

## RETFORD'S WOW! FACTORS

### SPA LANE SHEEP FAIR MURAL: THE STORY

The Civic Society's ongoing aim is to help improve Retford, and the dilapidated wall on Spa Lane was identified as an ideal site for another mural, to make the street scene more attractive, as the Dyers Court mural has done; it has taken several years to bring the project to fruition, but finally it did happen: on 6 June 2018, we had a formal grand opening, with those involved in the project from the Civic Society, the Art Society, Keim Paints and Thomas Cook's looking sheepish beside the mural.

*Rd, a main retail and pedestrian thoroughfare into the town centre. The Society would very much like to work in partnership with Thomas Cook to repair this wall and to install a Heritage mural depicting the sheep fairs that used to take place on Spa Common, using images from the Welchman collection housed at Bassetlaw Museum. We undertook a similar heritage community project in Dyer's Court leading from Chapelgate's town centre car park, which has greatly improved and added interest to the area.*



*The Society already have grant funding that can be used towards the project, and would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss the scheme more fully with you and representatives from Thomas Cook.*

The letter was well received, and, after much negotiation, Thomas Cook kindly agreed to repair and re-plaster the wall, and to allow us to realise our dream of having a mural. At last!

The Society approached Retford Art Society, to see if we could work together to produce a mural depicting the sheep fairs that used to take place for over a hundred years until 1980, only a short

distance from Spa Lane, across the ring-road, on Spa Common. Thousands of noisy, jostling sheep would be penned ready for the sheep fairs, which were held, one in March, along with the horse fair in Grove Street, for eight days, and another in October for four days. The fairground, with its swings, sideshows and roundabouts, was also on the Common before later moving to the Market Square. At this time, the fairs attracted buskers and pavement traders, as well as pickpockets and thieves. The inns were open early in the morning, so there would be many the worse for drink!

Images were found from the Welchman collection at Bassetlaw Museum, and the Chair of Retford Art Society, Andy Massey, set about creating the design, ably assisted by Mary Fenwick, Jenny King and Sally Telfer. RCS Vice-Chair Bob Lamb well



r e m e m b e r s  
auctioneering at the sheep fairs and you might just be able to spot him within the mural!

*Continued page 6-7*



Why had it taken so long? First of all, there were problems with identifying the owners of the property, and who was responsible for the maintenance of it. Meanwhile, the plaster crumbled more and more, as you can see in the 'before' photo above. If it weren't for Pam Barnsdale's persistence and the fact that Thomas Cook took over, it might still be an eyesore.

**Here is part of the letter that Pam wrote to the Assistant Manager:**  
*It was great to hear that Thomas Cook will be undertaking a full makeover of their Retford store at 53-55 Carolgate. The Retford Civic Society over a number of years have been very concerned about the poor state of the exterior blank wall that faces onto Spa*

# CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Where has the time gone this year? It doesn't seem a year ago since I wrote my last 'Chairman's Chat'. Time obviously flies when you are having fun! 2018 was a year of growth and achievements. We don't always succeed on every issue, but we can't be accused of not trying! And we are certainly doing something right: we attracted 19 new members in 2018, and at the end of the year our membership was 263 plus 7 corporate members. This compared to 184 and 2 corporate members in 2011 is a great improvement.



Partnership has once again been the major theme of our work, and the Civic Society continues to be involved in exciting projects to preserve our heritage and improve our town.

It was great news to hear that Kings' Park received a Green Flag Award for the 11th year running. This international award is a sign to the public that the space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. 2018 also saw Kings' Park 80th Celebration taking place in June.

Two major litter-picks took place during the year; an increasing number of participants enjoyed the fellowship of working together and improving our local environment. Although the number of bags of rubbish remains

high, overall things are improving. The number of plastic shopping bags being collected has gone down since the 5p charge. Plastic bottles are still a major problem – perhaps the solution is a returnable deposit system? More volunteers means that we are able to pick up litter over a larger area. However, there are a few 'grot spots' that need tackling regularly by a small team. We are considering this possibility for 2019.

Last year I mentioned that Bassetlaw District Council had launched a Blue Plaque Scheme to recognise important people who have lived in Bassetlaw. I am pleased to say that the first Blue Plaque under this scheme in Retford was unveiled this year in recognition of Flt Lt James McCairns, a heroic pilot in World War II. He lived at 20 Chapelgate from 1930-39. We worked closely with Adrian Sumner, a member of RCS, who also represented the local RAFA group. The Committee are compiling a list of other deserving people and would be happy to receive any recommendations.

