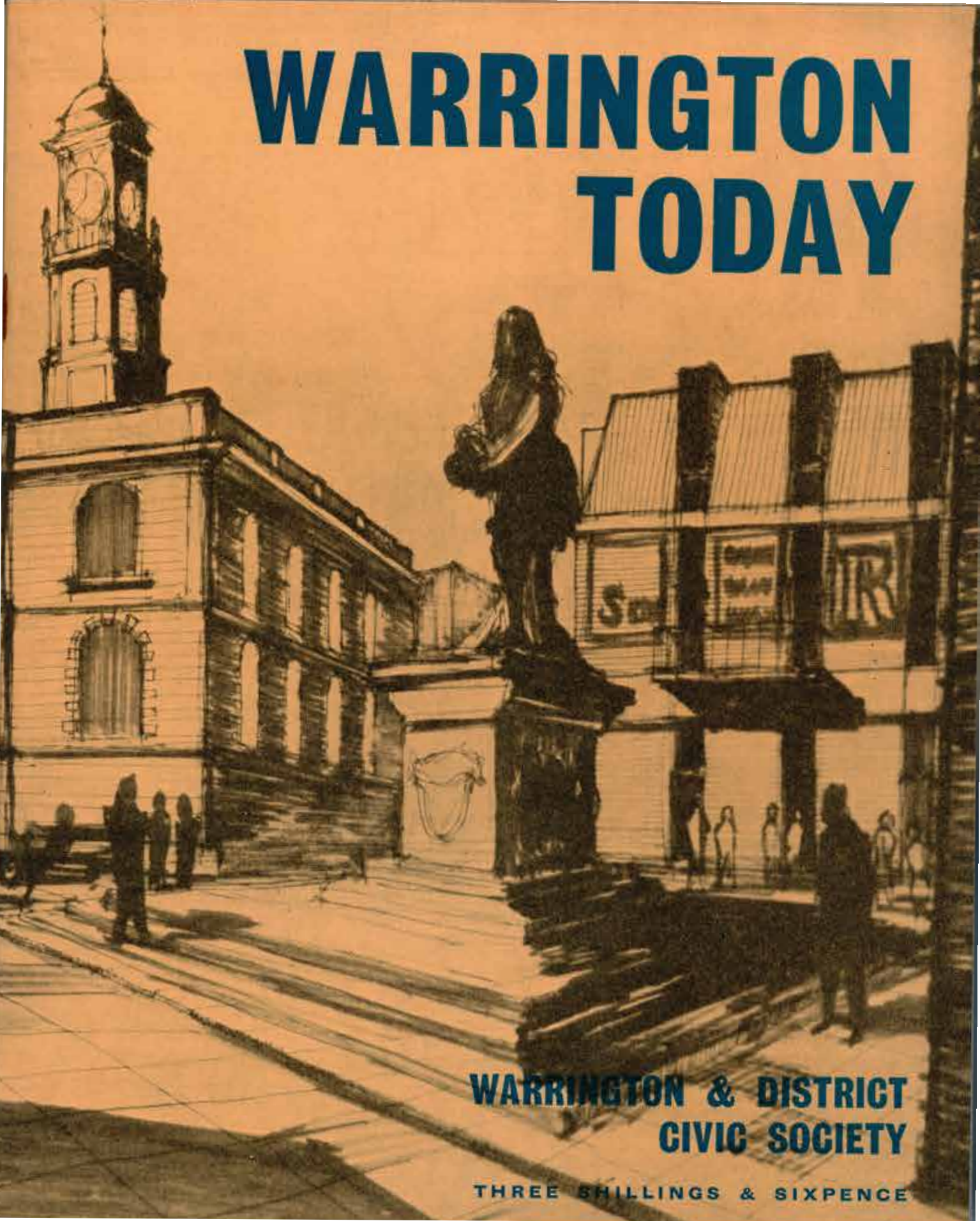


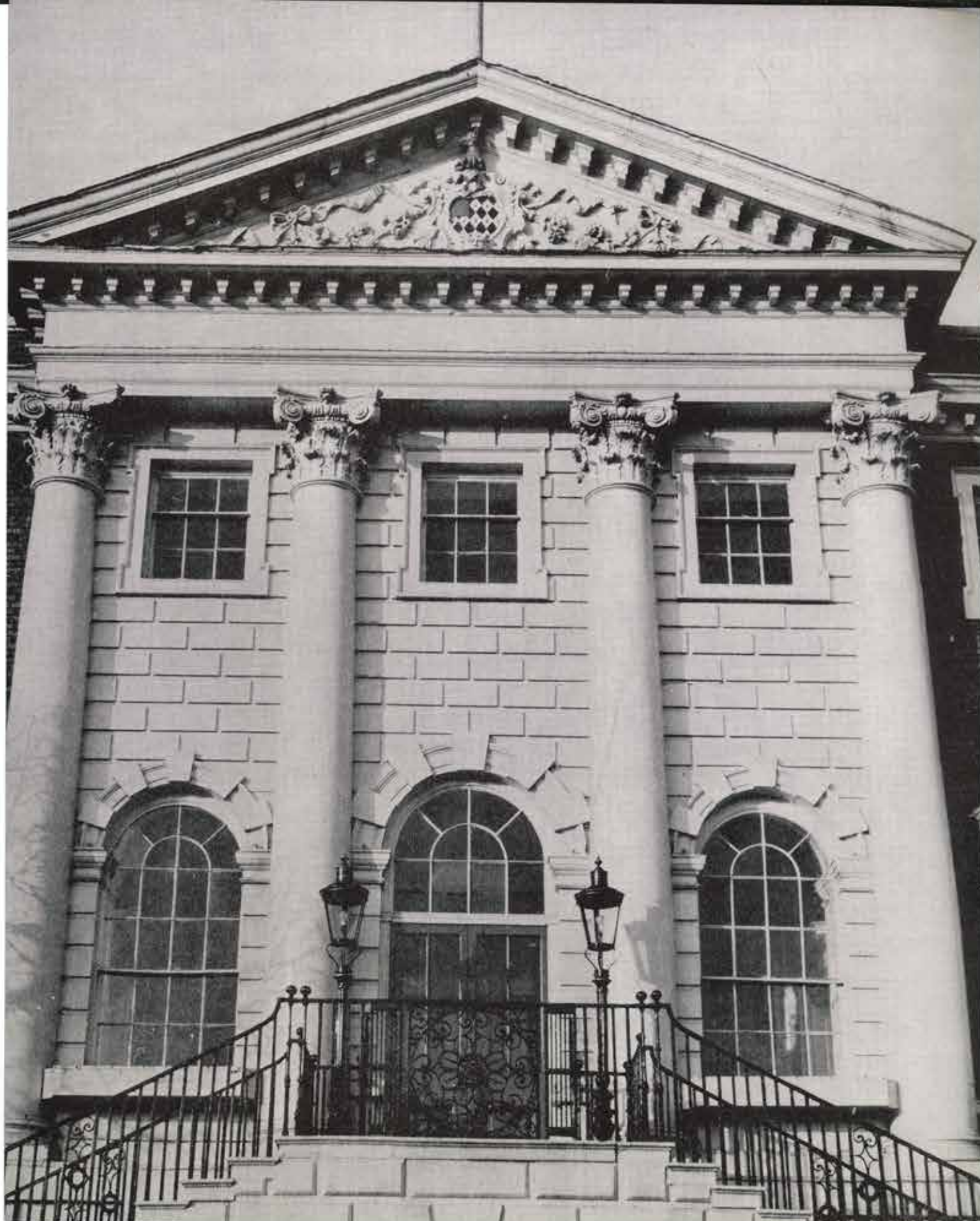
# WARRINGTON TODAY



WARRINGTON & DISTRICT  
CIVIC SOCIETY

THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE





## FOREWORD

This small book is written, as you will see, by several people. In a sense they are all responsible for their own opinions, and for what they have written, and yet they do represent others, perhaps a much wider audience than many would imagine.

This book is published by the Warrington Civic Society, and in a sense it is a "follow up". You saw the exhibition, *A Plan for Warrington*, which was staged in the long gallery in the Warrington museum. Here you have in small measure our afterthoughts.

We wish to go on thinking. We ask you to join us in our thinking.

Here we are not offering to you a superior comment on Warrington, nor an infallible guide to things that must be, but we are saying that Warrington is the town of our birth, or at least of our adoption. Here we live and move and have our being, and that lays on our shoulders a great responsibility.

Here is no carping criticism, still less a mood of despair, but there is a social conscience that demands that we should cry out aloud when things are not what they ought to be.

Will you read this book, and, however much you may agree or disagree with what you read, however much you may feel that this or that which has been omitted, ought to have been included, at least have the courage and the will to say so?

J. C. LONGBOTTOM,  
Chairman, Warrington Civic Society,  
Rector of Warrington.

May, 1965

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# **WARRINGTON TRAFFIC**

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**R. E. Morrison**

R. E. MORRISON is a Warrington industrialist. He is a member of the Warrington Chamber of Commerce Traffic Sub-Committee, and Chairman of the Standing Joint Committee on Traffic, which he inaugurated in 1962.





# WARRINGTON TRAFFIC

In 1961 and 1962 the Warrington & District Civic Society and the Junior Chamber of Commerce both produced reports on Warrington traffic problems, and these were given careful consideration by the bodies concerned and the Chamber of Trade, as it was felt that some action must be taken to improve traffic flow through the town.

In February, 1962, the Borough Surveyor produced a plan for elevated roads with the idea of eliminating through traffic from the town centre. This plan was studied, and as a result it was agreed to set up a joint sub-committee composed of members of the Warrington Chamber of Commerce, the Junior Chamber

of Commerce, the Chamber of Trade and the Civic Society to consider the problem from the point of view of the inhabitants and users of Warrington streets—perhaps a different point of view from that of the Local Authority.

In August, 1963, the Borough Surveyor produced a new plan for the centre of Warrington which incorporated an idea that had been put forward earlier by members of the sub-committee, namely, that the centre of Warrington should become a pedestrian shopping area by the exclusion of through traffic. While many detailed features of this plan are open to argument, it was generally agreed that the plan as a whole was a good one



