



## **Newsletter – number 48 – April 2024**

### **Don't forget our member meeting on 18 April**

Neil Johnson, Head of Economic Development at Chesterfield Borough Council, will be the guest speaker at the first of our new series of occasional meetings for members (and guests). Please come along and hear what Neil has to say about current and planned developments in the borough. There will be a question and answer session following his presentation. It will also be a chance to have a chat with your committee about society developments.

The meeting is being held on 18 April at St Thomas Church Centre, Chatsworth Road, starting at 7.30pm. There is no admission charge for members – a small admission charge for guests. We hope light refreshments will be available after the meeting. We are using 'The Suite' – the room we normally use for our AGM – it is part of the 1970s extension, not the much newer building.

### **From our Chairman – Howard Borrell**



A warm welcome to your spring 2024 Civic Society newsletter. Our committee met on 7 March, when we welcomed new (non-trustee) members. There's news of this and what other issues we discussed in this issue and much more too.

We are still in need of a Secretary – following Frank Gorman's retirement from the role – as was reported in our last newsletter. Please do consider if you can help in this role – drop me an email or give me call if you are interested. The future of the society is at stake if we cannot find a new Secretary. Very fortunately Frank decided to stay on as Membership Secretary and Treasurer. We now have an email for him in this role – [treasurer@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk). Please contact him via this address if you need anything member related. Interim arrangements to cover the secretary's post are explained on the next page.

Finally, please don't forget our member meeting headlined above. Guests are also welcome. It will be a chance to hear about what's happening across Chesterfield, with particular emphasis on Chesterfield town centre issues. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and air some views. There's still unfinished business from our town centre meeting we held in 2023. For example, what is the role for housing in the centre and its fringes? Is the shopping area really too big and if so what can be done about it? You may remember that we published a series of internet posts on thoughts about town and city centres. These are now available as one resource and can be accessed on our website here - <http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/rethinking-chesterfield-town-centre/>.

As always, please get in touch if you have any thoughts on how we can continue the work in making the area a better place to live, increasing our membership or maybe even helping with our search for a new secretary. Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

*Our picture of Howard in this edition shows him holding the National League trophy after Chesterfield Football Club had won promotion to the Football League, at the end of March. Our congratulations to the team and supporters on this important promotion.*

*Chesterfield & District Civic Society is a registered charity – number 507548*

Website - [www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk)

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079777451157>

## Society news

### 1 – Revised contact details

We have slightly altered our arrangements for contacting us since our last newsletter.

- Our Hon. Secretary and Treasurer – Frank Gorman – can be contacted by email at [treasurer@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk). His telephone number is 01246 463326 and his address is 20 Lime Tree Grove, Arkwright, Chesterfield, S44 5BU.
- We have a small team covering for the Hon Secretary's post. To contact this team by email please use [secretary@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk). By post/telephone please contact Howard Borrell, 1 West Lea, Brampton, Chesterfield, S40 3SL, telephone 01246 221400.

### 2 – New committee members

A warm welcome to our new committee members, who attended, for the first time, at our meeting on 7 March. These are Graeme Challands and Ray Russell. They join us as non-trustee members. If you fancy volunteering, either as a full trustee or just as an ad hoc member and would like more details please contact Howard Borrell for an informal chat. Our committee meets every other month for about two hours.

### 3 – No review of constitution

Our constitution is how we are governed and run, alongside important requirements from the Charity Commission. We briefly reviewed it at our March committee meeting to see if it is fit-for-purpose. We have decided it is, but that at some time in the future it may need revisiting. One key issue is that members of the committee can be co-opted, but must not be classed as charity trustees. The later can only be elected at the annual general meeting (or a special meeting). Our current constitution can be viewed via our website – <http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/about-us/>.

### 4 – Heritage Open Days 2024

Regrettably the society is scaling back its support for Heritage Open Days in 2024. Due to resourcing issues we will not be offering to fill in application forms for site applicants, nor contacting building owners to encourage them to take part. We will, though, promote the event through our Facebook page and website. The reduction in support has been prompted by us not having a secretary – which underlines the importance of trying to fill this role.

### 5 – Ways to increase membership

As we have previously highlighted we would like to increase our membership. So, if you know of anyone interested perhaps you might get them to join us! There is a membership form downloadable from our website – <http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/membership/>. The committee will also be considering ways in which we might publicise ourselves a bit more. We would be interested in your views on this. For example, should we perhaps consider having a tree at the parish church Christmas Tree Festival?

### 6 – Links?

Wirksworth Civic Society have approached us with a view to forming some links. Early thoughts are a possible visit to the town with a reciprocal visit to Chesterfield. We will keep you updated.