The old King Edward VI School building is almost finished and is looking good, having been tastefully restored and landscaped; the former Police Station is now a hotel, bar and restaurant – book a cell for a meal! And there is good news about other

buildings of concern. Unfortunately, other buildings are appearing on the list, such as the Pine Warehouse on the corner of Chapelgate and the Mason's Arms. Meanwhile, the Civic Society has been beavering away behind the scenes. I believe we are influencing the situation and there are signs of movement. Please have faith and offer even more prayers! Hopefully this year! Our Planning Committee continues to monitor, comment on and discuss numerous planning applications whilst overseeing developments in Retford. Thanks go to Bruce Barnett, Bob Lamb and Simon Holdaway for their continuing enthusiasm and active involvement in planning matters.

On Retford Charter Day in May the Civic Society had a stall on Carolgate to publicise our work and launched our Grand Art Draw. That day, the interest shown by the general public in the new Spa Lane Mural was overwhelming.

Bolham Manor gardens were open again under the National Garden Scheme in July. Pam and Butch Barnsdale gave us the opportunity to promote the Retford Civic Society and sell Grand Art Draw tickets, raising £136. Once again, many members visited and helped.

In September we organised our eleventh Heritage Open Day, a great success that brought together so many organisations, and followed a theme of 'Victorian Retford'. This year Heritage Open Day will be on Saturday 14 September with the theme 'The Chesterfield Canal and Retford's Industrial Heritage'. As usual, we have an enthusiastic Committee planning the day. Please make a note in your diary, come along and support us and offer help for an hour or two if you can.

Since the closure of Bookworm, the Civic Society has taken over maintaining the Spa Lane public notice



board as well as the leaflet stand at Retford Railway Station. A special thank-you must go to Angela and Paul Meads on their retirement for holding the key and freely selling tickets for so many town activities. The Mind shop on Spa Lane has now taken responsibility for the key.

During the past year our Social Committee organised a number of events both for fundraising and fellowship. Our thanks to Joan Turner and Hilary Holdaway for organising our visits so well, and to all of our members who come along and join in so willingly with our raffles. In March we had a great night at a Pie-and-Peas-and Music social event organised by Pat and Bruce Barnett, raising £200 for RCS funds. The Bridge Street Stompers from Newark entertained us.

Pam Barnsdale, as always, has worked tirelessly this year moving projects on with BDC, the Business Forum and other organisations, as well as applying for funding to finance future projects. I would also like to thank the editor of our Newsletter, Tina Jones, for producing such a professional publication and Pat Barnett for the Summer News Sheet. Barrie King continues to move us forward through our website and social media. A younger generation is now receiving information about our activities through Facebook.

We continue to support the Retford Business Forum in their efforts to improve the appearance and amenities of our town, and a representative attends their meetings. Their 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 throughout North Notts and surrounding areas, and promote Retford as a successful shopping environment, thereby increasing footfall.

Bruce and Pat Barnett represented the Society at the 2018 Civic Voice Convention in Birmingham. Civic Voice, our national body, brings together nearly 1,000 societies across the country, all of them independent but part of this umbrella organisation. They, like us, are concerned with the built environment and wider issues such as care for the environment, the provision of infrastructure, health and transport systems, etc. RCS has an important role to play locally, but we have to be at the top of our game if we are to be effective bulwarks against inappropriate development, standard bearers for excellence in design, and proponents of good practice in the conservation of our heritage assets.

At times you might ask: 'Do we make a difference?' Surely everyone reading this report and the rest of the Newsletter must be impressed by the range of Retford life with which we are actively involved. As an organisation we can only achieve with your support. Even if you are unable to support physically, your continued membership gives us the finance to continue our work, and the greater our membership the more authority we have when negotiating. You are part of an incredibly dedicated group of unapologetically proud Retfordians who love their town and want to make it a better place. Therefore, please try and recruit a neighbour or friend.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my eleventh year as your Chairman and feel really proud of what we achieved in 2018. It has been wonderful to see an increasing number of members who have responded to the calls for help – manning stalls, collecting litter, offering their skills and knowledge, supporting school visits, etc to help improve the quality of life in our Retford. Thank you!

Once again special thanks must go to our Committee, whose good humour, enthusiasm and hard work have enabled us to achieve so much over the years. I look forward to another successful year in 2019, and, once again, I do think this should be the Retford Civic Society motto – '*Onwards and Upwards*'.

*Derek Turner*

## THE SILENT SERVICE

There are several members of RCS who from time to time do essential jobs: setting up the Christmas trees at St Swithun's (including going out to a field and cutting down and erecting the large one outside), mending and 'fettling' things around Retford, such as benches that have been vandalised. These contributions are not often recognised, as they are done unobtrusively; so we would like to acknowledge the 'silent service' volunteers, particularly Butch Barnsdale, Gavin Johnstone, Roger Jones and Barrie King.

