

Civic Society Visits

2011 was a very good year for our visits. We had good variety, quality information, good company and humour, and.... good weather! Thank you, everyone: it wouldn't be a coach trip without you. 2012 promises to be even busier and includes something for a range of interests.

On 21 February we are visiting the Vintage Coach and Car Museum and have planned free time in Lincoln, thanks to the kind offer of Ken Thompson, our resident coach expert. You will have already received this information by post or e-mail in December.

26 April sees us visit the Church of St Mary and All Saints, with its crooked spire, in Chesterfield. Then after free time in the town, we move on to Renishaw Hall for lunch and a private tour of the house, followed by time in their Sitwell museum and gardens at the beginning of their Bluebell Fortnight.

On 4 July, to celebrate this Royal Jubilee Year, I have booked a visit to Althorp in Northants, the Spencer family home and final resting place of Diana, Princess of Wales, with its museum and gardens.

Two private tours of the State Rooms of Welbeck Abbey have been arranged, for Wednesday 22 August and 12 September. These special visits will be advertised later in the year but transport or car-share will be needed, and spaces will be strictly limited.

Finally, on Wednesday 5 December, we will make a return visit to Chatsworth at Christmas – a venue which has enduring interest for everyone with its house, shops and sculpture gardens.

I look forward to seeing you all and enjoying your company in 2012. If you need any more information please give me a ring - Joan Turner, on 01777 702929.



Where we are: We await hearing from English Heritage that the funding, required for the next stage of the church roof restoration, will

St. Swithun's Church Update

be granted. In the meantime, the Development Committee has received approval from the Diocesan Advisory Committee for work to be carried out in the Lady Chapel to make it into a multi-purpose area. This will entail re-positioning a radiator and memorial ironwork to widen the existing access from the nave into the Lady Chapel, and building a ramp to facilitate wheelchair access. It is also hoped to make the area warm, welcoming and 'sound-proof' by having a door set into the newly-vamped access, and also by blocking off the gap above the existing screen that separates the choir stalls from the Lady Chapel. Much of the 'labouring' will be carried out by our volunteer maintenance team, Roger Jones, Gavin Johnston and Butch Barnsdale.

The Development Committee is also looking into the possibility of forming a properly constituted Development Trust, and, hopefully, attracting someone with the necessary business skills – and spare time – to help take forward the development of St. Swithun's. A copy of the job description is available to anyone with leadership skills and who enjoys a challenge!!



Fund-raising: The 2011 Christmas Tree Festival proved to be enormously successful, with fifty-eight creatively decorated trees, and it was heartening to welcome new supporters. However, without the help (over seven days) of sandwich-makers, cake-bakers, cashiers – at the door and on refreshments, washer-uppers and those helping with the setting-up and taking-down of table-tops and lighting, there wouldn't be a festival. So, a huge thank you goes to all of those helpers - a good note with which to end the year. So, here we are – 2012 – and the fund-raising continues. Some notable diary dates thus far for this year are included on a separate sheet. However, we really do need to be doing more – and could with a few extra people with ideas and some spare time to support us.

STOP PRESS

Great News! St Swithun's has just received confirmation from English Heritage that its grant application for Phase II of the church's roof restoration has been successful. The total estimated cost of the work is

£235,000 – the breakdown of which is made up of English Heritage's grant of £178,000, plus £33,000 reclaimable VAT, leaving St Swithun's to raise the remaining £23,000. Fund-raising continues apace!

Acknowledgements

Articles in the Newsletter are written by members of the Committee, unless otherwise stated. Photographs are by Janet and Brian Shawcross (our official photographers), unless

otherwise stated. The editors (Tina Jones and Pat Barnett) thank all the contributors, and are grateful for the technical help of Roger Jones and also Justin Pursell at Whartons the printers.



RET FORD CIVIC SOCIETY

Charity No. 1004435

NEWS

Issue No. 10 – 2012

The Making of the Magnificent Mural

Main players:

Mary Fenwick - artist **Frank Canning - artist**
Pam Barnsdale - fund-raiser, networker, overall manager
Roger Jones - project manager
Notts County Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Retford Lions,
Rotary Club of Retford's Percy Law Memorial Trust, Retford
Civic Society, Mr Bill Clark - funders

Supporting cast: Butch Barnsdale; Gavin Johnston; Charles Vaughton; Derek and Joan Turner; Dawn Renshaw; Anne Everett; Stephanie Hunter and Millie Priestley (Retford Oaks School); Joan Vickers; Rose Elkington; Barbara Sparks; Margaret Kerrigan; Sandy Hudson; Dan Sly; Peter Cole; Mike Crowther.



