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# CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## CHESTERFIELD: CRADLE OF THE GARDEN CITY MOVEMENT

Since we will not be holding a committee meeting in August, and so will not produce a newsletter next month, we would like to take this opportunity to remind members of the speaker meeting we have arranged for Thursday 5 September at St Thomas's Church Centre, Chatsworth Road, at 7.30.

Our guest 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.

## A BLUE PLAQUE AT 89 NEW SQUARE?

Parker & Unwin's connection with Chesterfield in the firm's early years, before it moved to Buxton, is fairly well known, although it is not at present commemorated anywhere in the town. Barry Parker lived for some years at 89 New Square, the stone-fronted building which was until recently a bank and is currently a chapel. The house was rebuilt in its present

seventeenth-century style after it was acquired by the Sheffield Banking Company in 1865. Before then it had been a private house, latterly occupied by two doctors, Jonathan Stokes and Thomas Jones (see *Chesterfield Streets and Houses*, pp. 99–100). Parker's father was the manager of the bank there.

We discussed briefly at our last committee meeting the possibility of installing a plaque at 89 New Square, recording both its history as a bank and its connection with Parker & Unwin, and agreed to investigate this idea further.

## THE FIRST COUNCIL HOUSES IN CHESTERFIELD

Next year sees the centenary of the building in 1920 of the first council houses in the borough (to the rear of SS Augustines' church off St Augustine's Road). This initial venture was soon followed by a much more ambitious project at Boythorpe, where a complete estate was laid out on 'garden city' lines, much of it on land left derelict after the closure in 1900 of Boythorpe colliery. The driving force behind the Boythorpe estate was William Rhodes, a borough alderman who was himself a builder, and for whom the schools serving the new estate (including what is now Parkside secondary school as well as William Rhodes primary school) were named. He was a member of the National Town Planning and House Committee.

The Borough Council plans to celebrate this important centenary,

which marked the beginning of an energetic programme of building houses to rent that continued until the 1970s. Especially before the Second World War, this did much to improve working-class living conditions in Chesterfield. Housing was another aspect of the borough council's work in this period, alongside its nationally recognised achievement as an education authority, that was widely admired.

The Civic Society committee briefly considered at its last meeting the possibility of installing a blue plaque in connection with this centenary, perhaps on the parade of shops in the centre of the Boythorpe estate.

## REFURBISHING VICAR LANE

The last few weeks have been a quiet time for planning applications on which we have been asked to comment, but we have been sent details of a scheme to refurbish Vicar Lane shopping precinct, effectively for the first time since it was created in its present form nearly twenty years ago. The new owner's plans include the erection of a large video screen on the blank wall at the lower end of Steeplegate to encourage people to spend more time in this part of the town centre.

The Civic Society committee has decided to support this proposal and have invited the managing director of the firm of developers to speak at a future society meeting, hopefully sometime in the autumn.

Full details of the scheme can be seen on the Borough Council's plan-

ning website, under the application reference CHE/19/00390/FUL.

## HAS THE CHESTERFIELD HOTEL CHANGED HANDS?

A chance conversation recently with a member of staff at Coco's Bar on Corporation Street suggests that the Chesterfield Hotel, bought a few years ago by a syndicate of businessmen from the south-east of England who have since done nothing constructive with the building, may have changed hands. We know no more than this, but the

building remains an eyesore, especially in view of its prominent position for visitors arriving at Chesterfield by train. If any Civic Society members do know more, we would be glad to hear from them.

## HURST HOUSE AND THE CHESTERFIELD SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

We understand, but have not been told officially, that the county council, acting as sole trustee of the owners, the Chesterfield Schools Foundation, have agreed a sale of Hurst House.

What the prospective new owner intends to do with the property has not been established, although planning permission has been granted for its restoration to become a private residence again.

If this sale goes ahead, the proceeds will roughly double the cash resources of the Chesterfield Schools Foundation (to about £600,000). This will make it one of the largest charities in Chesterfield.

The Civic Society committee has been unhappy for some time at the failure of the county council to dispose of Hurst House, for which the charity clearly has no further use. It remains to be seen whether this sale marks a fresh start for the property.