## HERITAGE TRAIL GUIDED WALKS

Our Chairman has again been tutoring a group of members who have volunteered to lead visitors and locals alike along the Retford Heritage Trail. Bruce Barnett, Jenny King, Bob Lamb, Roger Stenson and Rob White have all been involved in this project. During the Chesterfield Canal Walking Festival on 16 and 23 September their expertise was put to good use and their contribution was invaluable.

## RETFORD TOWN HALL: SCHOOL VISIT

This year, the 150th Anniversary of the opening of Retford Town Hall in 1868, there have been many celebrations, to some of which schools were invited. We welcomed Ordsall Primary School Council on Monday 11 June and showed them its historic features and helped them try on mayoral regalia, which is always a highlight of any visit. A walk around the Town Centre Heritage Trail completed the morning.

## RETFORD STATION

BDC has obtained a substantial grant from LNER for improvements to Retford Station, including much-needed works to the Ordsall subway, better signposting to and from the station, and promoting the North Notts brand on the station itself. As members of the Community Rail Partnership, we have been consulted, and are happy to lend our support. The Community Rail Partnership has also applied for government funding to install a much-needed lift onto Platform 3; currently, those with mobility or disability problems can access the platform only with a member of staff escorting them across the track!

# RETFORD IS BLOOMING FANTASTIC (AGAIN!)

Green-fingered successes were honoured with a presentation of awards for the best entries in the Retford-in-Bloom competition. The annual contest captured the imagination and gardening skills of businesses, residents and schoolchildren, and encouraged everyone to make Retford attractive for visitors and the community. We had also the largest-ever number of schools taking part in our potato-growing competition.

A ceremony was held in the ballroom at Retford Town Hall on Wednesday, 19 September. The awards were presented on behalf of the Civic Society by the President of Retford Rotary Club, Eddie McGarvey: the Rotary Club of Retford-Percy Laws Memorial Fund sponsored this year's event. This year, certificates were awarded in four main categories: residential, shop and business fronts, public houses and schools, together with special community awards.

RCS Chairman, Derek Turner said: 'Thanks are due to all gardeners in Retford – not just the winners – for helping to make our town such a pleasant place in which to live. Despite

the extreme weather it has been a successful year.' He also thanked Icon Aerospace Technology, Traffic Labour Supplies Ltd (TLS) and the Retford Business Forum for their support of the Retford Hanging Basket Scheme over a number of years, and **Certificates of Appreciation** were presented to them.

The winners of this year's Retford in Bloom were...

## BEST FRONT GARDEN:

**East Ward:** Large Garden – 1 St Helen's Drive.  
Small Garden – 155 Moorgate.

**West Ward:** Large Garden – 2A Ordsall Park Road.  
Small Garden – 13 West Park Place.

**North Ward:** Large Garden – 7 Earles Court.  
Small Garden – 118 Camborne Crescent.

**South Ward:** Large Garden – 33 High Street, Ordsall.  
Small Garden – 27 Briar Lee, Ordsall.

## SHIELD FOR THE BEST PUBLIC HOUSE DISPLAY:

Joint Winners : The Ship Inn and Whitehouses Inn

## BEST FLORAL SHOP AND BUSINESS FRONT:

King's Furnishing & Coffee Shop

## BEST PRE-SCHOOL GROUP PROJECT – POTATO-GROWING:

West Street Play Group

## BEST PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT – POTATO-GROWING:

Joint Winners: Carr Hill Primary School & St Joseph's R C Primary School

**THE MAGGIE BATTERSBY SHIELD** was presented to Thrumpton Primary Academy to acknowledge the continuing development of the school garden and growing projects throughout the school.

This year every class in the school participated in a school-based planting and growing project.

**THE MOST IMPROVED SCHOOL GARDEN AWARD:**  
Retford Oaks Academy



## COMMUNITY AWARD:

The 2018 Community Awards were presented to:

- Simon Grayston for the development of gardening at Carr Hill Primary School by the formation of and running a very active Gardening Club over many years.
- The Rotary Club of Retford for building an eco greenhouse at Tuxford Primary Academy and developing a new garden area at Carr Hill Primary School.
- Brian Shawcross in his capacity as official photographer of Retford Civic Society. Brian records the floral displays and events in Retford throughout the year.

Thanks also to the 2018 organisers: Bob Davenport, Alan Laurie, Richard Lyon, Adrian and Lesley Sumner, Derek and Joan Turner, and Jan Williamson – their teamwork made it all happen. Pam Barnsdale is specially thanked for organising the hanging baskets scheme and other schemes for making Retford bloom.