and the sub-committee has supported it in principle. The main point of difference has always been in the speed at which action should take place, the bodies represented by the sub-committee wanting immediate short-term action, which they felt could be done at minimum cost, while the Local Authority has been concerned with the distant future. No doubt the Borough Council has to consider finance (with a view to minimising expenditure which falls on the rates) and has to obtain the consent of various authorities such as the Ministries of Transport and Housing and Local Government: nevertheless, it has been generally felt that there has been a lack of urgency on the part of official action, and that relatively inexpensive "first aid" measures could have been taken a considerable time ago. This, in fact, is the main point of difference between the subscribers to the local organizations—who pay the rates—and the Local Authority which spends them! The industrial firms who have to get raw materials in and finished products out are handicapped by traffic delays, and the same applies to shops and professional men who want to see some early action taken.

Hence, in December, 1963, the joint sub-committee produced a scheme which could be implemented cheaply and quickly, and which formed part of the Borough Surveyor's 1963 plan. This scheme was based partly on the Civic Society's plan, and the main points were as follows:—

1. A ring road to divert through traffic from Market Gate and the town centre.  
*Route: Scotland Road–Buttermarket Street (east)–Mersey Street–Bridge Foot–Winmarleigh Street–Sankey Street (part)–Golborne Street–Queen Street.*
2. "No Entry" signs at the four main roads leading to Market Gate to stop through traffic using the town centre. (Local traffic could, however, leave the central area at these points.)
3. Only trade vehicles and cars concerned with business or shopping to enter the central area (by means of Flag Lane, Market Street, Town Hill, Bank Street, Barbould Street and Rylands Street). Such vehicles to be allowed to park for a short time within this area for business or shopping purposes.
4. Buses to terminate at Arpley or at a bus terminal between the Fire Engine Station and Central Station, or in the lower part of Buttermarket Street (entry by Bank Street), these bus terminals being connected by a single-decker Corporation service round the ringroads, run at short intervals to take shoppers to and from their buses, at a low fixed fare.
5. The elimination of traffic lights at the Horsemarket Street–Bewsey Street,–Scotland Road junction and at the bottom of Bridge Street, and, of course, at Market Gate.

The only demolition required to make this ring road practicable is in the Horsemarket Street–Scotland Road–Queen Street area, which is already called for in the Borough Surveyor's plan. Otherwise, only minor road alterations are needed.