RCS, working in partnership with Conservation Officers from BDC, contacted Mrs Nanda, the owner of 18C Dyers Court; she kindly agreed to the mural's being painted on the black wall, and that she would undertake essential repairs to the building. Then all went quiet.

In June 2009, Committee member David Ingall reported on his research into the history of Dyers Court; this would be helpful to Pam in applying for grants. Pam contacted Gary Ashton, artist-in-residence at the Museum, about using a selection of Bill Clark's photos for a mural which could be painted by volunteers. Gary showed his Wednesday morning art class this bundle of photocopied photos, whereupon someone (we discover later who this was!) volunteered to scan them into the computer and put together a design.

All got going behind the scenes, and by March 2010, listed permission was applied for and granted, owners and tenants in Dyers Court had agreed to buy into works being carried out, and funding was being obtained from the funders listed above, not only for the mural but also



From this...

Once upon a time, long ago in July 2008, there was a run-of-the-mill item on the Committee's agenda about cleaning up "grotty spots". By November, Russell Slater, then Town Centre Manager, had agreed that Dyers Court was such a spot. In Committee, an interpretation panel was suggested, and possibly a mural to depict Clark's Cleaners and Dyeworks, which had originally occupied the site, using images given by Bill Clark and housed at the Bassetlaw Museum.

...to this.



for further improvements that would take place after the mural's completion. Members were told of these plans at the AGM in May. And then we heard that Gary Ashton was moving away. Oh dear!

Continued on centre pages

Chairman's Chat – Report for 2011



At the end of another year, I think we can look back again with a sense of satisfaction and pride in what we have achieved. 2011 was again a busy year for the Society with lots to occupy the attention of our committee members and, I hope, plenty of activities to keep our

members interested in what we do. And we are certainly doing something right: we attracted 19 new members in 2011, something of a record in recent times. At the start of 2012 there are 184 members plus 5 corporate members overall. Let's see if we can improve on this by the end of the year!

The Retford Civic Society continues to be heavily involved in exciting projects to preserve our heritage and improve our town. Once again the numerous and informative articles in this Newsletter bear witness to this! We have even had to increase the number of pages in this edition to cover all we have achieved in partnership with Bassetlaw District Council, Notts County Council, other organisations and private individuals.

The Society was represented at the annual Civic Voice Convention (the national body that we are affiliated to) in Sheffield by Derek and Joan Turner and Bruce and Pat Barnett. Griff Rhys Jones, in a recorded video link, emphasised the need for strong community-based organisations to campaign for the retention and conservation of heritage assets while pressing for well thought-out and well designed new developments. Without the support, ideas and media presence of Civic Voice, the work of our society would be much harder. It is only when you see members from societies across the region, or even across the country, networking with each other at such a gathering that you realise how much expertise, passion and enthusiasm there is invested in the movement and how important it is that societies exist to do what they do.

In September we organised our fourth Heritage Open Day, a great success that brought together so many organisations. (Please see the full report published in this Newsletter). I am pleased to report that an even more

ambitious event will take place in 2012 with more buildings open, and the theme for the day will be the recognition of sport in the heritage of Retford – an ideal theme in our Olympic Year!

The Letter-Writing Competition for Year 5 Primary pupils announced last year was a great success and Jenny Cheung from Carr Hill Primary School was the overall winner. Four youngsters received Book Tokens for prizes, while books to enhance the school libraries were presented to Carr Hill and Ordsall Primary Schools. The event was sponsored by RCS, Retford Lions and the Rotary Club of Retford.

Our Planning Committee continues to monitor, comment on and discuss numerous planning applications whilst overseeing developments in Retford. The Committee also responded to the consultation document, *Bassetlaw Local Development Framework*, after many hours spent surveying the townscape, and much discussion before decisions were reached.

The Society also plays an active part in the recently formed Retford Business Forum. The Forum's aim is to create an attractive image of Retford as a market town with individual shopping offering great value. They also hope to increase awareness, over a wider area, of Retford as a successful shopping environment and by doing so increase footfall. We support their efforts to improve the appearance and amenities of our town.

Running a society like ours is no easy task, but it can be fun and satisfying. However, it can only be successful if the officers and committee members work happily together. What a team we have in Retford! Don't forget we are always looking for new helpers to assist with our many projects – do offer your support.

There are detailed reports on this year's activities on the following pages that give an insight into the work of RCS. It is important to remember that we are a society – a society of like-minded individuals and businesses who care about Retford. Without your continued support and participation there could be no society. I look forward to your support in 2012 and hope that we will see you at our forthcoming events throughout the year.