For the first time, in collaboration with the Retford and District Photographic Society, we held a schools' photographic competition. The winners were Henry Boustead (6) with 'Wonderful Dandelion Clock' and Emily Hodgson (13) with 'Bumble Bee'. Thanks go to Brian Shawcross for co-ordinating the competition.

## OPEN MEETINGS 2018

This year, the numbers attending have risen yet again, and we have had to think about accommodating everyone in comfort. Having said that, members and friends have very much appreciated these meetings, even if they were a bit squashed! So far, we've not made a decision about another venue: the Grove Church Hall is so convenient, with all the facilities we need.

In March, the speaker was Sam Glasswell, curator of Bassetlaw Museum, who, we knew from past experience, would give a rousing talk. We were not disappointed: 'How Women Got the Vote' was informative, moving and even at times humorous. Sam came dressed as an early 20th century suffragist (we learned the difference between 'suffragist' and 'suffragette') and brought several artefacts to illustrate her historical account.



At the AGM (on 8 August, having been postponed from 11 July because of a competing attraction!), Malcolm Dolby, Sam's predecessor, spoke about Stephen Pegler (1852-1937) and his wonderful collection of photographs, housed in the Bassetlaw Museum. We were fascinated by the insight the presentation gave us into the life of Retford in times past.

To mark RAF 100, Adrian Sumner, a member of RCS and retired RAF officer, gave a talk entitled 'The History of RAF Gamston' at our meeting in October. Well, some of us, who thought we would have little interest in the subject, were utterly absorbed! It was delivered with such authority and knowledge, copiously illustrated, and full of human interest as well as technical details.



At these meetings, members of the Committee report on planning matters, projects, events, finances, and so on – all the 'business'. There is also the opportunity to ask questions, and socialise during the refreshments interval.

Rob White, who retired from the Committee this year, was thanked for his contributions over the last few years, and Andy Massey (of Spa Lane mural fame!) was elected in his place.

## POINTING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

RCS continues to be represented at Retford Business Forum meetings, and was successful in partnering them and BDC to bring in over £45,000 of funding from Notts CC's Local Improvement Scheme towards improving signage into and through Retford. These improvements will be rolled out over the next few months.

## PLANNING MATTERS

Good news first of all! It is great to see restoration at the corner of Grove Street and Beardsall's Row almost complete at last. This listed building has been an eyesore for over forty years. It should soon be in use as flats, a restaurant and shops. The old Post Office building has also been attractively restored to become another restaurant with flats above. Well done to developer Glynn Beech for taking on these projects. Well done also to Andrew Watt for reopening the old Police Station as the Kings' Park Hotel and the Old Police Station bar and restaurant. We welcome the commitment to the town of these local developers. Let's hope that their investments prove that there can be profit in restoring buildings.

There may at last be some progress with the former St Alban's church. The Diocese has agreed terms for someone to buy it. We are told he is local, has experience in this area and plans to convert it into flats. He has been liaising with Bassetlaw District Council, and doing a number of surveys. Let's hope something happens at last.

House builder William Davies has failed to bring forward plans to redevelop the derelict land and buildings on Bridgegate. They are now trying to get permission to demolish buildings on the frontage because, owing to a lack of maintenance over many years, they may now be unsafe. BDC is at last removing advertising banners from some roadside fences in its ownership, but has done nothing to address other fly-posting sites around the town.

The planning application for Phase 2 of the residential development at the former Kenilworth Nurseries off London Road is still being considered by the Council. We remain concerned about access arrangements here, but understand from the Council that a solution to the drainage problems affecting the site has been agreed.

The Society continues to keep an eye on planning applications. We recently opposed the demolition of a former church, the Albert Hall, on Albert Road, and the enlargement and conversion to dwellings of the former Yates's premises on Cannon Square, and plans for up to 171 more houses off Bigsby and Palmer Roads. We also expressed concern about several aspects of a proposal for a hotel next to Home Bargains, and about details of a new housing development planned for Tiln Lane.

After years when the Council found it difficult to control house building, as it had insufficient land allocated for development, recent changes in government guidance about how to calculate the number of houses needed appear to show that there is now an ample supply of land with permission for building. This situation may, however, prove short-lived as the government guidance is about to change yet again.

In recent years the Society developed a close relationship with Simon Britt, Bassetlaw's Chief Conservation Officer. We did not always agree with him, or he with us, but the relationship was friendly and productive. Sadly for us, he has recently taken a job elsewhere. We wish him well.

## SPA LANE SHEEP FAIR MURAL: THE STORY Continued from page 1

Although the Spa Mural team, organised and enthused by Pam Barnsdale, were hoping that a short, sharp burst of painting before Christmas 2017 would see it all finished, it soon became clear that winter's cold and damp would make that impossible.



