



Newsletter

www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk

Issue 4 • Winter 2012

Chairman's Report November 2012

I start with last season's final talk. Adrian Kirkham, the Planning Manager for NEDDC, gave an update on the local impact of changes to the planning system. Adrian described the tangible improvements to the Clay Cross town centre.

It would have been better had the local supermarket agreed to more tree planting in its car park and it is a pity because the more attractive a place is the more likely there will be greater spending and investment. The Avenue site is moving away from being one of the most polluted in the country to becoming an attractive employment site with good landscaping and even space for wildlife. Hopefully, there will be a link road from the Hasland bypass to Derby Road to improve commercial attractiveness and if this road could be extended to the west it would be the icing on the cake.

John Robinson gave us a detailed and fascinating history of his entrepreneurial and inventive family in Chesterfield. Their business interests flourished when they had the vision to embrace new ideas, for example pill boxes, bandages, gauze tissue, sanitary wear, disposable nappies and even Smartie tubes. These are all now taken for granted but were quite revolutionary at the time. Success also depended on patents being obtained and treating the workforce with respect - 'a family business of families'. Thankfully, this approach now finds favour again in the more progressive organisations. Richard Robinson also gave a brief update on the project to redevelop the Walton Works site which still remains in the family. He invited support for the project. However, although the Society supports the conversion of the Works, it recommends refusal for the current planning application in the expectation

that all interested parties will come together to progress a much better scheme that includes all land in ownership.

Toby Perkins, MP for Chesterfield, gave a very good insight to the life of an MP. He dispelled misconceptions about it being easy - those days are long gone. In a normal week, Monday to Thursday are spent in Westminster, Fridays in the constituency and Saturdays on campaigns. MPs have a dual responsibility to their constituency and to their parliamentary party. They are either members of a Select Committee or have front bench responsibilities, his is for small businesses.

On other matters, our representations on the CBC Core Strategy will be taken into account by the Inspector. Unfortunately, our resources did not allow us to make meaningful comment on the NEDDC version. Nonetheless, we are commenting on the joint design guide by Bassetlaw and the North Derbyshire councils. Also we have had a positive response from Councillor Gilbey and officers about the need for tree planting at important sites such as Horns Bridge to improve the appearance.

There are two major developments in the town centre at present, one is the refurbishment of the Market Hall, the other is the replacement of the railings around St Mary's and All Saints Church.

Best wishes for 2013
Bryan Thompson

Planning Reformed

History shows that good planning is essential for attractive places and sustainable economic growth. The problem is that it needs informed balanced decisions to be made at the right level and in the public interest. The Localism Act 2011 devolves

greater powers to local councils and community organisations. Local people, through neighbourhood forums, may decide on local policies concerning the siting and appearance of new homes and businesses, provided of course that they are in line with council planning policies. This may be genuine localism but the concern is that it becomes a NIMBY's charter.

The Act covers nationally significant infrastructure projects too, such as power stations. To reduce huge delays and costs the commitment to give them special treatment remains but proposals will now be examined by government inspectors and decisions taken by the Secretary of State; local authorities will only be able to comment.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 is designed to make the planning system less complex and accessible. It reduced 1,000 pages of advice to 60. Following a public outcry it was amended significantly and now it :-

- **defines sustainable development for which there is a presumption in favour;**
- **places town centres at the heart of vibrant and sustainable communities;**
- **encourages the development of brownfield sites;**
- **recognises the intrinsic value of unprotected countryside;**
- **strengthens policy on design.**

Contrary to suggestions, it has not brought about a revolution in town and country planning. The changes are minor and their impact is likely to be small. The previous policy advice was usefully detailed, but very similar in its overall purpose. Even the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' does not mean, for example, that green belt policy should be overridden.

What we are seeing is a realignment of where decisions are to be made. Major infrastructure was to be made by a commission - now it will be the Secretary of State. A history of slow decision-making by councils means that developers can ask for major applications to be determined nationally by inspectors, and quite possibly this will be by the Secretary of State.

At the other end of the scale, removing developments from the need for planning control appears to be used as a mechanism for implementing national policy with little regard to

Saved from disastrous redevelopment by public involvement.



the cumulative long-term impact on local communities. This trend may well continue despite good evidence that in areas where controls are stronger, new development is more likely to be sustainable.

So what about localism?

Arguably localism merely disguises more centralised control, exercised in the belief it will help solve national economic problems. In 1950s post-war Britain, government expediency led to a raft of poor and sometimes very costly decisions on Derbyshire quarries. In the 1960s we had a lot of new housing to meet national targets, which often had to be replaced because it did not meet the needs of communities. By contrast action by local people in Chesterfield saved our historic town centre from a disastrous redevelopment. It was a watershed paving the way for sensitive successful regeneration of town centres in place of crude commercial redevelopment.

Today our elected councils, in consultation with local communities, are promoting imaginative ways to regenerate the local economy making our area a better place for investment. The process includes meaningful checks and balances to support, amend or even halt change. It can be frustrating but in the end sound decisions which truly involve others produce better developments for now and future generations. That is unlikely to occur where they are taken remotely for expediency or are deliberately permitted to avoid local involvement.