Derek Turner

appreciated the ceiling's beauty. During our visit the organ was being played in the hall to entertain us. Our guide Leila was full of snippets of information about the running of the house and how the house is now used for weddings and social functions. After we visited the tearoom and shop we boarded our coach for the return journey to Retford.

Although the weather was cool for July we had all enjoyed our day out. Derek once again entertained us with the raffle; he was helped by Butch Barnsdale, his "Beautiful Assistant" who spent a lot of time jogging up and down the coach handing out prizes. The raffle raised a magnificent sum of £74.

Sue Johnston



Christmas Visit to Stamford and Rockingham Castle

Wednesday 7 December



As we approached Stamford, the sun came out in a cloudless blue sky. This compensated somewhat for the bitter wind that we felt when we got out of the coach. From the bus park we could see three churches, and followed Joan to the nearest one. This proved to be the wrong one, but none of us minded as we had the opportunity to see all the shops beautifully decorated for Christmas on the way to All Saints' Church, where we were welcomed with hot drinks and biscuits.

All Saints' is a very splendid church: among the features which attracted us were the brasses of the Browne family, restorers of the church in the fifteenth century, the reredos, a beautiful representation of the Last Supper (1878), and the monument to someone who died in 1762 at "the Siege of the Havanah" (sic). The latter intrigued us: Google informs me that it is the Siege of Havana.

After that, we were free until 1.30pm to investigate Stamford. Some people made their way to St John's Church, where there was a display of Christmas trees and charity Christmas cards; others walked up Barn Hill, where scenes from Middlemarch had been filmed for TV, and found the house with the blue plaque (placed by Stamford Civic Society) commemorating William Stukeley (1687-1765), antiquary and "Father of Archaeology"; others found the wonderful Aladdin's cave that was a hardware store, a number of interesting charity shops, and, finally, different places for lunch, including the Arts Centre.

Rockingham Castle was up a very steep hill (it was sensible not to have attempted it in last year's snow!) and very windblown. The marquee selling refreshments and plants felt as if it were about to take off! There was time before the guided tour to look at St Leonard's Church. The Mortuary Chapel contains monuments to the family, including Anne, Lady Rockingham (died 1776), who was "the best of wives, the best of mothers, the best of women... sacred to the conjugal, parental and domestic virtues". A more modern one was an inscription to Michael Culme-Seymour (1909-1999), his wife Faith Montague (1911-1983) and, sadly, "their three baby boys"; they had done much to modernise the Castle and put the Estate in good order. Because the Estate had passed through the female line at various times, the family name changed. After Sir Michael,

it passed to the son of his sister Elizabeth Saunders; he took the original name of Watson. And it is his son, James Watson-Saunders, who lives there today. We later learned that the Watsons have lived at Rockingham since the early sixteenth century.

Then, divided into two groups, we followed our "housekeeper", in period costume, on a guided tour. Charles Dickens had been a frequent visitor and, to mark his bicentenary, a Victorian Christmas Eve was being celebrated. Richard and Lavinia Watson, who had often entertained the famous writer, were in residence in 1849 – perhaps he was a guest then? – and the rooms were decorated in Victorian style. There was a distinct "family feel", in spite of some very grand furniture and magnificent paintings. Fires were lit and trees were wonderfully decorated in every room; we saw a sumptuously laid table in the Great Hall: Christmas lunch was obviously an elegant affair (How many of us knew that knives should be placed with the cutting side outwards?). We also saw "below-stairs", with the kitchen, stillroom, butler's pantry and housekeeper's room. Elsewhere, we marvelled at paintings by van Dyck, Reynolds, Zoffany, Lely, Angelica Kauffman, and many others, and a modern collection, which included works by Augustus John, Stanley Spencer and Maggi Hambling. We saw the rather garish (we thought!) eighteenth century Venetian chandeliers in the Long Gallery. I admired a small portrait (behind a screen in the Great Hall) of a child with rosehips – "denoting fruitfulness" – and wearing a coral bracelet to ward off evil.



I also realised, having bought, at the end of the tour, Rockingham Castle: 1000 Years of History, how much I had missed. The garden, for instance, was braved by some hardy souls, but I had just looked at it from the windows! There was so much to see that I am sure that many of you reading

this will think I have not described what you saw, or that I saw things you did not. There was one thought: "We must go back some time!" We were encouraged to do so by the Events Organiser who came to the coach to say goodbye; she told us of the tremendous efforts made by the family and employees to maintain the Estate, and gave out brochures detailing events in 2012. Before that, we had concluded our tour with tea/coffee and delicious mince pies in Walker's House (named after an eighteenth century Estates manager).