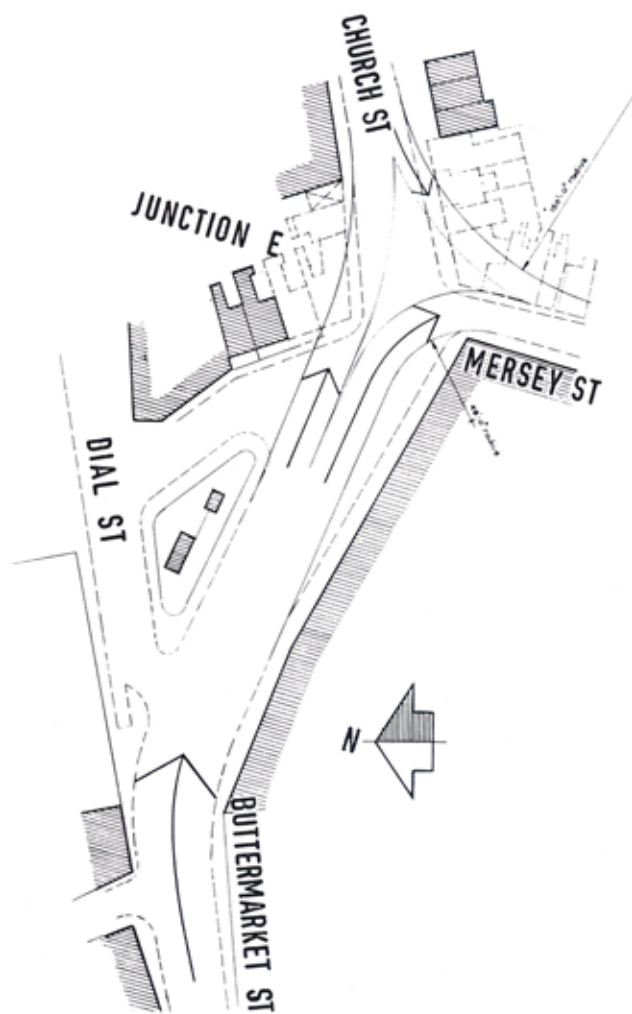
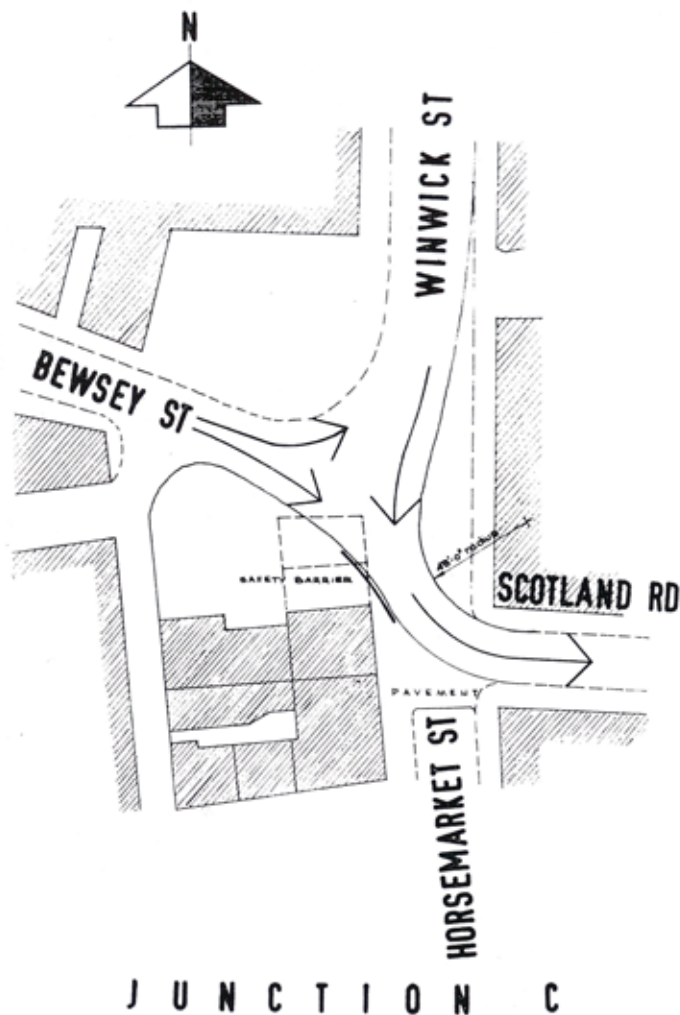
This plan was explained to the Borough Surveyor and the Borough Council Planning Committee, and was published in the *Warrington Guardian* on 24th January, 1964, alongside the Borough Council's own short-term plan. This latter plan is really only concerned to make the narrow part of Sankey Street one-way westbound, and the sub-committee feels that it cannot work satisfactorily as long as two-way traffic is permitted in Horsemarket Street, Buttermarket Street, and Market Gate. However, it has since been announced that the Borough Council is going ahead with this plan, so the proof of the pudding will be in the eating! It is to be hoped that the traffic congestion will not cause indigestion! While the conversion of the narrow part of Sankey Street to one-way traffic is a move in the right direction (and can be taken as an indication that the widening plan is now dropped), it is only a very small step, and all the bodies represented by the sub-committee are convinced that not only is action to relieve congestion imperative, but that it can be done quickly and at relatively small cost.

The necessary work on Golborne and Queen Streets will presumably now be put in hand in accordance with the Borough Council's short-term plan mentioned above, and if the layout shown under "Junction 'C'" in the Civic Society's plan of 1962 (see Fig. 1) is followed, there should be no need to widen Scotland Road. There should, of course, be no waiting in Scotland Road and the other narrow roads forming the ring road. It is interesting to note that part of the widening of the Mersey Street–Church Street junction ("Junction 'E'") in the Civic Society's plan (see Fig. 2) has already been carried out.

One of the main points of difference between the sub-committee and the Local Authority seems to be the use of Mersey Street. The sub-committee feels that it should be one-way only, from Church Street to Bridge Foot, while the Borough Council appears to insist that it remains two-way. This presents problems at the point where it joins Bridge Street and Bridge Foot, where congestion is increased by the bus terminus near the Mersey.

