



Newsletter

Issue 1 • Summer 2011

Welcome

Welcome to our first newsletter. We hope to publish 3 or 4 each year to keep everyone informed and offer the opportunity to comment on civic matters.

And we do not mean just conservation of our heritage, planning applications or the Eyre Chapel talks. The newsletter is open for relevant articles within the Society's aims. It is an opportunity to raise awareness and more importantly it could lead to real civic benefits. As a reminder we are not short of local issues.

- **Pavement parking.** It has become an unwanted obstacle as well as the indignant expectation of white van man that you will jump clear as he drives along the pavement.
- **Urban bric a brac.** We have seen it, unsightly wires over attractive buildings, posts marking abandoned road signs and over prominent utility structures. If we care enough someone in authority will act.
- **An appreciation of early C20 social housing in and around Chesterfield.** Can we rekindle the spirit of that age to help housing providers move away from the often drab successors?

It is an opportunity to be more engaged on civic matters. So let us hear you civic passions and interesting stories.

See Executive Committee contact details on page 4

Blue Plaques

The Society sponsors a Blue Plaque Scheme which recognises the importance of particular buildings around the area.

There are currently thirteen, mainly within the town centre. The latest one was installed and unveiled on the Ragged School on Markham Road. This recognised the existence of the Ragged School movement as well as the building which used to be a lace mill. The photograph below shows another of the buildings so marked.



North Midland House. The only remaining building of Chesterfield's first railway station.

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Chairman's Report 2010-2011

What have we done this year? Well quite a lot, but perhaps it has not been very evident as most members see our activities through the Eyre Chapel talks.

In early years our Society was instrumental in saving the town centre from a harmful shopping development which would have covered the Market Square. Later we worked hard to save the Eyre Chapel from dereliction. Both actions received national recognition. Both were championed by founding members such as Win Hope, who sadly died this month at the age of 88 and Maurice Tither.

Today, the planning system is obliged to be more sensitive to conservation and the views of the community. Consequently, the Society has not found the need to be so proactive. We comment on policies and some proposals within Chesterfield and part of North East Derbyshire; promote a Blue Plaque scheme and work with CBC on conservation schemes. In particular, in late 2010, the Society mounted a well-received exhibition about our work in the Pavements Shopping Centre. We continue to have representatives on the Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme which uses lottery money largely to conserve and enhance shop fronts within the town centre. With our support, some of this money is likely to help the conservation of the Market Hall, re-introduce railings around the Crooked Spire churchyard and refurbish important street features such as old street lights. Mindful of future stewardship, we have also stressed the importance of employing apprentices on conservation work.

The Society continues to run the annual programme of talks, the topics have ranged from cultural interest to updates from local planning officers. Over the last year meetings were better attended and membership of the Society has grown.

Planning updates were given by Adrian Kirkham for NE Derbyshire and later Mike Hayden for Chesterfield. Of particular interest were the Tesco store in Clay Cross and the major developments in Chesterfield. Helen Carrington followed Mike with conservation of the town's heritage and the market hall proposals. David Jenkins History of the Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company revealed the

economic importance of this company in the development of local iron and the chemical industries. Margaret Thomas gave another talk about her memories of the Queen Alexandra Nurses, this time about her experiences in the Far East and latterly teaching best practice back home. A broken leg prevented Clive Hart from speaking about the archaeology of the Peak District. His replacement, Carol Grew from CBC, gave a lively talk and answered challenges about recycling our waste. 'The Old Theatre Royal Chesterfield' by Lesley Philips reminded us of Chesterfield's importance for horse racing and its attendant entertainments such as the theatre. This tiny theatre off Low Pavement was popular for many years before its decline. David Sobczak JP gave an engaging talk about the work a magistrate. It was also a good illustration of how individuals can contribute well to society.

What about the future?

The Executive Committee has adopted a business plan which aims to move gradually towards a more conventional Civic Society in line with our constitution. A timely visit from Wakefield Civic Society reinforced the view that we ought to do more. In 2014 the Society will celebrate its half century and by then it is possible to envisage a Society that is:

- **active in conservation and planning**
- **active in communication through talks and publicity**
- **proactive with small projects such as tree planting**
- **and stronger in its administration.**

To this end, we have had meetings with the Planning and Conservation Officers of CBC. We made strong representations on the applications for the demolition of Manor College and the redevelopment of the football ground. Our constructive support for better conservation and design has been well received. Over the next year, members of the Society will be asked to nominate buildings which they consider to have local heritage value. We have asked also for more realism in the DCC Local Transport Plan and have supported the Council's bid for funding improvements to public transport as the endorsement of community organisations is now deemed to be important.