Our journey home was as calm and uneventful, thanks to our lovely Kettlewells driver, as the journey out – apart from the excitement of the raffle. Derek had the usual startling array of prizes, which he described in inimitable fashion, and they were delivered by his glamorous assistant, Butch. Joan was warmly thanked for yet another well-organised and enjoyable day out. She outlined plans for 2012 trips, and everyone is looking forward to the next one.

Membership Booming!

Since our Open Meeting in October we have added new memberships, as you will have read in the Chairman's report. We did make an appeal at that meeting to people to spread the word and persuade friends, family and colleagues to join. Thank you to all those who responded to that appeal. Perhaps also the publicity about the Mural has helped to make us more high-profile. Whatever the reason, we hope to keep increasing our membership. If you know of anyone who would like to join, please ring Pat Barnett, Membership Secretary, on 01777 704154, and ask for a membership form.

Message for members

As members of the Retford Civic Society, you are giving both financial and moral support to the work of the Society, and the Civic Society could not exist without you. By "work" we mean undertaking projects to protect and enhance our town. If you are also able to offer practical help, then please do so; appeals for help are to be found in several articles here, and from time to time appeals are made at Open Meetings or via email. Articles here also show how many members are already "mucking in". From sitting on the door at Church events to standing at the RCS stall in the Square; from making cakes to washing up; from viewing gardens to nominating buildings; from picking up litter to painting a wall: the list is endless! If you'd like to be more active, please let us know.

Spring Outing to Harrogate and Ripley Castle

Wednesday 6 April

April showers? Not on the day the Civic Society visited Ripley Castle, the home of the Ingilby family since 1300.



Our first stop was the historic town of Harrogate where we could partake of the waters, sip morning coffee at Betty's or simply promenade in the morning sunshine. Then off to Ripley for a hearty lunch served in one of the many

beautiful rooms of the castle itself by very attentive staff. One could be forgiven for thinking that they were expecting that Lord Ingilby was going to join us but no, he was spotted striding across the gardens, off to exercise the family dogs.

Ripley is very much a home as well as a castle. Modern portraits of the family can be spotted in many of the rooms and the friendly guides take great pleasure in keeping guests updated with the five Ingilby children's latest educational achievements. Further evidence of the relaxed atmosphere can be observed in the "servants' quarters". The carefully preserved room bells still adorn the walls but there are also fourteen pairs of diminishingly sized wellies lined up by the door, ready for any size of visiting feet that might need protection.

The castle has two distinct styles: the Georgian house built in the 1780s and the 16th century tower. The guides are both knowledgeable and amusing, peppering their talk with interesting facts and anecdotes. Would you recognise a teapoy or recycle your tea-leaves? Or maybe you have a polescreen to protect your rather extreme makeup methods whilst still

warming your toes! In contrast, the tower holds tales and mysteries of a much more robust nature. Ingilbys fought in many battles in the 16th and 17th centuries - often on the losing side. They suffered many religious persecutions and were implicated in the Gunpowder Plot. During the Civil War Lady Jane Ingilby held Oliver Cromwell at pistol point for a whole night, to prevent his searching the building for her brother Sir William. A Victorian print commemorates the event.

These are just a few of the fascinating stories which await you at Ripley Castle. I will sum up in the words of the present Sir Thomas Ingilby:



"The history of the Ingilbys of Ripley Castle is a tale of romance, of courage in the face of adversity, of treachery and distinction. It is the story of how one family has survived everything that fate has thrown at them during the last thousand years. There is no concluding chapter because the family still lives at Ripley Castle and today's events will be tomorrow's history."

They also serve spiffing ice cream!

Chris Rooke

Visit to Beverley Minster and Sledmere House

Wednesday 13 July

A total of fifty-three members and friends of the Retford Civic Society made the coach trip to Beverley Minster and Sledmere House - yet another magnificent effort by Joan Turner.



Our first stop was at Beverley Minster where we were met by our guides, John and Peter, who had arranged for refreshments in the Minster, very much appreciated by everyone.

We then divided into two groups for a most interesting tour. They explained that the Minster had been built in three phases because of very cold winters and wet summers. The Minster has three styles: Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular. As we walked along the nave our guide pointed out many of the carvings, which depict musicians, the beautiful vaulted ceilings, the quoire (french spelling) stalls with the "cartoons" underneath the seats (even carpenters had a sense of humour!) plus the modern place of worship with the sculptures and stained glass window.