The dilapidated wall had been repaired and rendered, but it needed time to dry right through, so we pulled our horns in, and

started on the painting of the new render in Spring 2018. The Art Society team had already produced draft drawings, based on the archive photos, and Mary Fenwick devised a model of squared templates to enlarge each section for copying onto the wall.



The white base layer was painted by local painter/decorator Andrew White. The wall had to be protected from the elements and vandalism during the painting, so an elaborate scaffolding was erected on two levels, all covered in waterproof tarpaulin, with heavy duty padlocks to secure it, by the scaffolding firm C.S. Scaffolding.



We used special mineral-based paints made by Keim Paints, in black and white and mixed where necessary for a variety of grey tones. A final all-over coating of anti-graffiti glaze was applied. Keim Paints were immensely supportive of this project, with technical advice and cost-effectiveness.

Working in these conditions produced some interesting challenges. We worked during the last three weeks in April,

mostly in ones and twos, limited by having to have security key access and having to bring paints and equipment from home for each stint. Early mornings were best, before Spa Lane became too crowded. Some days were very cold; others were sauna-like under the tarpaulin. Hot coffee and bacon rolls from Café dé Bella helped a lot.

Painting the upper level – skyline, the tops of vehicles and people – involved climbing a ladder and perching on planking, and then painting down to ankle level.



Painting the lower level, where all the sheep were clustered, as were the lower halves of people, meant standing/crouching under the planking, which blocked the view of the upper level. It was a matter of guesswork as to whether or not a shepherd's top half would meet, let alone join, his bottom half. At least one shepherd grew to 8 feet tall and had to be cut down to size after the planking was removed.

Details of design changed as we worked. Sheep's backsides were too numerous, so we turned them round, and in many cases added rather sexy eyelashes to make them more noticeable. Bob Lamb (who better, with that name?), appearing as the auctioneer on his raised dais, seemed to get younger as the painting emerged.



*Over 100 hours of painting, over three weeks, went into the mural.*

Generally the public were unaware of us, working behind the tarpaulin. Some charming, inadvertent conversations happened. An unsuspecting passer-by, talking on their mobile, called out, "Hello, can you hear me?" and received the disembodied reply from behind the tarpaulin, "Hello, yes, loud and clear". Ghosts? It was often heart-warming to eavesdrop on the generally cheery, good-natured chatter of the public going about their business.



responded to our pleas and came on the Sunday morning to take it all down. That day was brilliantly sunny, to match our mood; Andy's and Derek's beaming faces match the sun, and the sheep.

We can all agree what an attractive and positive improvement to the area it has been, helping to further highlight the history of our town. A big thank-you must go to all those involved. It's amazing what can happen when the private, public and voluntary sectors all work together, and the very positive feedback we have so far received from the public makes it very worthwhile.

**This project was funded by the Civic Society and a grant from Notts County Council.**

*Footnote: Sadly, since the completion of the mural, there have already been several vandal attacks on the mural. The special glaze has helped to protect it and limit it to several scratches, which we have repaired. The Civic Society has approached BDC and the Police to consider how to improve CCTV coverage in the Spa Lane area, to deter this sort of anti-social behaviour.*

We wanted a story-board to explain the mural. We were also asked to preserve the fire-door exit and signage in the wall, for Thomas Cook. Working with Burgess Printers, we came up with a neat combination, affixed to the door, which we think works well.

The unveiling was, by great effort and goodwill, achieved in time for Retford Charter Day on Monday 7 May. A massive thank-you went to the scaffolders, C.S. Scaffolding, who



## COMING VERY SOON!

It was long thought that a sculpture or installation outside HSBC on Carolgate, to celebrate Retford-in-Bloom, would be worthwhile and provide a talking point within the town.

Talks took place with sculptor Kenny Roach from West Street Gallery and the Young People's Education Centre in Retford to see if they would like to be involved, to help their students develop skills and confidence. Permission was sought from HSBC, and funding acquired through Notts County Council, Retford Lions, and the Retford Rotary Club Percy Law's Trust, to support the RCS funding, which includes the Laurie Hudson bequest of £1,000.

The students have been involved in making the various floral elements of the design, while Kenny continues to work on the main structure. We are hoping the sculpture will be installed in February to herald the start of Retford-in-Bloom 2019, and we look forward to acknowledging all those who have contributed to this community scheme.



## HERITAGE DAY HAPPENINGS

The second Saturday in September has arrived. Is it Beaujolais Nouveau? No, it's Heritage Day in Retford! After months of preparation we're ready. The publicity in village magazines, the competitions in Retford Life and the Retford Times have all been organised, the leaflets with maps printed and posters and banners in place. Dignitaries are duly invited, with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (Veronica and Mike Mahoney) joining them for the day.



