



# Newsletter *Jubilee Edition*

Issue 6 • Spring 2014

## Can we be Your Civic Society?

2014 sees the Society celebrate 50 years of helping to conserve, enhance and shape the places where we live and work. We are inviting like-minded individuals to participate in our Jubilee events, and to help us ensure the continued success of the Society.

50 years ago, the Chesterfield and District Civic Society was created by members of the then Chamber of Trade, in response to proposals to demolish the market hall and cover the market place with a shopping centre. Thanks to the Society and others this never happened, and instead we have a town centre which has become a national benchmark for conservation-led redevelopment. We went on to save the Eyre Chapel (below) from dereliction, and



it has become a popular public meeting room. The project received national recognition. Recent successes include working with others to reinstate the railings around St Mary's church and the Heritage Area Assessment in the town centre. We continue to cajole our local councils to make the area a better place to live, work and enjoy life.

The theme of our Jubilee celebrations is 'The Past, The Present, The Future.' Our events programme is outlined on pages 6 and 7, and we invite you to join us in our three key events in March, April and May. Our work to erect blue plaques continues, to record and celebrate our heritage. We continue to campaign for improvements to the public realm, with tree planting - look out for our Autumn activities in these areas.



There is much to be proud of from the past 50 years, but we recognise the need to do more, to help make Chesterfield and the District better. That can only happen if we enlarge our active membership.

continued overleaf

We are ambitious, and we want more people to care about their environment and be good stewards for future generations. Most of all we want people to enjoy being members of an active Society, which is committed to improving the well-being of the Chesterfield area.



So what about the next 50 years? I suspect that changing values will oblige the Society to widen its remit, and to monitor and vigorously challenge private and public bodies to act in the wider long term public interest. A tall order but a strong Society will help make Chesterfield a better place for all.

We look forward to welcoming you to our Jubilee events, and to your support in 2014.

*Bryan Thompson, Chairman*

## Chesterfield Centre – the last Hundred Years

**Chesterfield is an historic market town of some substance, having received its market charter from King John in 1204, and it has possibly one of the largest open air markets in Britain.**

The town sits on a large coalfield which formed a major part of the area's economy along with pottery, engineering and chemicals, until the 1980s. Whilst there is little evidence of these industries today, the town remains proud of its industrial roots and its Town Centre.



There was a phase, between the Wars, when a cosmetic offensive was mounted in Chesterfield to 'Tudor-bethan-ise' the town centre, and revive the charms it probably never originally enjoyed.

The awareness of a problem, however, and the willpower to do something to rectify it at the time is an interesting point.

Then in the 50s and 60s there is what could be called the Civic Era. It had begun before WW2 with the rather pompous Council Offices and some quite significant

interventions in the neo-classical manner in the main streets, and it continued afterwards with the Law Courts and the new Civic Centre. There was even water and sculpture. All of the individual projects were quite good for their times, but they were planted out like bedding plants and turned their



back on the historic core, which became increasingly seedy. Eventually Chetwynd House was replaced with a pleasant modern office block whose red brick walls and dark roof help knit the area together, though we still await the removal of the derelict car park at West Bars.

Then came the first coherent attempt at a strategy for the whole town, both in its conservation aspects and in the provision of scope for new developments.



The architect, Sir Bernard Fielden thought the net result was quite good and was rightly proud of his work. There is a legacy here which is worthy of study. The public library is a successful modern building, whereas Theatre Yard was good on conservation but changes in levels deter footfall. The later shops on Vicar Lane/ Steeplegate work on plan but disappoint by the lack attention to detail. That, and

a respect for context and good quality materials, distinguish the better new buildings around the town. The new courthouse, for example, looks good on the outside, but the artificial stone plinth is starting to let it down. The Market Hall extension shows that improvements can be achieved on a tight budget.