Then eighteen members went on for the Roof Tour with John - 113 steps up a narrow winding staircase, to reach the massive roof voids. On reaching the top we were greeted with an impressive sea of split tree-trunks for beams. At each end were large circular windows; these gave uninterrupted views of Beverley. I think we were all puzzled as to why there was a "water wheel" in the roof; this turned out to be a treadmill. John then demonstrated the wheel's use: it was to raise the ceiling rose which was above the organ and chancel, and it was the only way to get large objects up to the roof. After we left the Minster we were able to explore Beverley and have some lunch. A lovely town with lots of individual shops in the cobbled streets and courtyards.

We continued our journey to Sledmere House, travelling through the rolling countryside of the Yorkshire Wolds. Once again our guides greeted us; this made the afternoon visit very interesting. The original home was burnt down in 1911; the house we see today took five years to complete by the Sykes family who still live in the house. Our guides took us through rooms with beautiful chandeliers, Chippendale, Sheraton and Hepplewhite furniture and beautiful ceilings of plasterwork by Joseph Rose junior. Most of the rooms had portraits of the Sykes family covering the two hundred years that they have lived there. One room was full of paintings featuring horses that the family have owned. When we went into the library our guide switched on the up-lighters in the ceiling and we really



Retford-in-Bloom

Despite the severe winter of 2010/11 and the devastation it caused to trees, bushes and plants, the town's gardeners came up to the mark and the town looked bright and welcoming. This year the standards were high.

Representatives from individual roads, shops, public houses and commercial premises, along with children from the primary schools, met together in celebration at a September presentation evening in the Town Hall. The 2011 Retford-in-Bloom Awards were presented to the various winners by the Deputy Mayor, Carol Palmer. 'All these efforts make the town really attractive to visitors and make me incredibly proud to be Deputy Mayor,' she said.

Derek Turner, Chairman of the Retford-in-Bloom Planning Committee, thanked and congratulated all those who planned, helped, judged and took part. 'The abundance of floral displays throughout the town have rarely been better and 'Retford-in-Bloom' gives the Civic Society the chance to acknowledge all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes, benefiting everyone in the town and helping to create a welcoming environment.'

Certificates were awarded for:

Best Residential Group:

Commended: Springfield Road
Highly Commended: St Helen's Road & Earles Court
Winner: Rectory Farm Cottages

Best Floral Shop Front:

Commended: Malcolm's Taxis
Highly Commended: Jones & Co. Solicitors
Winner: King's Furnishings

Shield for the Best Public House Display:

Commended: Galway Arms & Sherwood Ranger
Highly Commended: Turk's Head
Winner: Ye Olde Sun

Primary School Project:

Highly Commended: St Joseph's R C Primary School & St Swithun's C of E Primary School
Winner: Carr Hill Primary School

Civic Society Appreciation Certificates for Community Environment Amenity:

Bassetlaw District Council - Parks Department
Charter Court - McCarthy Stone
Trinity Hospital Estates
West Retford Hotel

Special Mention and Certificate of Appreciation:

The Retford Town Centre Street Cleaning & Public Toilet Maintenance Team
(The hard work of creating floral displays and brightening up the town are enhanced by our clean streets and well-maintained public amenities.)

If any member would like to join the 2012 planning team, please contact Derek Turner on (01777) 702929.



Quiz Night

November saw the return of the annual Quiz Night, once again held at The Birches. This was very well organised by Roger and Tina, being far superior to your average pub quiz. The questions included a round where photographs of Retford doorways had to be identified, which wasn't always easy even if you'd walked past/through them on umpteen occasions. Another interesting round was "spot the regional accent", in which tape-recorded dialects had to be identified. Paradoxically, most people found the Newcastle accent easier to identify than Nottingham! Most teams scored highly, but that wasn't really the point. The point was that a convivial evening was held, an excellent pie-and-peas supper was enjoyed, raffle prizes were won (did anybody ever "talk up" the prizes like Derek does? That was worth the entrance money in itself!), funds were topped up, and new members enrolled. And how lovely to spend time at a pub which was bustling with activity, as opposed to the sadly increasing number of derelict ones in and around Retford!

Chris and Rob White

Open Meetings

Our Open Meetings continue to be very popular, and the hall at Grove Street Methodist Church has been packed out on the three occasions this last year.

On 2 March, Derek Turner gave a presentation on Retford-in-Bloom. The official presentation takes place in the Autumn each year (see the article on p. 3), and this was an opportunity, for those who had not been present, to see the most recent one. Maggie Battersby, who until then had organised the competition, had put together the presentation, which consisted of one hundred and forty-two photos of beautiful gardens in different parts of the town. Kings' Park was given a special mention: it had been awarded the Green Flag Award and deemed the best in the East Midlands. Goodwin Hall Gardens was also mentioned: the hard-landscaping had been completed, the planting scheme was available to see, and it would be opened in June (see the article on p.8) The business of the meeting included a report on planning matters, and on projects, particularly details about Dyers' Court, on which work was about to start; this gave members a chance to keep an eye on work-in-progress!