In this connection, an interesting suggestion has been put forward by a Chamber of Trade member of the sub-committee. This, in effect, proposes a second bridge over the Mersey, between the public weighbridge and the War Memorial, this bridge being one-way southbound, the present bridge becoming one-way northbound. The result would be a "squareabout" and would mean that westbound traffic from Mersey Street would cross the river twice to reach Bridge Foot, but the time taken would probably be less than that spent in waiting at the present traffic lights. Apart from cost (and this only need be a two-lane bridge) the main point against this scheme is the fact that it would be necessary to move and re-site the War Memorial, which for reasons of sentiment and tradition might go against the grain of local feeling. But if it were moved to the centre of a new and larger traffic island on the south bank facing the traffic entering the town from the south, might it not—combined with the floral skill of the Council's parks department—have a more impressive setting than it has at present? The cost would need to be considered against the advantage of retaining two-way traffic in Mersey Street, but this is something the sub-committee will consider before long, with particular regard to the distance to be saved for traffic from south of the river to Manchester Road.





Since this subject was first raised, it has been announced that two new towns are to be built near Warrington, one at Runcorn and the other at Risley. Although the first may not have much effect, the second will undoubtedly make an impact on local traffic, as many new people will come from Risley to work and shop in Warrington. Hence, the Borough Council has been asked to give a considered opinion on the following points:—

- (a) Is anything known about the timing of the type of building in the new towns, i.e., will residential accommodation, or factories, be built first, or will an attempt be made to build simultaneously? The answer to this question will have considerable effect on the labour supply position in Warrington, particularly as regards Risley.
- (b) Will housing in the new towns be restricted to persons moved from Manchester, or will it be available for people now living in Warrington?
- (c) Do future plans for Warrington provide for the building of two-storey houses or multi-storey flats? This will have a

considerable effect on the amount of land available for factory building. Should more factories be planned in the Borough, from where is it expected that these factories will draw their employees?

- (d) What alterations are planned for the Manchester Road between Kingsway and Risley, as not only is this stretch of road liable to carry much more traffic if and when the new town is built, but improvements between Kingsway and the M6 access could ease considerably the traffic density over the Ship Canal bridges in Warrington.

When a reply has been received from the Local Authority, the sub-committee will give the whole question further consideration, and it could well be decided to hold a meeting open to members of the Civic Society, the Senior and Junior Chambers of Commerce, and the Chamber of Trade, to which the Town Clerk, the Borough Surveyor and other interested members of the Borough Council would be invited in order to discuss these matters and get some idea of future plans and timing.

# **THE WARRINGTON STORES COMMITTEE**

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**B. J. Broadbent**



**BERNARD J. BROADBENT** is Chairman of the Warrington Stores Committee, which organization he was instrumental in founding in 1963. Mr. Broadbent is a Warrington Borough Magistrate.

# THE WARRINGTON STORES COMMITTEE

The need for trade associations has always been recognized and the value of the combining together of traders with similar problems and interests has been proved over the years. In Warrington the grocers, hairdressers, butchers, bakers, news-agents, fruiterers and other trades have their own associations and most of these are affiliated to the Warrington Chamber of Trade. Most of their members are also individual members of the Chamber which is thus a very influential body looking after the interests of all traders, large and small, in the area.

Some years ago the drapers of Warrington and district also had an association of their own but unfortunately lack of interest by the majority resulted in the meetings being attended by fewer and fewer until finally the same three members were the only ones attending the meetings. Thus the Warrington Drapers' Association was disbanded.

That there was a gap, however, was evident as for some time it had been felt by some of those who run the larger businesses in Warrington that it would be useful to have the opportunity to meet regularly and discuss problems and matters of interest which affect the larger stores and shops and which are not common to smaller shopkeepers. In November, 1961, several of the managers and directors of these businesses met and talked of matters of mutual interest and problems which they shared. It proved to be a most useful occasion, and in May, 1963, positive action was taken to bring about regular meetings.

Representatives of eight of the larger shops in Warrington met and proposed the formation of a Warrington Stores Committee on the lines of the Liverpool Stores Committee which had been operating successfully for over twenty years. Those firms present became founder members and Mr. Bernard Broadbent was elected the first Chairman. At the outset it was resolved that the Committee be run on similar lines to the Liverpool committee and that it should be of an informal nature. For this reason it was formed as a Committee and not as an Association.

The terms of reference were decided as follows:

1. Membership of the Committee will be limited to 16 members and membership will be by invitation only upon a vacancy occurring in the Committee.
2. Membership to be restricted to larger firms employing a minimum of 20 staff.
3. Meetings will be held monthly except in August and December and will be of an informal nature.
4. No decisions involving members will be taken which would interfere with or cut across obligations of members to trade associations to which they belong or in the case of branches which would conflict with Head Office policy.
5. The Committee can take action on any issue which all members are agreed upon but generally meetings of the Committee will consist of informal discussions on local problems which affect all members.

6. Members of the Committee are the firm or company invited and not any individual.

7. In order to utilize to the best advantage the possibilities of the Committee, regular attendance is a condition of membership. If the usual representative of the firm cannot attend a deputy to be sent whenever possible."

Since May, 1963, meetings have been held regularly each month. The present members are:

- Boots the Chemists Ltd.
  - Boydell Brothers Ltd.
  - Broadbents of Warrington Ltd.
  - C. H. & J. A. Dawson Ltd.
  - J. Dickenson & Son.
  - B. B. Evans & Co.
  - Hancock & Wood Ltd.
  - John Manners Ltd.
  - Lee & Clarke Ltd.
  - Marks & Spencer Ltd.
  - R. Roberts & Son Ltd.
  - Warrington Co-operative Society Ltd.
  - Warrington Electrical Co. Ltd.
  - F. W. Woolworth & Co. Ltd.
  - Timothy Whites & Taylors Ltd.
- and there is one vacancy.

The wisdom of operating the Committee as an informal body has been justified. By confining the meetings to discussion of problems generally common or peculiar to larger businesses, members have been enabled to retain membership of the Committee without interfering with their obligations to the particular trade organization to which they belong or in the case of multiple firms with their Head Office policy. Thus no member of the Committee is ever committed to any course of action by the other members, but members keep each other informed of any course of action which they intend to take and discussions often result in a recommendation to members to pursue some particular method. However, there are some subjects and problems which are common to all trades and which the Committee consequently can act on as a body.