They arrive in The Square on time at 10.15am in the landau pulled by two magnificent black horses with white plumes nodding. Children and adults wave Union Jacks (given out by Joan Turner and Pam Barnsdale) to welcome them. A Quarter Peal of Bells is ringing out at St Swithun's, and in the church Victorian sponge cakes are being tasted to determine the winner of the Baking Competition.

At the other end of Retford, the Seth Ellis has started its boat trips on the Chesterfield Canal. In the Town Hall the dignitaries, including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, the Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council, the Deputy Mayor and our

Chairman, Derek Turner, Lord High Steward of Retford, take refreshments with Queen Victoria and Albert, while our photographer, Brian Shawcross, gets to work. Soon the Community Choir arrive to sing Music Hall songs with adults and children packed into the Council Chamber.

All morning in the ballroom, Vicky, with the Retford Youth Theatre, has been getting ready to stage their play, 'The Gates of Retford', and now at noon the audience are in place, Vicky is at the piano and the play begins. It's a great celebration of Kenny Roach's historic gates, which were removed and then reinstated at the Rum Runner (now The Ship), by Batemans Brewery.

Our stalls on Carolgate and outside the Museum are being brilliantly managed by our loyal members, who give out information and engage the public on the subject of our projects.

But it is 1.00pm and everyone wants to be in Grove Street and The Square for the Tour of Britain 2018 Cycle Race. The big screen outside Spencer's on the Square shows that the bikes are not far away, in Eganton; within twenty minutes they'll be here; so we grab a quick sandwich at The Grove and wait near the corner. The motorbike outriders roar in first, a couple of them overshooting the corner, to our great amusement. Then all of a sudden, the first cyclists appear with huge applause and cheers from the crowds. In minutes, groups of green, red and yellow vests whizz by and disappear through town. Their follow-up cars are fast and multinational, in contrast to Ken Thompson's 1946 East Kent Dennis Lancet bus and the landau from earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, St Michael's Church, St Swithun's Church, the Majestic Theatre, the Masonic Hall and Trinity Hospital are enjoying a bumper day of visitors. Harry Foxley gives a talk at the Denman Library and the Museum stages a Suffragette Display, tours of the building and children's craft activities.

The day winds down, we start to pack away and Pat Barnett volunteers to turn the tombola drum and pull out the Grand Art Draw winners – a great finale to a great day!

**Our thanks to Bassetlaw District Council and the North Notts BID for their support.**



## THE GRAND ART DRAW

The Grand Art Draw display certainly drew the public to our stall on Carolgate on Charter Day, Monday 7 May. The striking works of art attracted visitors, who bought tickets to have a chance to win one of the framed pictures.

These had been kindly donated by some of our members who are talented local artists: Andy Massey, Anne Everitt, Jenny King, Frank Canning and Joan Turner had painted a range of subjects which appealed to a large audience.

The lucky winners were drawn on Heritage Day, 8 September, at 3pm on our stall in Bridgegate. One of the winners chose Jenny King's "Sunflowers".



More than £500 was raised for Civic Society Projects through the Grand Art Draw.

**Many thanks to all who took part in any way.**

## KINGS' PARK 80TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

It was a beautiful sunny day, Saturday 30 June, when we joined the many other Retford voluntary organisations to celebrate the anniversary of the opening of Kings' Park in 1938.

On our stall on the playing field next to the River Idle, we displayed information about RCS and our achievements.

We also displayed the pictures for the Grand Art Draw and sold a considerable number of tickets for it, thanks to all our helpers, including Rob White and Councillor Sue Shaw.



For the children, we had prepared a Kings' Park Treasure Hunt, which was very popular. Entrants paid 50p a go, and the money raised covered the prize and the little chocolates we gave to each child. Result! Tyler Jessop, aged six, from New Ollerton, was the winner of the £20 W.H.Smith gift voucher. When he received it, he was overjoyed and couldn't wait to get to the shop with his dad to spend it.

## WINE-TASTING IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

We began in Italy with bubbly 'Prosecco Cartizze'. Moving at an appropriate pace, via Slovenia, France and Argentina, Civic Society members and guests arrived in Spain, greeted by a forty-year-old sherry that had the capacity to charm some and provoke others to respond, 'Petrol'. Yes, this was another Retford Civic Society wine-tasting evening held in St Swithun's hallowed Lady Chapel. Master of Wine, David Bird, one more member of the Civic Society with rare knowledge and skill of a vital subject, was responsible for assembling a very tasty assortment of white and red glory. And we enjoyed every last drop.

