



Chesterfield Civic Society

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. 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 whose 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 and later Mike Hayden for North East Derbyshire and 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 grow 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, a founder member and Publicity Officer, has retired and Catherine Troth, Mary Cheetham and Jean Hammond have all stepped down after good service. On your behalf I thank them for their contributions. Ann Hargreaves has joined the Committee but 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. We do need active contributors, we are seeking a Publicity Officer and new members on the Executive. Beyond that there is scope for individual contributions such as writing an article for the Society's news-sheet, helping with exhibitions, establishing a website, being a member of a pool for administrative tasks, co-ordinating civic gripes and grumbles and organising tree planting. We would like your help and support now to ensure that by 2014 the Society is flourishing and with recent achievements to celebrate too.

Best wishes
Bryan Thompson
Chairman

- **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.

- **Manor School Campaign**

The Society receives details of Planning Applications from both Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council. An application was received at the beginning of March for the redevelopment of the Manor College site on Ashgate Road. This included the demolition of the iconic building that has commanding views over the town.

The Society has submitted an objection. This will supplement the various others that have been submitted by concerned members of the public.

- **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 rôle 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.

- **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 |

- **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.

(I've just inserted the sepia version as example – and if we don't do the newsletter in colour!)



North Midland House

Only remaining building of
Chesterfield's first railway station

Programme of Talks 2011-12

13 Sept **Dogs, rats, mice and all things nice**
Mike Rawson (Rat Catcher 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

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

December and January – no meetings

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

August – no meeting

Chesterfield and District Civic Society – Executive Committee:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Chairman (acting) | Bryan Thompson | 01246 566211 |
| Secretary | Phil Whiteley | 01246 211200 |
| Treasurer | Diana Wilmot | 01246 768133 |

June Beckingham, David Evans, Yvonne Williamson, Ann Hargreaves