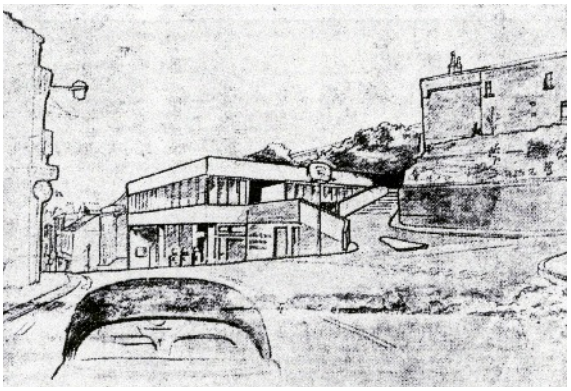


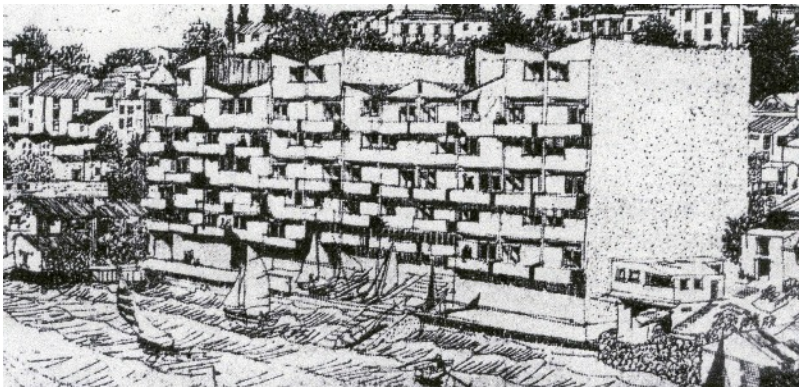
On the left, the area as it was in 1935, and on the right, as it appeared in the 1970s (Source: Falmouth History Archive)

The County Planning Officer at the time, John Sloper, advised the group that if they were to be taken seriously, they needed to form a Civic Society. This they did, and Falmouth Civic Society was born. Their first action was to show alternative plans, and Francis Hewlett made a model to show what the area could look like. It was exhibited at the Poly and it went on to win a number of awards. Not surprisingly, the plans for the redevelopment of the Laundry and Packet Quays were the issue of the day and attracted much attention.



A map showing the area earmarked for development in 1972 (Source: Basemap, Tom Weller, graphic, Mike Jenks)





Here are images of the 1972 development proposals that triggered the formation of our Civic Society. On the left at the top of the High Street is a multi-storey car park and filling station, and on the right a large and out of character block of flats.



While the Civic Society may have led the way, many more in Falmouth objected. Foremost amongst the general public who protested about the council's plans was Toby West. He was a very well-known Falmouth character. In 1967 he was coxswain of the lifeboat, and the RNLI website says of that year:

> *Framed Letters of Thanks signed by the Chairman of the Institution, awarded to Coxswain W. B. West, Assistant Mechanic R. F. Twydle and Shore Signalman C. J. Barnicoat in recognition of their services on 4 September 1967, when they boarded the lifeboat boarding boat and rendered assistance to the French trawler* Martine Jean Paul *which had grounded at Trefusis Point in a westerly gale with a short choppy sea. Each man was also granted an additional monetary award.*

Toby was an oyster fisherman, owned a fish shop next to Barracks Ope, which his sister ran, and raced the working boat 'Victory' which is still owned by one of his descendants. Above left is a photo of Toby taken in later years taken from his 1991 biography *A-Sailing West*, written by Jonny Nance:

> *Here was one of Falmouth's truly great characters. Toby was still the coxswain of the Falmouth lifeboat at this time, a shrewd and masterful helmsman, a natural, social leader and budget bon-viveur.*

Toby was also involved in the saving of lives in the 1979 Fastnet race disaster.

Derek went on to talk of other memories of Falmouth in the past; of how Pete Lochrie used to run cruises on 'Marina II' from the Prince of Wales Pier. Students at the Falmouth School of Art were given a welcome cruise.

I am grateful to Derek and Barbara Toyne for their hospitality.

In our archives I have all of Derek's minutes of the Civic Society's meetings. Then, they had to be typed on a typewriter with carbon copies. It is a lot easier today!