It is commonplace to say that wine improves with age. When accompanied by a Birdian commentary about its origins in the earth, its fermentation and blending, nose and taste it improves beyond recognition. David takes a glass in his right hand, swirls, then

moves his wildly curled head closer, his nose an instrument of precision. We wait for a response which, for the benefit of Civic Society members present, ranged from 'American (note, not English) Oak' to 'cat's pee on a gooseberry bush'. Content with his judgement, we swirled, sniffed and tasted, trying for all the world to look as if we understood the complexity of the liquid consumed. Marks out of ten, statements about after-taste, sweetness and dryness, bubbles and scent consumed the Lady Chapel. Throughout, David Bird encouraged us to recognise the history, provenance, subtleties and much more of what we tasted. What more could you wish for?

This, like previous Birdian tastings, was a lovely evening. David knows his stuff and, crucially, how to talk about wine in fascinating and encouraging speech. If you were not present, make a mental note to come along to the Lady Chapel when the Civic Society next swirls, sniffs, drinks and a great deal more.



## OAKWELL HALL AND THE PIECE HALL

We set off from Kettlewells on a typical English April day: we had wind, rain and some sun.

At Oakwell Hall near Batley, we were greeted by the manager; after refreshments the group learned about the history of the Hall, a Grade I listed Elizabethan manor house, built in 1583 by John Batt. The house dominated the landscape, with about 110 acres of country park. This established the Batts as one of the area's leading gentry families. Charlotte Brontë was a regular visitor in the 19th century and featured it as Fieldhead, the home of the heroine in her novel *Shirley*.

The site declined, and absentee landlords decided to sell in 1926. Two benefactors bought the Hall and in 1929 donated it to Batley Corporation (now Kirklees Council). Oakwell is displayed as the 1690s Batt family home. The rooms are furnished with a mixture of original and reproduction furnishings to show the lifestyle of a lesser gentry household. It is now a museum with a visitor centre, gift shop, and nature trail, and has been used for filming, including BBC's *Jonathan Strange*.

After leaving Oakwell Hall we made our way to Halifax, arriving there just before lunch. We had free time to find lunch and see some of the town. We met back at the Piece Hall and were divided



into two groups for the guided tour. We learned about the rich and varied history of the magnificent Hall, which opened in 1779.

The Grade I listed Piece Hall is unique in being the sole survivor of the great 18th century northern cloth halls, a class of buildings which embodied the vital and dominant importance of the trade in hand-woven textiles to the pre-industrial economy of the West Riding of Yorkshire, from the Middle Ages through to the early 19th century.

Dating from 1779, it was built as a Cloth Hall for the trading of 'pieces' of cloth (a 30-yard length of woven woollen fabric produced on a handloom). This made the town very prosperous at the time and led to many splendid buildings being built, including the Town Hall and Minster. Unfortunately we could only access a small part of the Town Hall because the various chambers were occupied, although the architecture in the Victoria Hall was splendid and well maintained. And the Minster was closed because of a funeral! However, it was exciting to see the Piece Hall, the most ambitious and prestigious of its type, and one of Britain's most outstanding Georgian buildings.

On the journey home we had Derek's usual raffle – the jokes were as bad as ever, but no trip would be complete without it! Thanks to Hilary Holdaway for organising this fascinating visit.

*Jocelyn Moorhouse & Sue Paul*

## VISIT TO TEMPLE NEWSAM

On 18 July a bus full of members and friends set off from Kettlewell's for the journey up the A1 to Temple Newsam, near Leeds. Joan Turner organises these trips marvellously, whetting the appetite with circulated information en route.

The visit started in the Great Hall for refreshments, after which we split into three groups to tour the 30+ rooms, including the spacious picture gallery with its portraits of previous owners and their families. The 'Temple' part of the home's name links the history of the lands to the Knights Templar. After their suppression, the estate, by royal decree, reverted to Sir Phillip D'Arcy in 1377. The house was built between 1500 and 1520 as a Tudor country house; some of the original beams are still visible.

In 1537 the property was seized by Henry VIII, who gave it to his niece, Margaret, Countess of Lennox and her husband, the Earl of Lennox, in 1544. Their son Henry, Lord Darnley, was born there the following year; he married Mary, Queen of Scots. In 1565, Temple Newsam was again seized by the Crown. In 1603, James 1 granted it to the then Duke of Lennox, but in 1622 the estate was bought by Sir Arthur Ingram and over the next twenty years the mansion was rebuilt. A century later, Henry Ingram, 7th Viscount of Irvine, remodelled the west and north wings of the house, creating new bedrooms, dressing rooms and the picture gallery. The house was originally four-sided, but then three-sided, with ornate rooftop stonework and lettering creating a message to all.