The future of Warrington as a shopping and entertainments centre has occupied much time at many of the monthly meetings. Numerous matters come within the scope of such a survey, such as the lack of car parking facilities, the town centre development plans, including the provision of shopping precincts reserved for pedestrians only, the five-day week, Christmas

street illuminations, and empty shops in the main shopping streets. These are vitally important subjects and the Stores Committee has tackled them vigorously. Mr. Alan Brown, the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, was invited to one of the meetings to explain the Corporation's plan for the town centre and subsequently a deputation from the Committee attended at the Town Hall to meet the Development Sub-Committee. The purpose of this meeting was to ascertain priorities in carrying out the re-development of Warrington and to impress upon the Local Authority the urgency of the car park problem in Warrington. A resolution on this last item was passed at the October, 1963 meeting, and copies sent to the appropriate officers of the Corporation in the following terms:

- "1. Off-street parking is an outstanding community problem and its solution is a public necessity.
2. The initial responsibility for ensuring the planned provision of both kerbside and off-street parking facilities rests with the Local Authority.
3. Motorists are entitled to expect to be able to park reasonably near their destination and should demand such facilities.
4. Only by realistic parking planning will towns attract the custom of their local motorists and others from a wide area, thus increasing local prosperity and benefiting the ratepayer.
5. Off-street parking should be as cheap as possible so as to attract the greater use. Free parking space can bring great benefits to business centres.
6. Neighbouring communities are in competition with one another for highly mobile customers possessing freedom of choice and quite able to pick and choose in their search for it.
7. The relief from congestion achieved by the provision of sufficient parking space benefits every member of the community, whether motorist or not.
8. The powers given to local authorities under the 1960 Road Traffic and Roads Improvement Act, enabling them to provide parking facilities on their own initiative or in conjunction with commercial interests, should be implemented without delay."

At the meeting with the Development Sub-Committee, early in May, 1964, the future of Warrington's town centre was discussed and light was thrown on all the various aspects of the problem. The Committee directed the attention of the authorities to the urgency of the car parking problem, advancing the opinion that the future of Warrington as a shopping centre depended to a large extent on the availability of short-term

parking and suggesting that multi-storey car parks should be provided by the Corporation. The Stores Committee feels that it was given a very sympathetic hearing by the Corporation representatives but regrets to note that very little has been done practically in the last year to remedy the shortages complained of.

Members of the Committee have discussed many other matters including the five-day week, the various new Acts which concern shops, namely the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act and the Contracts of Employment Act, Christmas street lighting, empty shops in Warrington, one-day carpet sales, advertisement rates and carriage charges.

In order to bring about a five-day working week for shop assistants, all shopkeepers in the district were asked to vote on a five-day trading week, and the majority decided in favour. In spite of this, when the scheme became operative in February, half the town centre shops did not close all day on Thursday as originally expected. Thus the scheme is only partially successful. It is interesting to note that originally Monday was considered because it was assumed that shop assistants generally would welcome the opportunity to have two days together. However, unofficial soundings in many of the shops produced the surprising result that most of the shop assistants approached preferred to have all day Thursday as a holiday to provide a break in the middle of the week. The Committee has also been prominent in advocating the decorative illumination of the central streets during the Christmas shopping period. Once again the Local Authority was approached and proved most co-operative. Although it was not possible in the available time to arrange this for Christmas, 1964, it is most likely that 1965 will see four main shopping streets looking bright and gay with coloured lights shining across from shops on either side for the month of December. Early in 1965 a Christmas Street Lighting Committee was formed consisting of representatives of the Chamber of Trade, Civic Society, the Stores Committee, and other interested bodies and it is anticipated that an attractive scheme will be organized and put into effect in good time. The Corporation have been generous in the allocation of financial and advisory assistance in this venture.

The Warrington and District Civic Society was asked to address the Committee on its plan for the future of the town centre, which is an alternative to that produced by the Borough Surveyor. Members found the scheme praiseworthy in many ways and are delighted that so much interest has been evolved. However, the Committee has consistently pointed out that it is concerned with action. It does not favour any particular scheme but wants something done quickly to bring back to Warrington the attraction previously held as a shopping centre.

Members of the Warrington Stores Committee have found the monthly meeting to be a very useful vehicle for informing each other of their ideas, activities and intentions and an effective means of initiating action where and when considered appropriate. They hope to continue this in the future and look forward to co-operating with the Warrington Corporation and other local bodies in an endeavour to improve shopping conditions in the town.



# **WARRINGTON'S HERITAGE**

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**F. R. Altmann**

F. R. ALTMANN, A.R.I.B.A., is Secretary to the  
Architecture and Planning Committee of the  
Civic Society.

# WARRINGTON'S HERITAGE



TOWN HALL

It is only in this century that the preservation of buildings has become a widely accepted practice.

Preservation is largely the community's acknowledgement of the past's achievements. In the next few years, with the enormous reconstruction programmes which councils will have to undertake, preservation is sure to be a thorny problem.

Several reasons can be advanced for retaining and maintaining examples of buildings from other periods of our history. First, a building or group of buildings may be a notable work of architecture, making a large contribution to our enjoyment of the visual scene. Preservation may be worth undertaking because a building is an example of a particular style or period rare in the part of the country in which it is located, even though it is not necessarily amongst the best examples of the style. Historic grounds are often applicable, for the building may have housed a famous episode in the history of the community. The building may be connected with some famous

figure or some act in national history. Finally, the building may contribute to our understanding of the community's growth and development. It may be important to the town's character and its environmental qualities.

Under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, preservation was accepted as one aspect of town planning. Local authorities are required to list buildings for preservation. Warrington has such a list. In the next few years buildings on this list will be affected by urban redevelopment schemes. In some cases the proper functioning of the redevelopment may only be possible by the demolition of a scheduled building. On the other hand a proposal to demolish a scheduled building may represent the easy way out for the planners.

To remind people of buildings which are or could be important to our community, the following comments and photographs highlight our heritage. The buildings worth keeping extend far beyond this short survey.





#### **Town Hall**

Warrington's finest building, fortunately well looked after by the Town Council. Built in A.D. 1750 its southern facade is a small masterpiece. Victorian authorities have attributed it variously to James Gibbs (1682-1754), architect of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, and the Italian, Leoni, architect of Lyme Hall and Bold Hall. Proof of authorship is yet to be produced.