Falmouth Civic Society leaves its mark

Since its founding in 1972, FCS has certainly left its mark, both physically through plaques and restoration projects, and in the close involvement in plans and policy formulation that help determine Falmouth's future. The pages below are a brief encapsulation of many of our achievements over the years. So much has been done, and hopefully not much has been left out. But as members you may have experience of things that the Society have done that should be included, so please do get in touch and let us know your memories, or any interesting anecdotes. We would welcome your input.

1970s

1972 - **The foundation of Falmouth Civic Society**, described in Angela's interview with Derek Toyne. The objection of proposals for flats, car park and filling station, and ideas of something better was a major achievement. What eventually was built there was an improvement, though not to everyone's taste, especially the arch. But Derek noted that the clock in the clock tower was an old one.

The other discussions and concerns in this decade were about the decline of the town, vacant sites and empty properties. Also taken on board was the debate over the future of Arwenack Manor.

1980s

In the 1980s the Society discussed issues about multiple occupation problems, especially in Marlborough Road, the re-appearance from the 1960s of a road to be built in the harbour, and the importance of our pedestrian routes and getting signs for the opes in the town. And more was carried out.

1983 - **The viewpoint on Pendennis Rise**



From the prominent position, one of the plaques showed the long views over the harbour, and the other all the layout of the docks. The citation said 'Plaque presented by Falmouth Civic Society with the aid of a Heritage Interpretation Grant from Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and erected on plinth by Carrick District Council.'

1985 - **The Markey Mural, Webber Street at the rear of Tesco's**

Paint was provided free by ICI, and the Manpower Services Commission provided three young workers under the Youth Training Scheme. The mural was restored in 2018 by Nicole White and volunteers, funded by the National Lottery, and organised by Falmouth Art Gallery's Director, Henrietta Boex.





1987 - Plaques for the Killigrew Monument and Arwenack Manor



The plaques outlined the history of both the Monument and the Manor House.

The Killigrew Monument plaque was funded by grants from Carrick District Council and Falmouth Town Council. And Arwenack Manor plaque by another grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.



1990s

Issues were discussed, that are still current today, especially the impact of out of town supermarkets on the vitality of the town centre. The Society ran a competition in 1996 for good shop front design, and made awards to five, including the distinctive bay windowed shop fronts, owned and restored by the late Colin Nunn.

Also, following some Civic Trust workshops in 1994, the closure of Church Street car park, introducing a park and float scheme, and the re-design of the Moor were proposed. Plans for the latter were produced in 1999, and the Church Street car park closure is now in the Neighbourhood Plan, but still far from being implemented.

2000s

2001 - Plaque celebrating the Moor



After our discussions in the 1990s, and the drawing up of plans in 1999, the Moor was finally regenerated.

The plaque reads: 'The area of the re-designed Moor "A Falmouth Community Project" was formally opened on the 30th September 2001 by Lady Mary Holbrow, Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, and Councillor Geoffrey Evans, Mayor of Falmouth'

2002 - News of Trafalgar



This is a replacement plaque. Some members may remember what was there before and, if so, do let us know.

It was '… erected in 2002 by Falmouth Civic Society with the support of Still Waters Charitable trust'

The plaque gives a brief account of Lieutenant Lapenotiere, Captain of HM Pickle, bringing news of the victory at Trafalgar, and of Nelson's death.

2004 - 'Falmouth by Design: Falmouth Harbourside, a way forward'

This significant report, written by architects M J Long and Chris Smith, was the result of a small team, of which John Stanley from our Society was a member.



It set out ideas for the harbourside, including the closure of Church Street car park, for other sites along the waterfront, and for the the town centre - these fed into the Neighbourhood Plan some 10 years later.

2010s

2012 - Restoration of the fountain at Greenbank Gardens



The gardens were in a poor state and a group Save our Foreshore was formed. Our Civic Society applied for a Community Grant Scheme, through County Councillor Grenville Chappel, which helped replace the fountain's headstones, and set the scene to improve the gardens.

2016 - Restoration of St George and the Dragon



In June, the Mayor, Grenville Chappel and crowds gathered to celebrate the restoration of the St George and the Dragon sculpture over the entrance to St George's Arcade. Over 20 years ago it was pulled down as a student prank, but the pieces were saved, and it was restored by Gary Springfield.



2017 - Walking Town Trail

This was put together by Mike Johnson, showing a circular route through Falmouth from the Moor to the National Maritime Museum, pointing out 16 buildings of interest. It can be found on our website here, and it was also translated into German for visitors on many of the cruise ships coming in to Falmouth. An update was done by students from Exeter University, led by Hugo Saxton on a work placement, and this will appear on our website when it is also updated.