The Annual General Meeting was held on 18 May. The highlight of this evening was the talk given by Christine Clappison, a steward of Sledmere House, the destination of the Summer Visit. The history of the Tatton-Sykes family (many of whom seemed to be most eccentric!), owners since the fifteenth century, proved to be very entertaining, and provided a thought-provoking introduction to our visit. Members were pleased to learn that the guides would be friendly and "wore only their badges" (sic). The Chairman's report outlined all the activities and achievements of the previous year.

On 19 October, the presentation of the Building Awards

took place. The Society welcomed Wendy Spalding (on behalf of Mr Carlton of Heathcliff Developments), for the Waterfields site, Vicky and Darren Sooriah, for The Lawns, and Bob Rabagliatti, for various sites belonging to the Trinity Hospital Estates. Please send nominations for future awards to the Committee, who wish to encourage members' involvement.

The latter then gave a most informative and engaging illustrated talk about the Trinity Hospital, outlining various



topics: aims and organisation, history, buildings, the Brethren, the property portfolio, the accommodation. He spoke of John Darrell's 1664 will and his idea of "hospitality", and the development of that idea to the present day. All of this is outlined in *A Godly Inheritance*, by J.M.Nicholson, copies of which were on sale. The present property portfolio (bearing the distinctive TH monogram) is extensive, and includes, as well as the building on Hospital Road, properties on Bridgegate, the offices by Bridgegate roundabout, and Trinity Barns and farmhouse on the North Road.

The dates of 2012 Open Meetings are to be found on the membership card, and we hope that members will find the proposed talks interesting. Members are also invited to suggest topics/speakers for the future.



Litter-picking

Members of RCS joined members of the Chesterfield Canal Society for a canal and canal-side clean-up in March. All manner of strange rubbish was found! We are continually vigilant about areas that become spoiled by litter, and if no action is taken officially, we do it ourselves. Do join us next time!

Planning Matters

There have been few significant planning applications in the last year, probably due to the recession. The eyesores on Moorgate have thankfully been dealt with – as these photos of the Banana Warehouse show. In addition, there are signs that the derelict building on Beardsall's Row may soon be restored: its owner, Mr. Paul Levack, who has done so much to put Ye Olde Bell, Barnby Moor, back on the map, has plans to create three shop units there with eight flats above. However, there has been no progress with the King Edward School buildings or with the fire-damaged St Alban's church. The Society has invited the Diocese to seek delisting of the latter building to facilitate redevelopment. The closure of the White Hart pub on Bridgegate has led to increasing concern about the future of this important building and the attractive carriage yard behind it.



In addition to commenting, where appropriate, on applications, the Society keeps an eye on developments in the planning policy field. We have recently submitted comments on the Government's draft *National Planning Policy Framework*, which aims to simplify national planning guidance. Although there is much in this which is commendable, we are concerned that it attaches too much weight to the economic value of development and may make it harder to resist schemes which harm the local environment.

Nearer to home, we have also commented on the recent Bassetlaw consultation about where in the Retford area it would be best to locate the 600 or so more houses needed between now and 2028. In general we concluded that it would be better to distribute further building around the town rather than to concentrate it all in a small number of locations; however, some of the suggested sites we felt were unacceptable.

In December Mary Portas produced a report for the government on the future of high streets. You can read this at http://www.maryportas.com/wp-content/uploads/The_Portas_Review.pdf. She emphasises the importance of town centres and the need for action to protect and enhance them. Among her many proposals is that each town centre should have a visionary, strategic and strong operational management "Town Team" to guide development. We support this objective and will continue to work with the District Council and the Town Centre Forum to achieve it for Retford and we would also welcome members' ideas about how the town centre can best be promoted and developed.

Retford Library Gets Facelift

RCS successfully brought in funding from Nottinghamshire County Council's Local Improvements Scheme to restore the cast iron balustrade at Retford's Library, once the home of the Denmans, one of Retford's oldest families, while the County Council, using local firms, undertook repairs to windows, wood and paintwork. The newly restored exterior now does justice to the town's valued public library.



A garden for everyone

After two years of planning, fund raising and hard work, it was wonderful to see the Community Garden behind the Goodwin Hall in Kings' Park finally completed last year, thanks to funding from the Notts County Council Local Improvements Scheme, BDC and the RCS. Many of those involved attended the official opening ceremony by BDC Chairman David Challinor in June.

