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# CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## FORMER SPREAD EAGLE INN

We mentioned in the last Newsletter that the Civic Society committee had written in support of the plans (submitted by two different developers) to convert the former Spread Eagle Inn on Beetwell Street into a licensed bar with six letting bedrooms, and 87 New Square into six flats.

As a result of our representations, your chairman was invited a couple of weeks ago to visit both properties. In the case of the Spread Eagle, a close examination of the structure, which is currently stripped back to bare brick inside, shows that the whole of the present building dates from the early nineteenth century and there is no fabric surviving from an earlier building on the site (as the Historic England listing notice suggested might be the case). The proposed alterations do not affect the basic structure and should give the building a viable future.

I have also made a renewed effort to trace the history of the property, adding more detail to the note in *Chesterfield Streets and Houses*, p. 54, and the entry in John Hirst's *Chesterfield Pubs*. The house appears to date from the 1820s and to have been built (or bought very soon afterwards) by a butcher named Thomas Harvey, who had a shop on Packer's Row on the edge of the Shambles. It seems to have been the Spread Eagle Inn from the start. The first licensee was Edward Mitchell. Harvey's executors sold the freehold of this and other property he had owned in 1862. Some houses on the corner of Beet-

well Street and Lordsmill street included in the sale were then still copyhold of the manor of Temple Normanton, as they had been since the twelfth century, when the manor belonged to the Knights Templars (see *Streets and Houses*, 45–7).

Both ownership and licence passed through various hands until the Spread Eagle became a Chesterfield Brewery Co. house sometime before the company was taken over by Mansfield Brewery in 1934. At the outbreak of war in 1939 (before proper shelters were built) the Spread Eagle was registered as having space for 50 people in the event of an air-raid.

One happy outcome of my visit is that new owners of the Spread Eagle would like to have a Civic Society blue plaque on the building when the refurbishment is complete.

## 87 NEW SQUARE

This handsome three-storey brick-built house in the north-west corner of New Square already has a Civic Society plaque, although it is in poor condition and too high to be seen properly. The new owners in this case have also generously offered to meet the cost of a new plaque.

A close examination of the fabric confirmed that it all dates from around the middle of the eighteenth century, except possibly for a stone wall in the cellar, which could be a relic of an older house on the site. The two ground-floor front rooms retain some fine panelling and in one case a marble fireplace. These features might merit upgrading the list-

ing of 87 New Square to II\*. The other rooms have been altered since the house became offices after the First World War, but there is an impressive oak-timbered roof, which the new owners hope to reveal as part of the conversion to flats.

Thanks to the kind cooperation of the Borough Council staff concerned, it has been possible to go through the historic deeds to 87 New Square, which the council acquired when it purchased the property. These generally confirm the account in *Chesterfield Streets and Houses*, p. 100, but also raise some doubts about who built the present house and when.

The oldest surviving document is a deed of 1850 which recites a lease of 1765 from the 5th Duke of Devonshire to William Manley, a Chesterfield attorney, of a house, stable, carriage house, offices and other buildings, and a yard and garden, in New Square. The garden was said formerly to have been a 'croft' and to have been occupied as such, together with an 'ancient message' which stood on the site of the house and buildings then being leased. Manley was made bankrupt in 1799 and his lease passed to another local lawyer, William Waller. His nephew, also William Waller, bought the freehold of 87 New Square in 1850.

After the younger William's son Robert died in 1870, the house was let and in 1884 became a Liberal Club, which failed after a few years. The Waller family retained the freehold until the sale to the corporation in 1926, when the property was already occupied by the borough treasurer.

The wording of the lease of 1765, as recited in 1850, could imply that

the present house was not built by Manley (as was suggested in *Streets and Houses*) but by an earlier tenant. Another possibility is that Manley erected the house shortly before 1765 (when he was in his thirties) and was then granted a long lease at a low rent (99 years at £10 p.a.) in return for undertaking the rebuilding. At present the exact date and the identity of the builder remain uncertain.

The present house has traditionally been identified as the one in which Thomas Secker (1693–1768), a future archbishop of Canterbury, lodged with his half-sister Elizabeth and her husband Richard Milnes while he was a pupil at Chesterfield Grammar School between 1699 and 1708. The house does not appear to be as old as this, but it is possible that the Milnes family lived in the ‘ancient message’ mentioned in 1765.

The history of the house needs more investigation before any conclusions are committed to the only too permanent medium of a Civic Society plaque.

## METHODIST CHURCH PLAQUE

We are pleased to report that an agreed text for this plaque has now been sent to the Methodist Church Property Department, which will apply for listed building consent to erect it, and to our suppliers, Leander Architectural of Dove Holes, who will produce a final design. We hope that it can be installed in the autumn.

We have left in abeyance for the moment the question of a plaque on

the former Primitive Methodist chapel on Holywell Cross, since the property is currently empty and on the market.

## HURST HOUSE

According to a message from an officer dealing with the matter, the county council (acting as sole trustee of the Chesterfield Schools Foundation) hopes shortly to exchange contracts with a new purchaser of this property, following the collapse of a previous sale. This is good news, if it means that Hurst House does not have to spend another winter empty and unprotected against weather and vandals.

If this sale goes ahead, this will raise once again the county council’s performance as trustee of this charity, since the proceeds will roughly double its cash resources (to at least £600,000 and possibly more). At present the charity is receiving a very poor return (about 0.4% per annum) on its capital, far less than had its funds been invested in one of the unit trusts designed for charities. Our secretary and treasurer proposes to raise this with the county council.

It remains the case that the county council appears to have made no grants from the charity’s income in accordance with its objects since the charity was established in 2002. This we also wish to pursue.

## TAPTON HOUSE

The committee also briefly discussed at its last meeting the uncertain future of another for-

mer school building in the town, Tapton House. This is architecturally and historically rather more important than Hurst House and is owned by the Borough Council. At present it is difficult to suggest how the mansion and the adjoining school buildings could be successfully re-used – for example by an independent secondary school, which Chesterfield at present lacks. One deterrent to any purchaser or lessee would, we regret to say, be the rates, which we understand are currently £67,000 a year. That is a large overhead for any business to find, including a day school charging average fees of £13,000 a year.

## CHESTERFIELD: CRADLE OF THE GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT

This is the title of a talk to be given at the Civic Society’s annual general meeting on Thursday 5 September, to be held at St Thomas’s Church Centre at 7.30 p.m. The speaker will be Dr Hugh Ellis, the project director and a former chief executive of the Town & Country Planning Association. The talk will look at the pioneer work of the local architects, Parker & Unwin, who went on to be leading figures in the garden city movement before and after the First World War. It should be a very interesting evening and we hope to see as many Civic Society members as possible. Visitors will also be very welcome.