2017 & 2019 - Blue Plaques



Left - The plaque to Robert Hunt was erected on the house, 4 Berkeley Vale, where he lived. It was funded by Exeter University.

Right - It is rare to have blue plaques featuring women, and this to two teenage girls, who inspired the founding of the Poly is a first anywhere in the UK. It was funded by Poly Past President, Mike Jenks.



2020s

2020 & 2021 - Blue Plaques



Left - Sophie Anderson, an artist of some renown, lived in Woodlane Cottage, Woodlane. The funding was from Falmouth Art Gallery, arranged by Director, Henrietta Boex.

Right - Robert Were Fox, a very distinguished scientist, lived in Rosehill, Woodlane, now part of Falmouth University, and who funded the plaque.



2021 - Falmouth Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) (2015-2021)

The NDP is one of the most important documents in helping to form Falmouth's future, and it has legal weight in Planning. Our Society was instrumental in setting the agenda, devising policy, and in drafting it.

We had advocated doing an NDP in 2012 - three years later Falmouth Town Council agreed to do one.

Four members of our Society were on the main committee. We led two of the working groups, one on strategy, design and housing (Mike Jenks), and one on open space and environment (David Yelland, FBRA rep as well, and helped by Jay Gidman).



2022 - The FitzRoy barometer



Five people needed to get a ton of granite onto its new plinth.



Mike Jenks and Mike Johnson, who initiated the project, admiring the barometer back in its rightful place

Restoring the lost FitzRoy barometer was one of our major recent achievements. As a Society, we were immensely grateful to all who contributed funds to make it happen, and all who gave so generously are celebrated on a plaque next to the barometer housing. The stainless steel housing was sponsored and made by A&P, and it looks splendid.

The barometer is a true heritage asset to the town, residents and visitors alike. You often see people passing by, stopping to admire it.

Looking ahead by Mike Jenks, Chairman

I wonder what will be added to our achievements in our 60th anniversary Newsletter? We will have one, and possibly two blue plaques in the near future. One to the author Howard Spring, and maybe one to Charlie Mitchell a muse to artist Henry Scott Tuke. These, and all those initiatives listed in the timeline on the previous pages, are the tangible evidence of the Civic Society's long-term contributions to improvements and enhancements of our wonderful town.

And reviewing what has been listed over the past 50 years is not only interesting, but something to be proud of. Our Society has often been ahead of the game, consistently progressive in the ideas it has put forward, its advocacy on key committees, and involvement in the development of policies for the planning and improvement of the town. At the same time, we have been rigorous in our response to development, supporting good design (often sadly too rare), and opposing the very worst of development proposals. In that we have been partially successful in giving advice to Falmouth Town Council's Planning Committee on conformity to the Neighbourhood Plan (NDP), and responding to Cornwall Council. Of course, we have no defence against abysmally bad decisions by Planning Inspectors, the M & S building being a prime example of the very worst.

This may change in future. Civic Societies across the country are largely under the umbrella of Civic Voice, and many towns are members. Falmouth has not yet joined, except on an individual basis. But Civic Voice is behind an All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies, and among many things, they are aiming to get Societies classified as statutory consultees in the planning decision-making process. This would put us on a par with the Town Council (FTC), English Heritage, Environment Agency and so on, giving more weight to our views.

And what of Falmouth, and the roles we might play? In our year on year activities, we will continue to organise and enjoy talks and visits to interesting places, and maintain a social programme for members. And we will also monitor all planning applications and respond appropriately. But also, our members, and hopefully new ones, will engage with planning for Falmouth's future. Currently, FTC's Place Shaping Board has engaged with the consultants Lavigne Lonsdale in preparing a town centre master plan which has just been accepted by the Council. This implements the NDP, including the regeneration of Church Street car park, something we discussed in the 1990s. And there is a move to review the NDP and strengthen its environmental credentials. We must ensure we are involved in all these initiatives. And of course we will be looking for other projects, whether plaques, heritage restorations or other initiatives, to make Falmouth a better place.





Before - just a car park? Or (after) a hub of activity for people in the Town to use and enjoy? Our Society can and will help shape the future of Falmouth. *(Visuals from Lavigne Lonsdale Consultants Report)*

Falmouth Civic Society

Tel: 01326 211196 Email: falmouthcivicsociety@gmail.com

http://www.falmouthcivicsociety.org.uk/

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Falmouth-Civic-Society/573370802673192