The garden is quickly becoming established, and members of the public and those using the Goodwin Hall have been able to sit out at the tables and enjoy garden designer Sarah Murch's planting schemes for the raised flower-beds and winter border.



In early Autumn volunteers planted thousands of Spring bulbs which should soon be poking their way through to brighten up the borders; further planting of snowdrops will take place in February.

During the coming Summer RCS will be holding a garden party here for members and their friends to enjoy.

Our sincere thanks to all those who have been involved with a worthwhile project that further enhances our much-valued Park and to the volunteers who helped plant the thousands of plants and bulbs for everyone to appreciate and enjoy.

Heritage Open Day

Retford's annual Heritage Open Day, organised by the Civic Society, took place on Saturday, 10 September with a host of activities and buildings open to mark the occasion.

This year the Chesterfield Canal Trust hosted a gathering of the Historic Narrow Boat Owners' Club over the weekend with a range of beautiful old and interesting working boats above Town Lock.

Ken Thomson arranged for seven old buses to be parked in Grove Street and vintage cars to be on display in the fine grounds of the Museum. Trips on the buses proved very popular and brought back many happy memories for some and new experiences for the youngsters.

Ten buildings opened their doors to the public: Bassetlaw Museum, Grove Street Methodist Church, Denman Library, St Michael's Church, the Masonic Hall, St Joseph's R C Church, Trinity Hospital, St Swithun's Church, the Majestic Theatre and Retford Railway Station. Most venues had special events taking place- organ recitals, refreshments, special displays, guided tours, parish records available for inspection, and more. The Museum and Tourist Information Centre acted as Headquarters for the day.

A quarter peel of Plain Bob Royal rang out over Retford from St Swithun's Church, involving the ringing of all the Church's ten bells!

The Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council, David Challinor, joined us for the day and amongst other things experienced a trip along the Chesterfield Canal aboard the Seth Ellis.

Kings' Park, in all its glory, was available for everyone to see: the rose garden, the flower-beds, the Rotary analemmatic sundial, the renovated tennis courts. A display of the history of Kings' Park and its development was based at Goodwin Hall.

The Retford & District Photographic Society also organised a



photographic competition for young people, encouraging them to submit photos they had taken on Heritage Day.

What a day! The weather was kind to us! Retford was buzzing with hundreds of additional visitors. A survey carried out on the day by the Civic Society showed that people travel considerable distances to appreciate the charm of Retford: Chesterfield, Doncaster, Grimsby, Rotherham were just a few of the places mentioned.

What do they like about Retford?

- The Market
- The buildings
- Kings' Park
- The friendliness of the people!



Re-enactment in the Museum



Bassetlaw Railway Society Buffet by Jayne Mair, Retford Photographic Society

Working Together

Businesses throughout Retford are working together as the Retford Business Forum, to improve and ensure the retail future of the town.

Meetings take place once a month at the Town Hall and members of the Civic Society attend the meetings to see where we can offer support.

In these difficult economic times, if we value our high streets, the way forward can only be by the private and public sector's working together and by all of us supporting local businesses.

Our thanks must go to the MOB (Mini Operatic Society) and the Retford Operatic Society, who braved the cold and sang throughout Retford on two of the late-night shopping evenings.

If you know or have a business that would like to attend the monthly RBF meetings, please contact Chairman Louise Copcutt at retfordbaytree@live.co.uk

More on the Magnificent Mural

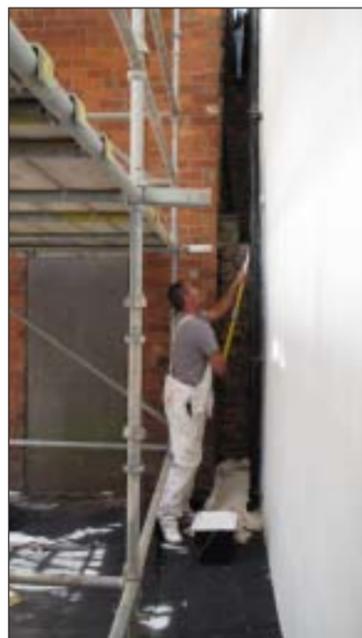
Meanwhile, over to the more prosaic stuff: finding money, organising scaffolding and a skip, sorting out guttering, roof repairs, new windows, plastering. Pam was responsible for all this work, beavering away throughout the Summer of 2010, in meetings with owners, tenants, craftsmen and BDC Conservation Officers. She buttonholed



her husband, Butch, and Roger Jones (later joined by Gavin Johnston) to “do some refurbishment”. By November she was confident that all would go well. The mural, “a montage in black/white/ grey”, would be started in June 2011.