Stephenson Memorial Hall (Chesterfield Museum and Art Gallery)

Some time ago, pavement maintenance was undertaken which involved removing some flagstones and replacing them with tarmac. This crude approach spoilt the overall effect of what is an impressive looking listed building. Fortunately, this turned out to be a temporary measure and the pavement has now been restored. Presently the new flagstones are rather obvious but hopefully, in time, they will mellow.



The Society's new website

The Society has a brand new Website which includes miscellaneous background information.

The site has been developed over recent weeks with the kind assistance of Purple Web Solutions, a local web design company that specialises in such work.

Please check it out - its address is :-

<http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/>

If you have any feedback on the site itself or you feel there are any issues with which you feel the Society should be concerning itself, you can send a message to any of the Executive using the template on the 'Contact Us' page.

From the archive papers of the Society.

On Tuesday 18 February 1964 at a public meeting in the Chatsworth Room of the Station Hotel, Chesterfield the Chesterfield Civic Society was formed.

A steering committee had been formed earlier through the Chesterfield Junior Chamber of Commerce and in January a letter was sent to approximately 69 individuals and bodies inviting attendance "to explore the possibilities of such a Society". The speaker at the meeting was Lieut. Colonel JM Barton MC, the Director of the Civic Trust for the North-West.

There is no record of how many attended this meeting but the "Minutes of Meeting of Chesterfield Civic Society, held at Bradbury Hall on Tuesday, 28th April 1964. Mr GW Hotter in the Chair" considered the Draft Constitution which had been drawn up by the Steering Committee an amended form of which was adopted and the meeting went on to the election of officers: Mr Hotter was unanimously elected Chairman of the Society; Dr AP Tait was elected Vice-Chairman; Mr DW Carr Honorary Secretary and Mr RH Lilleker Honorary Treasurer. A further 10 members were elected to the Executive Committee. The subscriptions were set at: Life Members £5.0s.0d; Full Members 5s.0d and Corporate Members £2.0s.0d (which entitled them to 3 representatives).

Eyre Chapel

Visitors to the Eyre Chapel after nightfall will be very familiar with the temperamental outside security lighting which means that the journey on foot from the car park to the Chapel building can either be in complete darkness or under a startling spotlight.

In the short term the sensors are going to be adjusted to help ensure that the expedition will always be illuminated. In the longer term, significant plans are afoot to install 'landing lights' along the whole of the pathway so that the building will be more inviting and accessible at all times of the year.

Talks

Unfortunately, the talks for June and July have had to be interchanged because of Speaker availability problems. Please note that the dates of the last two talks of the season are now as follows :-

11th June Destination Chesterfield

Dominic Stevens is the Manager of this initiative whose prime objective is to promote the Town, both at home and abroad. Here he will describe how this objective is being approached and what results have been made.

9th July The Tibshelf Oil strike of 1919

Many people are quite unaware that Derbyshire has an amazing historical role at the very start of Britain's oil industry and that the UK's very first successful deep oil well was sunk at Tibshelf. Cliff Lea, who worked as a chemist in the oil industry for many years, will describe the background and explain why this all happened our doorstep.

Chesterfield Shopping Festival, April 1914

(an extract from the programme)

In the Alpine Garden a new electrical device will enable beautifully coloured rays to be continually scintillating after dusk. The arrangement will be one of the most novel and prominent points of light during Festival week.

West Bars will be specially illuminated with high pressure gas lamps. New Square will be treated with various devices in illumination, both in electricity and gas.

All the Corporation Tram cars will be specially fitted with coloured lights.

For this week electricity will be supplied to Tradesmen at 2d per unit and gas will also be reduced pro rata.

PROGRAMME

September 2012 to July 2013

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

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| 11th Sept | A history of Robinsons
<i>John Robinson</i> |
| 9th Oct | The life of an MP
<i>Toby Perkins MP</i> |
| 13th Nov | Some aspects of Chesterfield's industrial past
<i>Dr Pat Strange</i> |
| Dec | No Meeting |
| Jan | No Meeting |
| 12th Feb | Fair-trade Coffee
<i>James Pogson (Northern Tea Merchants)</i> |
| 12th Mar | Recent Developments in the Archaeology of the Peak District National Park
<i>Ken Smith</i> |
| 9th April | The Lancashire, Derbyshire, East Coast Railway
<i>Martin Smith</i> |
| 14th May | Update on Planning in Chesterfield
<i>Mike Hayden</i> |
| 11th June | Destination Chesterfield
<i>Dominic Stevens</i> |
| 9th July | The Tibshelf Oil strike of 1919
<i>Cliff Lee</i> |
| Aug | No Meeting |

Chesterfield and District Civic Society – Executive Committee:

Chairman 01246 566211	Bryan Thompson
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Secretary 01246 211200	Phil Whiteley
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Treasurer 01246 768133	Diana Wilmot
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June Beckingham, David Evans, Yvonne Williamson, Ann Hargreaves

YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Committee. Do you have friends or colleagues who can play an active part in the Society? Please ask them to contact Phil Whiteley on 01246 211200