In seeking to influence decisions through support, new ideas and challenge, the Society is helping to make the district a better place to live, work and enjoy life. We also want to expand our membership, refine our talks and be seen to do things that promote civic pride. However, whilst well motivated, your Executive is under pressure. Maurice Tither, our Publicity Officer, has retired and Catherine Troth, Mary Cheetham and Jean Hammond have all stepped down after valuable service. On your behalf I thank them for their contributions. I am pleased to report that Ann Hargreaves has joined the Committee. Hayley Barnett, a graphic designer, is taking over from Maurice. However, there are vacancies on the committee.

We do need more active members, not just to ensure that the Society remains relevant but to stop it becoming dormant. When we brought this issue to members there was strong support to continue. There is scope for individual contributions such as establishing a website, writing an article for the Society's news-sheet, helping with exhibitions, being a member of a pool for administrative tasks or a planning group, co-ordinating civic gripes and grumbles and organising tree planting or other projects. We would like your help and support now to ensure that by 2014 the Society is flourishing and with recent achievements to celebrate too. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Bryan Thompson

Chairman

June 2011



The Tither Tree

Due to health problems, Maurice Tither submitted his resignation from the Committee earlier this year. It was with regret that this was accepted. Maurice has been a stalwart of the Society and the Committee for many years, including a spell as caretaker Chairman. His most notable role has been that of Publicity Officer which he has fulfilled for many years.

In recognition of his many years to the Society and the local community, it has been agreed that a tree will be planted within the grounds of the Eyre Chapel where the Society meets. This will be in the autumn - we will try and advise all members of the details.

The Society and Planning Applications

The Society receives copies of Planning Applications relating to, or which might affect, Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas. These cover both Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council. The applications are considered and discussed by the Committee at their monthly meetings. If it is felt appropriate, feedback is provided to the appropriate Council so that our concerns can be taken into account by their Planning Committee.

Carbuncle of a Medical Centre

Proposals to redevelop the Manor College site for a medical centre, a pharmacy, offices and nursery are on hold because of strong objections and the need for accurate



Manor College, Ashgate Road

information. The proposed design is very poor. Yet the well loved Victorian landmark could be adapted and reused. It is unfortunate that whilst CBC tried to list Manor College, it was not put within a Conservation Area which would have ensured protection from untimely demolition.

Market Square Pedestrian Zone

Within the last year, it appears that enforcement of the parking restrictions within the Market Square ceased with the result that that area of the town has become cluttered with both moving and parked vehicles which is becoming a growing safety issue in the town centre. The Society has made representations to the Leader of the Council and we had been advised that by the end of May, new signage would have been installed and enforcement would recommence. We have been assured that from early in July, enforcement will recommence and the area should, once again, become a safe Pedestrian Zone.

Subscriptions

The Society has been running at a loss for several years whilst the subscriptions have remained the same for many years :-

Individual membership £ 7.50

Family (i.e. Husband/wife) £10.00

Corporate £15.00

To enable the Society to become more involved with local campaigns, provide more Blue Plaques, etc., at the next Annual General Meeting, the Committee will be recommending a subscription increase with effect from 1st April 2012 :-

Individual membership £10.00

Family (i.e. Husband/wife) £15.00

Corporate £25.00

Aims of the Society

The Society and its members are dedicated to:

- Preserving buildings, monuments and places of natural beauty.
- Regenerating life in town centres and utilising urban wasteland.
- Encouraging good architecture and town planning by vigilant examination of proposals.
- Criticising, discouraging and opposing the destruction of amenities, bad planning and poor design.
- Co-operating with local authorities and organisations with similar aims – local, regional and national.
- Protecting civic amenities.
- Encouraging a sense of citizenship and pride in our town and district.

PROGRAMME

September 2011 to July 2012

Meetings are held at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of the month in the Eyre Chapel, Newbold.

13 Sept Dogs, rats, mice and all things nice
Mike Rawson (Pest Controller CBC) and Michelle Hill (Dog Warden CBC)

11 Oct Brampton Pottery - Joint meeting with NEDIAS
David Siddon

Change of venue: To be held in Library Lecture Theatre

8 Nov Do you know your Chesterfield? – part 2
Mary Cheetham and Catherine Troth

Dec No meeting

Jan No meeting

14 Feb Chesterfield Canal Trust
John Lower

13 March Crown Square, Matlock
Ken Parker, Matlock Civic Association

10 April Brampton Brewery
Chris Radford

8 May Update on Planning in Chesterfield
Mike Hayden

12 June The work of a Magistrate – part 2
David Sobczak JP

10 July Update on Planning North East Derbyshire
Adrian Kirkham

Aug No meeting

Chesterfield and District Civic Society – Executive Committee:

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June Beckingham, David Evans, Yvonne Williamson, Ann Hargreaves, Hayley Barnett