The developments over the last 100 years reflect how we value the town centre. The 2009 Masterplan for the town centre has a strong commitment to the future but probably needs refining, to take account of retail trends that have left the Co-Op store empty and filled the new retail units on the slightly disconnected Ravenside retail park. It is likely that the town centre will become more attractive as a cultural centre and a



place to live. To succeed, it will need more attention to the public spaces, more connectivity

and more of the good conservation of buildings that has occurred recently though Lottery funding. That is quite possible and should be considered alongside the redevelopment of the Northern Gateway and Waterside projects.

The Civic Society supports Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council in their work, particularly in challenging economic times

*Professor John Tam OBE and Bryan Thompson*

# What is Our Identity?

As we look to the future, the Society poses a question: **what is our identity as a town?** Here are some images to prompt your thinking - some reflect good design, some not so good; some show the street clutter which can accumulate over time, and some show what can be achieved with good detailing; one has been lost and another needs replacing.

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1. New Square Market Hall extension. *It fits in well and is more endearing than the last. The ground floor could be better.*
2. Chatsworth Road flats opposite listed church. *How will it weather? Look around it - are there too many finishes and what about the church?*
3. Tapton Lane flats. *The latest trend to make buildings more in scale with the surroundings but will the grey penthouse age well?*
4. Chatsworth Road shop occupies a focal point. *It is better than the new, more traditional shops opposite. Grey will not show the road dirt - will the building look dour...?*
5. New Beetwell Street. *Highly acclaimed when built but tight turning areas spoil it functionally. The first car park not to look like a licorice allsort.*
6. Tapton Lane, Chesterfield Magistrates Court. *Pleasant on the outside but allegedly not so well liked within.*
7. The Surgery@Wheatbridge. *Has an imposing artwork but is the rest good enough?*

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8. Ashgate Road. Former Manor School just before demolition.
9. Ashgate Road. Ashgate Manor Medical Centre. Does the shining top storey improve the building?
10. Westbars roundabout. Do visitors to Chesterfield deserve a better welcome from the west?
11. Rynkneld Square Information Centre. In the style of an old market hall, but do the dark windows make the building lifeless, just like next door?
12. Chesterfield Railway Station - fourth time lucky? A wave form roof with old canopies on the platform.
13. Saltergate. New housing estate. What does this add to the identity of our town?
14. Chatsworth road flats and shops. Lots of new buildings here. Is this Chesterfield? Do they respect the neighbours and the intended conservation area?
15. Basil Close off Durrant Road. Uses natural stone and a polite style of design. Is the hip better than the flying mono-pitch roof of the medical centre or the wave roof of the station?
16. Knifesmithgate. Upper floors refurbished with lottery funding. Now looks worth keeping as a building of its time.



***Celebrate  
our Jubilee  
with Us!***

The theme of our Jubilee celebrations is  
**‘The Past, The Present, The Future.’**

## ***The Past***

Our three main events start on **Tuesday March 11th** with a talk, at the Eyre Chapel, about the people behind the town - ‘Chesterfield Entrepreneurs’. (Eyre Chapel, 7.30pm. Free to Members, £2 to Visitors. Refreshments available.)

## ***The Present***

**Tuesday April 8th** is our key event and will be held in the Assembly Rooms in The Market Hall. **“Your Chesterfield - how YOU can make the difference”**. Graham Marshall of Maxim Urban Design and Chris Twomey of Latham Architects and Chair of the Design Review Panel at OPUN, the Architecture Centre in our region, will guide us through public engagement in the Planning process and how we can contribute to the quality of proposed developments within the town. We are seeking to engage as many local people as we can in our work; we urge you to join us at this event. (Assembly Rooms, 6pm blue plaque unveiling, 7pm ‘The Present’. Free event, but booking essential - either online at [www.chesterfield.co.uk/civicsociety](http://www.chesterfield.co.uk/civicsociety) or at the Visitor Information Centre in Chesterfield. Refreshments available.)

## ***The Future***

In **May (Tuesday 13th)**, Neil Johnson, Development and Growth Manager for Chesterfield Borough Council, will look at what the future holds for the Town Centre, and the changes, both locally and nationally, to the high street. (Eyre Chapel, 7.30pm. Free to Members, £2 to Visitors. Refreshments available.)

