

# **STREET SURVEY REPORT**

**By David Champion**

It's been another interesting year for the Street Survey Group monitoring Gloucester's street scene. We follow National Civic Trust aims on striving for a clean, safe environment for all those who live, visit and work here.

## **Enforcement:**

One major success this year is the fact Oasis Café in Southgate Street was eventually taken to task putting plastic windows into a listed building. Our Street Survey team reported this building to the city council in October 2004! So although it took a while, we're pleased that the work we do is filtering through. Gloucester City Council tells us that more enforcement is to be used in and around our Gate Streets in the future. However there's still a long way to go.

## **Mosaics:**

Another success is that the restoration of our Gate Street mosaics is now under way. The first one located by the entrance to Mavardine Lane is being restored. It's now back in situ but there's still some work needed on it. The process is very complex, slow and specialist. We hope over time that all the other mosaics will be restored. We shall keep the pressure on to make sure they are.

## **Townscape Heritage Initiative Bid**

We were disappointed to hear that the city council's THI bid for Southgate Street failed. Our Street Survey Group was fully behind the bid which would have given property owners in Southgate Street access to grant money to improve their buildings – something which is greatly needed around the Kimbrose Triangle area. The city council is resubmitting their bid so let's hope we get lucky next time around.

## **Street Cleaning and Maintenance of Open Spaces**

Street care seems to be concentrated on our Gate Streets and we have noticed an improvement. However towards the end of the year when Enterprise took over Accord, things started slipping and we noticed quite a few urban fly tips building up in Parliament Street, Commercial Road and Priory Place.

The areas around Parliament Street and Priory Place have been a problem for many months and the I Care Team has allowed large urban landfill sites to grow and grow – despite all the complaints we've made. We also feel that the street cleaning in approach roads to the city and historic docks is not as good as it could be. We've had meetings with the city council and I Care representatives about this problem.

We feel there is still a problem on response times and we do wonder what the Street Rangers do? We watch them walk past grot spots and other problems completely oblivious to their surroundings not reporting them. Part of the problem we feel is lack of training and supervision.

**St Oswald's Priory:**

We've seen St Oswald's Priory area transformed into a beautiful historic open space – reaching its full potential for visitors and residents. The area will be flood lit by the summer time; new interpretation boards tell residents and visitors all about the site. The area is well used and is kept in good condition.

**Bishop Hooper:**

You can now sit in leisure in this city oasis, taking in the story of Bishop Hooper in a relaxed, clean and pleasant environment. Again, there is a new interpretation board so visitors can read all about Bishop Hooper's gruesome death. What we found satisfying is the number of residents who can better appreciate the story of Bishop Hooper – many of them would pass by the monument daily and were unaware of its significance. So the use of interpretation boards across the city helps increase learning and access to Gloucester's heritage. We aim to lobby for more interpretation boards.

**Hillfield Gardens:**

We must congratulate the Friends of Hillfield Gardens for their work. These gardens are a delight. It's a shame that both the King's Board and Scriven's Conduit remain a target for vandalism and graffiti; and where's the door of the St Mary Magdalene Church? Why is it still boarded up and looking so ugly? The hunt is on for the doors as we write!

**St Mary de Crypt**

This has been our major gripe during 2007 as the garden at the rear became unacceptable and was full of litter, broken glass and needles. The ivy has started to creep over the stonework of the church and is starting to break up the stone. We put in a plea to the city council for funds to be made available for St Mary de Crypt. We're pleased to say – yes funds are now set aside to revamp the gardens at the rear. Another complaint we constantly receive is that visitors who are tracing family history cannot read the tombstones as they are covered in ivy.

**Civic Awards**

We're pleased to say the Civic Awards are to be held in November 2008. Gloucester Civic Trust will lead the project in conjunction with Gloucester City Council sponsored by the Citizen. Hugh Worsnip will be our GCT judge. It was generally agreed that the Awards in 2006 gave us all a bit of a buzz including local businesses and residents who had worked so hard trying to improve their properties and ultimately improving our street scene. Please watch the local press around September and October time for details.

**Night time Street Scene:**

As you probably know national Civic Trust has spent 3 years analysing the evening and night time economy of cities all over the UK. Their findings are included in a Government report. Gloucester is no different to many of the cities which National Civic Trust has studied. However, our Street Survey Team feels things are getting better.

The Gate Streets are cleaner during the evening as the street operatives work on a rota shift. Our Survey Group members regularly walk the streets late at night (in a nice way). We take photos as it's a good way of monitoring progress (with a camera loaned to us!!) The streets feel less intimidating; the beggars have gone for the moment which helps. We use the eating places and pubs in the city centre and we find on the whole the standard has risen. There is also a greater choice of restaurants now offering good food in lovely surroundings.

The Docks in the evening is busier with people milling around. The owners of Fosters and Vinings restaurants tell us business is booming and they are busy each night. Residents who live in the nearby flats are finally using what's on their doorstep in the evenings. The Convenience Store which is open until 9 pm seems busy in the early evening and is also doing good business. We're anxiously waiting to see who will take the large restaurant unit in Shipton Square – a Chinese or Italian would mean a greater choice of eating places in the Docks.

With the opening of the new College the footfall in the Docks has shifted. The walkways between the College and Llanthony Road are busy in the daytime. Parking has become a problem and we understand negotiations are taking place to provide a new parking area. The Waterways Museum has opened its new eating place – **Coots**. It's wonderful – **please support it**.

The businesses in the Docks including Fosters, the Antiques Centre, the Soldiers Museum, National Waterways Museum and British Waterways are forming a Docks Events Committee to lay on regular events throughout the year in the Docks. We think this is an excellent idea and we've asked the city council to support them.

### **Monitoring of Plaques and Monuments:**

This is our latest project. We're photographing plaques and monuments all over the city and surrounding area. We're finding plaques we didn't know existed! It's also great fun walking our city and exercising at the same time!

We aim to put all photos on a DVD. Each photo will contain the historic interpretation of the plaque or monument. We're debating whether we should also do voice overs for each photo as this would help people with impaired vision and will allow them to listen to Gloucester's Heritage. The project's going to take some 18 months we think to complete – it's weather dependent and time dependent too! The DVD will form part of our Trust's archive; will be on show in St Michael's Tower and available to buy.

Members of the Street Survey group were saddened at the comments in the Citizen from an anonymous writer, alleging misappropriation of Civic Trust funds to purchase a camera. The camera which is a professional one, is loaned to us by a local business. It may be we shall purchase a camera with Trust money in the future as we see it as an investment in the work we do protecting our city. As all Trust members know, photographic evidence is the best way forward and the professional way of recording buildings and scheduled ancient monument across the UK. Maybe the anonymous writer could use their energy in better ways such as joining our Street Survey Team and doing something positive for Gloucester and finding out about the Trust's work!

**Websites:**

Please take some time out to look at the national Civic Trust website – it's really interesting and you get to see what other civic societies are doing across the country. Also, please keep a regular watch on our own Gloucester Civic Trust website which has been revamped.

Many thanks to those who support our Street Survey Group.  
Keep reporting things – ring 396396 – let's keep Gloucester clean for our visitors and residents.