#### **National School, Church Street**

Warrington's Hampton Court. The result of the Victorians' pre-occupation with styles of the past. A reminder of the nation's debt to the Church for its pioneering efforts in education. Part of our social history as well as being an amusing building. The facade holds some lettering of fine quality.



#### **Nos. 12 & 14 Bewsey Street (old Examiner office)**

Town houses from the same period as the Town Hall. Now neglected, they could look equally as fine as their relations in Sankey Street. They are the remains of a once beautiful street. The largely Georgian structure of the inner part of the town has set the scale and proportion of town development. This should be retained in future.





Houses in Bold Street

**Palmyra Square, South and East**

Coming in time (1850) right at the end of the classical period, and before the final fall into the Gothic revival, these houses represent the nearest approach we have to a Georgian square in Warrington. They could again provide a restful backcloth to Queen's Gardens if the traffic was banished and the facades restored to their former state.



**Market Hall**

Now rather dilapidated, this forceful building is theatrical in feeling. It could be a John Piper stage setting for the opera *Carmen*. It is a delightful visual stop to the view from under the Town Clock. It contributes to a fine and sudden release of the narrow canyon formed by Sankey Street. A face lift would reveal its qualities.







#### **The Old Academy, Bridge Street**

Architecturally its importance is not great, being little more than tradesmen's Georgian. Its importance lies in its being an origin of higher education and research in this country. Further, it represents a milestone in the fight for religious freedom. Its loss would be both local and national.

#### **Barley Mow Inn**

Very little of the front is original, but it is important because it is one of the few remaining examples of the half-timbered style in Warrington. Its contrasts are also important to our environment, and to the sense of enclosure felt in Market Place. The only building which remains from the original structure of the market square and, with the former meeting rooms, an early element of municipal growth.





# **A PLAN FOR WARRINGTON**

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**J. W. Dickenson**

J. W. DICKENSON is a member of the Executive Committee of the Civic Society, and was its Honorary Secretary from 1962-64. His article is a transcript of an address given by the author to the Warrington Philomathic Society on 6th November, 1964.

# A PLAN FOR WARRINGTON

A town by its very nature is a fascinating organism: its inhabitants paint a many-coloured portrait of human experience, whilst its buildings and spaces provide a perpetual commentary on man's social and economic adjustment.

Warrington is an industrial town of South-West Lancashire and, on a first encounter, little presents itself to the eye to raise the spirits or excite the imagination, particularly if one happens to arrive at Bank Quay! Charred buildings mirror the town's past with stark unease, recalling an age whose champions lived with hell for a neighbour, whose squalor and toil left a scar on the face of the town which even the splendid remains of its Georgian heritage can do little to assuage.

Warrington is a prosperous town. Its level of unemployment is among the lowest in the North-West, and in the comparative table of annual retail expenditure, per head of population, falls only a short way behind Preston. Yet Warrington does not look, or feel, a boom town. If one were asked to give a "nutshell" impression of Warrington, it might be to the effect that the town lacked a unifying sense of purpose, and the ability or even the desire to insist on the best, and to reject the cheap and second-rate. The absence of an incisive leadership, a sense of despondency at the depressing legacy of the Industrial Revolution, and a lack of civic awareness on the part of the inhabitants may all be contributory factors to the *status quo*. Physically, it is true, the town harbours some priceless gems—the Town Hall, the Academy, Market Place and the Barley Mow are but a few. A splendid new brewery and distillery have recently appeared, and on the industrial site in Winwick Road, only a short distance from the squalor of the gasworks, can be seen some delightful examples of modern building. Yet there is much that is best passed by. The outer "twilight houses" come into the public gaze only when they are the subject of an uproar in the Council Chamber, and even the town centre, brash and bustling, in spite of considerable potential and through supposedly insuperable pressures is degenerating into a traffic slum. If this is an accurate diagnosis the symptoms are certainly not peculiar to Warrington. Mr. Graeme Shankland, formerly planning consultant to the City of Liverpool, and now to the County Borough of Bolton, recently described his first impressions of the North-West. He found there "a curious defensive blend of a sense of provincial inferiority, an unwillingness to face the

consequences of change, and a sort of very local nostalgia for the so-called good old days when 'muck was brass' ". These days were over now, he said. It was just the load of "muck" the North had to get off its back if it was to prosper.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, responsibility for town planning was vested in County and County Borough authorities. Controlled development was introduced in so far as almost all development came under the strict control of the appropriate planning authority through the device of planning permissions. Hence it is that, since 1948, the County Borough of Warrington has been responsible for its own planning, whereas in the Rural District Council it is controlled through powers delegated by the Lancashire County Council. One of the most important provisions of the 1947 Act was that a Development Plan should be prepared for each area, to be revised at least at five-yearly intervals, and more frequently if required. During the Commons debate on the 1947 Act, the then Minister of Town and Country Planning outlined the procedure behind the formulation of such a plan. "*The first step is the survey. This will cover the physical features of the area, water supply, soil fertility, minerals, and so forth; the growth of the population, the industries that are expanding and those that are declining; housing, open spaces, public buildings; the development projects of the transport authorities, of local industrialists, of statutory undertakers, and of Government Departments. I attach the greatest possible importance to this survey which will present a reliable and detailed analysis of the community from every aspect, and an estimate of its future growth and needs. Without this survey no plan can be of any real value. It will need the co-operative effort of economists, geographers, sociologists and other professions to ensure that all the facts about the area are known, including the characteristics and wishes of the people.*" By the prevailing standards of the smaller authorities, this was, and has remained, a tall order, and one difficulty which quickly arose was the problem of manpower. Whereas a large authority could afford a separate Planning Office, the smaller authorities—Warrington included—often left the province of planning under the control of their Engineer's Department. Of the eighty-three County Boroughs in England and Wales, only about twelve have chief planning officers, and only about a half of the rest have senior officials qualified in town planning. In Warrington County Borough responsibility for town planning rests with the Borough Engineer. In the past a civil engineer has been head of the local planning hierarchy for largely historical reasons, since almost all of the early major municipal works programme centred upon road building, drainage and sewerage works. The demands of society have in the last few years led to the appointment of senior officials responsible for reconciling the requirements of road works and other ancillary engineering with the intrinsic value of buildings or groups of buildings and the many other considerations needed to secure balanced development within the scope of the Town and Country Planning Acts. Such officials are normally architects or town planners, or both, working in partnership with, as opposed to under, the engineer. In Warrington, the Engineer's Department is latently overburdened and patently understaffed in town planning matters, yet it is vital that the basic groundwork and research needed to ensure the successful application of contemporary planning techniques to the County Borough Development Plan



should be carried out by a specialist department *with authority* within the Borough's own administrative framework. That this is now expected by Central Government is borne out by the former Minister of Transport—Mr. Ernest Marples—in an article in *Modern Transport* (April, 1964) where he says: "*The Government has accepted the basic approach of Buchanan and our long-term planning is being shaped accordingly . . . within the broad framework of the Buchanan approach and with the proper factual information on local conditions, each community must make its own decision on the solution to the local problem. And of course it is not simply, or even primarily, one of roads alone but is equally dependent on the future needs and plans for housing and other building*". . . .