## ***And, of course, our programme of talks continues beyond May:***

**Tuesday 10th June 2014.** John Scott, Director of Planning at the Peak District National Park Authority, will present a talk on 'Why the Peak District matters to Chesterfield'. (The Society's area of influence includes a small area of the Peak District.)

**Wednesday 9th July 2014.** at St Thomas' Church, Brampton: Derek Latham, founder of Latham, an award-winning architectural practice based in Derby, will present a talk about 'Lessons we can learn from the past, to help shape our future'.

**Tuesday 9th September 2014.** We will look at an aspect of Chesterfield using maps, both past and present.

**Monday 13th October 2014.** at St Thomas' Church, Brampton: 'History of Sutton Scarsdale' - this is a joint event with NEDIAS.

**Tuesday 11th November 2014.** Our annual picture Quiz - if you think you know Chesterfield by sight, come along and be challenged to identify details you may not have noticed!

**Please note:** All talks will be at Eyre Chapel, 7.30pm, with the exception of both Wednesday 9th July and Monday 13th October, these events are at St Thomas' Church, Brampton, 7.30pm.

All talks are free to members, £2 to visitors. Refreshments available.

Our Programme of erecting blue plaques continues, with our first to be unveiled at our April event at the Market Hall, to celebrate its conservation and the retention of the market place. There will be another at Horns Bridge to remind everyone of the Lancashire Derbyshire East Coast Railway.

In the autumn the Society will be leading on tree and bulb planting in front of the coach station.

***With support, other enhancement projects may come forward.***



### **Subscriptions:**

• Individual membership - **£10** • Family (i.e. husband/wife) - **£15** • Corporate - **£25**

**Please contact** Diana Wilmot, Treasurer on **01246 768133** for more information.

## The Jubilee Team:



### **Bryan Thompson, Chair**

Bryan has strong family connections with the area, moving to Chesterfield in the mid 1970s where he has lived ever since. He worked for several years in an architect's office in Nottinghamshire, undertook research at Sheffield University and for 35 years, Bryan was a Planner with the Peak District National Park Authority, until his retirement in 2009. During his career, he has received or been associated with several planning and design awards, and co-authored a highly-regarded Design Guide. Bryan is the RTPI Representative on Derbyshire Dales Conservation Area Forum. He retains a keen interest in the area and took the Chair in 2010. He is very committed to an active civic society which engages with others to make the area a good place for all to work, live and enjoy life.

### **Diana Wilmot, Treasurer**

Diana settled in Derbyshire in 1997 after living for some time in Lincolnshire. She worked in Information Services in a Further Education College and for a software company before retiring in 2004. Having had a long interest in architecture, Diana joined the Society in 2006, and became Treasurer early in 2007. Diana says "the most exciting part of being a member of the Society so far has been assisting in producing a Heritage Area Assessment in 2011".



### **Yvonne Williamson**

"I became a member of the Civic Society on moving to Chesterfield in 1991, and joined the Executive Committee soon afterwards. Being a Londoner and having previously lived in Essex and Bristol, it was soon clear to me that this was a very special place, and one that I wanted to get to know, and to become involved with. There have been many changes in the town since then, some good (the demolition of Chetwynd House and its replacement with I, Future Walk, for example) but some sad (the loss of Manor College). I am looking forward to the next phase and being part of the Society's future."

### **Ann Hargreaves**

"My ancestors lived in Chesterfield, I grew up in Chesterfield, so did my children and one of my grandchildren. It has been a happy town for me, and I would like to help keep it strong, beautiful and a good, successful place for people to live and grow in."

### **Jill Butt**

Jill is an architect and has run her own practice for the past 17 years, initially near Clay Cross but latterly in Markham Vale, in a building designed for one of her commercial clients. Jill says "I joined the Civic Society last year, because I wanted to become more connected with the town where I work. It has been really interesting to learn about Chesterfield and its history, and I have enjoyed helping to organise the Jubilee events. I am equally interested in securing the future of our heritage as I am in promoting a high level of design quality in proposed developments in our district."