## Buildings at risk list revised

We agreed our revised buildings at risk and unloved buildings list at the March 7th committee meeting. We would like to thank those who contributed.

The new list comprises the following additions:

- St John the Baptist Church Staveley. The roof has not been repaired following the theft of lead. Currently has a temporary cover.
- Lychgate St John the Baptist Church. Damaged and missing stone slates – apparently the case for a few years.
- Former school rooms, adjacent to the parish church at Staveley – practically empty apart from one tenant.
- Former Elm Tree pub High Street Staveley. Has been left vacant for many years and is subject to vandalism and arson attacks. There is a planning application in for flats – but believed to be for low-cost ones.



- Garden Walls at Staveley Hall. These are Listed Grade II. In addition, there are the remains of a formal garden which were the subject of an archaeological dig a few years ago. There may be a trust being formed to progress restoration.
  - Original 1938 build at the old Rural Council House on Saltergate (i.e. not the 1970s build).
  - 6-8 Lordsmill Street.
  - 3 Beetwell Street (listed grade II - former Hall's gun shop) and adjacent property.
- We will be adding these to our existing website list as soon as time permits.

The following buildings will be removed from the list, as we think progress had been made on resolving issues - Cannon Mill and the former Water Board Offices, New Beetwell Street.

The committee also agreed to look at how to highlight the plight of all the at risk buildings, at a future meeting, citing the recent demolition of the former 'Peel House' on Brimington Road as one example where decent buildings can still be lost (see last newsletter).

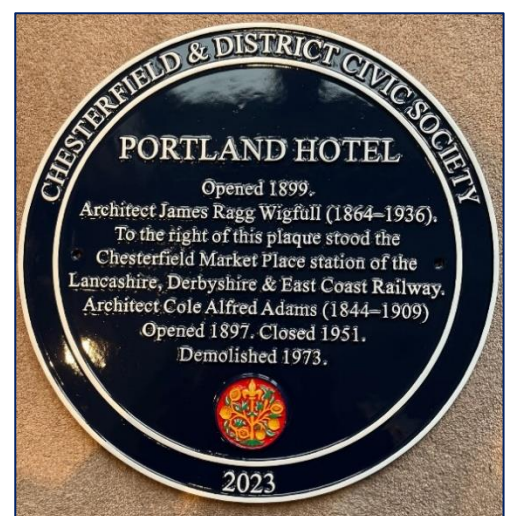
## Cuts latest

We have highlighted the recent budget cuts made by especially the borough, but also the county council, in our recent newsletters. The position of the society has been clear in that it wanted to see the civic good, as we term it, maintained wherever possible. Of course it is exactly these types of services, most of which are not statutory, that have fared the worse. We will continue to maintain our vigilance on these issues, which may well have to be reviewed at next year's budget setting round. It is, hopefully, now well-known how we very much regret the closure of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC), reduction in the Winding Wheel's operations, closure of the Revolution House, etc. We look forward to hearing about plans for the 'Crooked Spire Experience' at the VIC, but remain concerned about the future viability of the museum and Pomegranate when reopened.

Our approach throughout has not been to simply 'blame the council' as this is unhelpful, but to try and encourage a full and open debate about what options there really are to try and maintain services. This will continue to be our position in the future.

## Newest blue plaques to be fitted

We are currently negotiating to get two of the three blue plaques we have in hand fitted. The two are a replacement for the inaccurate plaque on North Midland House and a new one on the Portland Hotel. Both were paid for in 2023 by the East Midlands Railway Community Fund.



Wording on the plaques, illustrated here, is self-explanatory, but is

noteworthy in that the Portland Hotel one identifies, for the first time, the architect of the sadly lost Lancashire, Derbyshire and East Coast Railway (LDECR) station – Cole Alfred Adams – which was next to the hotel. The North

Midland House one corrects an untrue assumption that the building, at the bottom of Corporation Street, was part of the original Francis Thompson designed and 1840 opened North Midland Railway station. In fact the building appears to have been made out of masonry from carefully demolished and retained parts of the original station buildings, when they were replaced in the late 1860s as the direct route to Sheffield, we know today, was constructed. Our third plaque is for the Stephenson Memorial Hall, which will not be fitted until works there are completed.

All the plaques were commissioned during the tenure of our former Chairman Philip Riden, who also undertook research on the LDECR architect at The National Archives (TNA). We are also grateful to members of the Midland Railway Society for contributing research, also at TNA, towards the North Midland House plaque text.

It is not certain that there will be an unveiling ceremony. If there is to be one we will advise members by separate communication.

## Next blue plaques



*Chesterfield Football Club – our next blue plaque.*

At its March meeting the committee gave the go-ahead for our next two blue plaques, subject to necessary arrangements such as funding, design and siting. All new plaque projects now have a project plan accompanying them, which covers such issues as getting stakeholder approval for the site, text, installation and any unveiling ceremony requirements.