Warrington must very soon ask itself not whether it can afford a Borough Architect or Planning Officer, but whether it can afford to be without one any longer. With the increasing technicalities of town planning and the growth of the "urban renewal" movement, a continuation of the present climate of unfulfilment would place a severe strain on both planners and planned.

A novel suggestion in the shape of "mobile design teams" was put forward by Mr. Walter Bor, Liverpool City Planning Officer, at an R.I.B.A. conference last April. These, he said, might be set up jointly by the Ministry of Transport and Housing and Local Government. They could be financed by these Ministries and by the councils seeking their help. Such teams could move into an area, assisting the existing staff or, more likely, working in conjunction with them in much the same way as would an independent planning consultant. The only real shortcoming in this scheme would seem to be the difficulty for the teams' gaining sufficient knowledge of local environmental issues in the time available, although consultations with local Chambers of Trade and Commerce, Civic Societies and industrialists would be invaluable. The main benefit of Mr. Bor's proposal would be the utilizing to best advantage skills which at present are in great demand but very short supply. More recently, Mr. Graeme Shankland, in an address to the North-West regional conference of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, put forward a formula for the reorganization of local authority structure to tackle urban renewal in the most effective manner by (1) setting up an all-powerful committee to lead and stimulate renewal, and (2) appointing a new official, such as an urban renewal administrator, in the authorities' legal and administrative departments. Urban renewal was not simply an amalgamation of plans for housing, slum clearance, and private development—it was something of far wider significance, to be tackled in a completely new way. The essential difference was between allowing things to happen and actively promoting a co-ordinated and phased programme.

Town planning has been regarded by the public with some suspicion, perhaps justifiably in many cases since so much which has passed for planning has ranged from the indifferent to the downright bad, but mainly because its machinery is so little understood, even though its better results may be widely appreciated. In a leader last May, *The Guardian* suggested that "*The British are a visually uneducated people, the developers and the planning committees are genuinely blind to the horrors they promote or permit, and the public often seems indifferent,*" adding ". . . the revolution in thinking about 'townscape' and all the word implies has been slow to reach the planning committees,

*and the propagandists of this new thinking are not as a rule the people you find on town councils.*" How successful the Local Authority has been in this sphere in the past is something which the individual must decide for himself, but there is no doubt that in the last two years a conscious attempt has been made to improve relations between Council and Public, as witness a public showing of the film of the Buchanan Report and, in accordance with a recent Ministerial recommendation, the inviting of comment and criticism on the draft proposals for the redevelopment of the central area of the town. The importance of adequate public relations machinery cannot be overstressed. Although it is fair to say that such information about town planning policy as is available is readily supplied by the Local Authority on request, it seems a pity that it should be necessary to need to ask for it. Much can be done by way of official handouts, brochures and lectures to keep the public well informed, although, here again, an adequate staff is a prerequisite of such activities. Civic awareness is thus increased, and all are the gainers. It is in this sphere that the local Press plays such a vital role. An outstanding example of the local Press as local leader was afforded by the *Surrey Mirror* in 1960, at the time when redevelopment proposals for Redhill were announced. In addition to the usual editorial comment and reports, the newspaper sponsored a readers' poll to test public opinion on the proposals, and ballot boxes were placed in the town centre. Reporters were then sent to Crawley to obtain first-hand information from residents about their own experience of a "new style" town centre, which was passed back to the readers to stimulate interest and, at the same time, help the planners to put across their ideas more forcibly. The exercise was a triumph for the newspaper, and a fillip for the Local Authority.

Regional Planning is a subject about which much has been written in recent years, although no legislation is yet in being to implement its doctrines. Although it is impossible to embark on a discussion of its potential in the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that Warrington in its *regional* context is currently the centre of political wrangling and academic speculation of considerable magnitude. In January, 1963, the Town and Country Planning Association, in its Policy Statement on the North-West, singled out Warrington as an attractive nucleus for growth, a view subsequently endorsed by Mr. Franklin Medhurst, lecturer in town planning at Manchester University. The Association pointed out that Warrington's proximity to the north-south motorway, the ship canal, and improved roads between Merseyside and Manchester, and the existence of a sound industrial nucleus in the county borough together constituted a sufficient magnet for the siting of new factories and depots, providing as a result employment opportunities, housing and other facilities. In terms of population, the Association suggested controlled expansion from about 125,000 to 170,000. These recommendations have taken on a new dimension since the designation of Runcorn as a New Town in April last year, with its potential population likely to exceed 90,000, and a proposal by the former Minister of Housing, Sir Keith Joseph, in June that Risley should become an overspill town for Manchester with a population of about 50,000. The latter has yet to be designated, and the recent change of Government may delay or even abandon the idea, particularly since the Ministry of Housing and Local Government is

currently making a planning study of the relationship between the proposed Risley New Town, the County Borough of Warrington, and Runcorn New Town. *The Guardian* earlier in the year suggested that the proximity of these sites might lead eventually to the establishment of one major authority, drawn from two counties. A scarcely less momentous proposal has been the recent attempt to establish the first regional out-of-town shopping centre in Britain at Haydock, near the M6 motorway. The implications of such a proposal are virtually impossible for a layman to grasp, but there is no doubt that its portents for the North-West region as a whole constitute a challenge to the established principles of town planning in which the relatively high densities of suburban development and the provision of adjacent shopping facilities have tended to produce self-sufficient communities, although an improved national roads system and increased reliance on the private motor vehicle may jointly pave the way for new trends in shopping habits, for which a centre such as Haydock would purport to cater.