Because, by this time, Frank had appeared on the scene, and so had that volunteer from Gary’s art class.

When Frank and Jane Canning were persuaded, as long-time residents of Retford, that they should join the Civic Society, they were assured that membership did not necessarily entail actually *doing* anything. However, Frank, being Frank, one day said that if artwork were ever required, he would help. Immediately, Roger, with whom he was having his habitual coffee, pounced, and took him to view the wall in Dyers’ Court. Frank says, “I nearly dropped dead!”



Frank is first mentioned at a Committee meeting in September 2010: he was said to be “very enthusiastic” about the mural. Pam promised to get him details from the Museum. A package duly arrived, including a collage of old black-and-white photos of Clark’s Dyeworks. Frank realised that it was too big a project for him alone. Who better to help than his long-time friend, Mary Fenwick? He rang her, and started to tell her about it, when she interrupted: “I made a collage, but the person responsible for it moved away. I don’t know what’s happened to it.” “I’ve got it!” said Frank. What a wonderful coincidence! Frank invited Mary to meet Pam, Derek and Roger - and from then on, it was all go!

Together, for months they worked in Frank’s studio. They divided the collage into squares and photographed each square; these were then projected via the computer onto the wall and then copied onto tracing paper. A pile of about 50 rolls of paper (each 30x40 inches) accumulated. The outlines copied on these papers would later be traced through via Mary’s magic carbon paper (created by compressing charcoal into powder and rubbing it into paper with cotton-wool) onto the freshly painted wall.

Ah! Paint – Frank wondered about this. So he went straight to the top, and rang Michael Alford, renowned for his murals, whose first question was “How long have you lived in Retford?” “Forty years,” said Frank. “Well, you’ll soon be emigrating if you use ordinary paint: it’ll flake off. What you need is Keim paints – for the undercoat, and mural painting; then you’ll need an anti-graffiti coat. Then it will last 100 years.” So Frank contacted Keim Paints, and a meeting was arranged with them, Pam and Roger.

Frank now drew up a meticulously worked-out timetable, based on works being carried out prior to starting the mural, and had everything checked for Health and Safety. At the May 2011 AGM Derek announced that the scaffolding was up, that Roger would be managing the project in the absence of Pam (who was on a well-earned holiday), and that the artists Mary Fenwick and Frank Canning had developed the design.

Trying to organise all the various activities proved a tedious task. Roger had to arrange access to, and parking in, the car-park for a skip and workers’ vehicles. The scaffolders, plasterers, painters, repairers had to be co-ordinated; sometimes he was waiting before 8.00 am for someone who didn’t arrive till 10.00, or the weather prevented work. Derek and Gavin, who took over when Roger was away, also had to contend with problems. In June Roger was reporting “slippage” to Frank’s timetable.

It was a stressful time. Frank had become ill and had to take a back seat. Later, he came back into the team he calls “The Creatives”, but he stresses that Mary was from then on the key person. With the help of her friend Mike, and Butch, a grid was drawn on the wall, and each of those rolls of paper, fixed over the carbon paper, was traced through one by one.

By the end of July, Mary was overseeing a group of volunteers who painted, and some who “minded” for safety reasons when she was alone. They had problems, not least contending with the weather. There was one appalling day, when rain collected on the sheeting and Roger



tipped it all over Mary; she rushed home to change and returned to find a drunken man, shouting, kicking the scaffolding and frightening Dawn, a volunteer. The police did not arrive until after Frank and Roger, summoned from their usual haunt, had dealt with the situation. But they persevered! The final touch came when Mr Clark went into his loft to find an old bag and letter-head with the Clark’s logo, which Mary copied.

Butch and Roger refurbished a bench which had been rescued from the Market Square, and from which one can now view the mural in comfort. Thanks to funding from Notts CC Local Improvements Scheme, an information panel detailing the history of the site was finally installed. All was ready for the official “unveiling”, which took place on 28 September 2011. Mr Clark cut the ribbon in front of assembled dignitaries and all those involved in making this magnificent

mural possible. A presentation of Brian Shawcross’s wonderful photographs of work-in-progress was a highlight of the reception which followed in St Swithun’s Lady Chapel.

This impressive achievement shows what can be done with vision and hard work - a collaborative effort. It has already attracted new members. And some of those who spent so much time on it visit it regularly, to check that it is undamaged, and, of course, to admire it, as everyone will do for years to come.



STOP PRESS
Keep a lookout for further improvements and restoration that will take place in Dyers Court this year when weather permits, including Mary’s trompe l’oeil of a sweetshop to be installed where there is a boarded-up window.