A plaque is destined for the Chesterfield Football Club (CFC) stadium – to mark the origination of the now world-wide game of ‘walking football’. Production has been agreed. Our second new plaque, currently in the early stages of planning and research, is hopefully planned for Cutthorpe Old Hall – marking the house of c.1626. This is also a grade II\* listed building.

The CFC plaque is perhaps a change in our most recent policy in that it is outside the immediate town centre area and marks a fairly recent event. The committee feels, however, that the development of ‘walking football’ is worth celebrating, as it has enriched the life of many. The plaque will also be seen by many supporters and visitors to the ground. It is being fully financed by the Chesterfield FC Community Trust.

The owners of Cutthorpe Old Hall have requested and agreed to finance our second new plaque, on the property itself. This is much further outside the ‘traditional’ blue plaque sites than that even at CFC. Production of this plaque depends on further historical research, an agreed text and final sponsor agreement, so is at a much earlier stage than the football ground one.

## Buildings and sites update

### *1 – Busy for buildings and the town centre*

Whilst we have not necessarily had interest in all the buildings listed here, it is worth noting that there is news on building development in the town or around it. For example, the former York House on St Mary’s Gate has been refurbished as offices to let, the Burlington House apartments conversion completed and the development at 87 New Square (with its replacement blue plaque) finished. Our Chairman contributed to a very useful article on the future of the town centre in the Derbyshire Times of 7 March. This is also available on-line at <https://www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/politics/council/calls-for-investment-to-redevelop-vacant-chesterfield-town-centre-buildings-creating-new-living-spaces-and-boosting-footfall-for-businesses-4546805>.

Towards the end of March the borough council announced the next stage of its government aided ‘Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield’ project, expected to start during the summer. We are told that the market is to have a new layout, new stalls and updated facilities with the pump made more of a feature. There are plans to make New Square



into a space complementing the market and used for events. We have previously expressed some concern about the potential for permanent stalls and the possibility for antisocial behaviour that this might bring. Also expressed was our view that any changes made should be able to be undone, if they proved less than successful. We hope to learn more about these plans at our member meeting on the 18 April – so please do come along.

Noteworthy is the sale of some properties in the town centre by the borough council. At the same auction the county council were also disposing some of its surplus property assets. The borough council has also given the Peak Resort, on the outskirts of the borough, planning permission. It remains to be seen what this long awaited development will bring to the local economy.

At Basil Court (part of the former old Royal Hospital site) a planned hotel is deemed not now viable, prompting the developers to apply for permission to build an additional 34 apartments block instead. The originally approved development was for the hotel and a single 34 apartment unit. The borough council has recently deemed that full planning permission for this will be required.

There is continued bad news in the closure of a number of town centre shops, including Poundstretcher on Saltergate. Meanwhile the former and empty Marks & Spencer site on High Street, which closed in November 2022, is being marketed for rent by Savilles Ltd., as either a whole unit or split. In some good news the first tenant of the ground floor units created in the former Co-op department store on Elder Way was announced towards the end of March.

## 2 – Hurst House

There is no news on plans to bring this still deteriorating property to auction. We are continuing to monitor the situation.

## 3 – ‘Robinsons site’

We have been making renewed efforts to find out exactly what the long-term plans are for this site, following our last newsletter article. A fairly recent development was a suspected arson attack to the derelict terraced properties fronting Chatsworth Road – owned by Peppermint Grove. The properties were subsequently demolished to be replaced by a hording. Our stance on this site remains unaltered since that stated in the last newsletter.

## 4 – ‘Cannon Mill’

The community interest company formed to regenerate this grade II listed building has held a meeting to discuss its future plans to renovate the property. Members are encouraged to follow developments via their website - <https://www.cannonmill.org/> and Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/cannonmilltrust>.

## 5 – Chatsworth Road cycle-way

We have held over our planned update on this controversial scheme until a future newsletter.

### Contact us

Please get in touch with us if you have any news to share, want to comment on the Civic Society’s activities or have any concerns that you think we should be pursuing.

**Email:** [chairman@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:chairman@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk) or [secretary@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk)

**Write to us:** Howard Borrell, 1 West Lea, Brampton, Chesterfield, S40 3SL.

### **Our next member meeting - The Suite, St Thomas Church Centre, Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield on 18 April, commencing at 7.30pm.**

Discussion and update on Chesterfield town centre issues with Neil Johnson Head of Economic Development from Chesterfield Borough Council.

We hope that refreshments will be available afterwards.

This is primarily a meeting for members and guests, but members of the public can attend.

Non-members – small admission charge; members – free.