The University of Manchester recently completed an exhaustive research project into the whole question of the Haydock proposal, in the course of which Warrington's position in the North-West was put into perspective. Due to the developments at Runcorn and Risley previously mentioned, the report\* predicts the hinterland population of Warrington to *treble* between 1961 and 1971. This includes, of course, the efflux of population from the County Borough into the Runcorn Rural District. It is further suggested that, if the Haydock proposal came to nothing, Warrington might well take on the mantle of the regional shopping centre, thus counter-balancing the pull of Manchester and Liverpool, although the physical difficulties involved in such a proposal are acknowledged in the report. Conversely, Runcorn and Risley, depending on their eventual status as shopping centres, could together syphon off as much as one-third of the benefit of this population increase. In addition, it is conceivable that the Haydock centre could itself form the nucleus of a Risley New Town, but until the Ministry shows its hand on Risley, and the result of the Haydock inquiry is announced, it is impossible to venture any more accurate predictions.

Finally, in all this it should not be overlooked that the Local Government Commission set up to review the delineation of boundaries is shortly to review Warrington's case. To retain its County Borough status, Warrington would need a minimum population of 100,000, and to achieve this end, the Corporation has proposed the annexing of Stockton Heath, parts of Walton, Appleton and Grappenhall, Penketh, Great Sankey, and parts of Winwick, Burtonwood, Poulton-with-Fearnhead, Woolston and Croft. Such an area would be quadruple the size of the present County Borough and would increase the population and rateable value by about 55%. In the light of the Ministerial planning study already mentioned, these figures assume a new significance, and indeed it would seem that any decision on the extension of the County Borough boundaries must be closely linked with the future of the Haydock and Risley proposals.

The future of Warrington is a subject which intimately concerns all of us. Over the course of the next few years vital decisions will be taken at Government level which will determine the pattern of life in the town for at least the next two generations. It is an exciting period in which to live.

\* 'Regional Shopping Centres in North-West England' — August, 1964

# **BOLTON CIVIC ENTERTAINMENTS**

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**J. McGuinness**



J. McGUINNESS, A.I.M.ENT., is Entertainments Organizer to the County Borough of Bolton, and was one of the speakers at a public meeting called by the Civic Society at Warrington Town Hall on 21st April, 1964. In this article, he outlines the work of his department, and the Entertainments Committee of Bolton Town Council.

# BOLTON CIVIC ENTERTAINMENTS

The Entertainments Committee of the County Borough of Bolton was formed after the passing of the Local Government Act of 1948, Section 132, which gave local authorities the power to spend up to a 6d. rate on the provision of entertainments.

Previously the Town Council had, in accordance with authority already permitted, sponsored amateur variety concerts, band concerts and organ recitals since 1947, and it was now felt that there was both further opportunity and demand for cultural entertainment in particular.

A modest beginning was made with chamber concerts, which gradually acquired a small hard core of attenders who augmented to the extent that a steady capacity audience was attained, thus enabling the Committee to engage quartets of international standard, a practice that has now continued for over ten years. In due course, autumn and winter film shows (free of charge), celebrity lectures and concerts, and spring and autumn midday recitals were organized, in addition to weekly civic dances in the Town Hall. These last proved to be very popular, while artists and speakers visiting the town have included people of such calibre as Moiseivitch, Gina Bachauer, Gerald Moore, Joan Hammond and Elizabeth Schwarzkopf; Robert Speight, Bernard Newman, Antony Hopkins, Ginette Spanier, Marie Burke and Sir Basil Henriques. The spring midday recitals are designed for the encouragement of young and promising artists, and a constant watch is kept both for these and artists already established. There is free admittance to all midday recitals.

The Hallé and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras are regular visitors, each giving four concerts annually. Grants had already been made to these orchestras prior to the 1948 Act, and the Bolton Entertainments Committee played a large part in convening the conference of representatives of local authorities in Lancashire and Cheshire in 1950, which resulted in regular grants being authorised, contributions being made in accordance with the respective populations. In Bolton, smaller grants are also given to such local bodies as the Bolton Choral Union, the Bolton Chamber Choir and Orchestra, the Parish Church (for organ recitals) and sports organizations.

Entertainments offered during the summer include band concerts, a horse show, a swimming gala, a Concours d'Elegance and, during the town holidays, the popular children's amusements in the various parks. The Department is also responsible for a tree and a crib, and a carol recital (provided by a school choir) during the Christmas season.

The venture of a Beethoven Festival in the spring of 1963 proved an enormous success, seats for all the events being sold out, and it included chamber and orchestral concerts, piano, song, lecture, and gramophone recitals. In view of this success, a Mozart-Brahms Festival will be held during this coming April and May, with, among others, appearances by

John Ogdon, André Tchaikowsky, John Shirley-Quirk, Antony Hopkins, Ilse Wolf, the Loewenguth String Quartet and the Hallé and R.L.P.O. Orchestras.

Estimates of expenditure are, of course, made annually, to be passed by the Finance Committee and ratified by the Town Council. The Committee's estimated expenditure for the current year is 0.41 of a penny rate.

In addition to arranging the events themselves, the Department is responsible for the selection of each programme (in consultation with the artist concerned), publicity, advertising, printing, booking of halls and Press liaison; relations with the Press have always been good. The preparation of Festival, autumn and summer brochures is also undertaken, strict records are kept, there is close contact with the Treasurer's Department, and meetings of the Committee are held each month.

THE WARRINGTON AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY is a non-political and non-sectarian body with the following aims and objects:—

To render such public services in Warrington and district as are calculated to stimulate civic interest in making Warrington and district a fine place in which to live, work, and carry on business.

To encourage, where practicable, the preservation of any objects of beauty, historical or antiquarian interest.

To uphold and foster canons of good taste in civic and private enterprise.

To work for a more attractive town, by co-operation either with Public Authorities on town planning and architecture, or with kindred societies or other persons.

To encourage high standards of materials, craftsmanship and design in housing.

To arouse a sense of civic pride and responsibility in all citizens of the community by means of exhibitions, lectures and general propaganda.

To formulate, or help citizens to formulate, an authoritative opinion on matters which concern the culture, artistic taste, health, happiness, environment and government of the local community, through local, county, and other authorities.

To support and encourage the formation of such groups as will further the general objects of the Society.





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