In the 1760s Capability Brown was engaged by Charles, 9th Viscount, to re-landscape the park; his widow continued his work, living at Temple Newsam until her death in 1807. Their eldest daughter, Isabella, was for a time mistress of the Prince of Wales (George IV). When he visited in 1806, he presented her with the Chinese wallpaper (current valuation £10m!) and the Moses tapestries. The house passed through the family until 1904, when it was left to Edward Wood, later 1st Earl of Halifax. In 1922, he sold the park and house to Leeds Corporation for a nominal sum, placing covenants over them to ensure their future preservation.

Today, the gardens are free to explore, and in this beautiful sunny summer weather it was good to see people enjoying the parkland. After a delightful lunch taken in the Still Room, we were free to wander... to walk, overlooking the peaceful scene of the river ponds, to climb the hill of the Oak and Elm Wood towards the estate Glasshouse, to stroll around the planted beds of the Walled Garden, returning to the House's courtyard via the Rhododendron Walk and Home Farm. This has a Grade II listed Barn built in 1694, which is still in use, housing a large Rare Breeds working farm. In the café we refreshed ourselves before making our way to the coach for our return journey.

We all agreed it had been a very interesting and enjoyable trip. Of course, the fun was not yet over. Just as we were nodding, the dulcet tones of Derek came over the sound system announcing the draw for numerous raffle prizes, "all from VERY good homes!" Great entertainment value at least! Thank you, Joan and Derek, for such an excellent day out. It is an unwise person who misses these life-enhancing Civic Society trips!

*Roger Stenson and Mylle West*

## NEWARK HERE WE COME

On 26 September, members left town to invade our neighbours in Newark. We were led by Bob Lamb, who was nobly standing in for Derek and Joan Turner, following Joan's very unfortunate accident. Thank you, Bob – you did a wonderful job at short notice.

First stop was Newark Town Hall, one of the finest in the country, designed in Palladian style in 1774 by the famous architect John Carr of York. Many of us had not realised that the civic building beside the busy Newark Market Square had so much to offer. We saw the Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour, and were overwhelmed by the magnificence of the 18th century Assembly Rooms with its beautiful ceiling and splendid large candelabra – a truly inspiring room. Then we spent some time in the Art Gallery, enjoying the paintings by local artists. I was impressed by the way Newark Town Council has brought together and displayed the work of so many Newark citizens from the past and present in such a systematic, permanent way. Perhaps we should do more of this in Retford.

It was a lovely sunny day, so we all went our separate ways to explore the town and have lunch. Sam King and I enjoyed a stroll around and lunch in the grounds of historic Newark Castle. Later, we visited the magnificent Newark Parish Church with its almost cathedral-like dimensions.

At one o'clock we all assembled at the Newark Civil War Museum. This very modern museum impressed everyone with its extensive collection, which not only presents military

exhibits from the Civil War, but, more interestingly, describes the life of ordinary people living in Newark at the time. It is also very contemporary in its use of presentation techniques, including an interesting film in a small cinema.

One forgets that, positioned on the Great North Road, Newark, with its castle and the River Trent, was one of the major towns in 17th century Britain. So it was a prime objective for the Royalists to occupy and defend during the English Civil War. It was nearby, in Nottingham, in August 1642 that King Charles raised his standard and the war started, and this part of middle England was seen by the Royalists as a key to achieving success. Newark did not fall to the Parliamentarians until May 1646.

Although the Museum has a splendid exhibition of armour, clothing and lots of interesting specific exhibits of civil and army life (including many items to appeal to children), and so well worth visiting, some of us found it difficult to discover and understand from the museum the historic background events involving Newark at the time. None of this was made very clear, except (I found) on two small computers hidden away and easily overlooked. On returning home and googling, I discovered that there were three distinct wars; so, to my surprise, the English Civil War went on for nine years!

It was a wonderful day out, with only one great regret: we sorely missed having Joan and Derek with us, and we wished Joan well.

*Brian Cane*

## VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM 21-22 NOVEMBER

**On Wednesday morning an almost full coachload of Civic Society members set off to explore Birmingham for an overnight stay. Joan had completed the arrangements for the visit brilliantly, despite being handicapped by a broken ankle!**

Our first visit was to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. We had a fascinating introduction to some of the large collection of pictures. An hour was hardly enough to scrape the surface, but after lunch there was free time to walk around the city centre and also to return to the Museum to explore the artworks further, and look at some of the other treasures in this large, impressive building.

Many of the party found their way to the recently opened exhibition area dedicated to the 'Staffordshire Hoard', a collection of gold and silver items from the 6th and 7th centuries, dug up in a field in 2009. There are 4000 fragments of gold and silver, many with filigree decoration and cloisonné pieces inlaid with garnets. The intricacy of the work is just astounding, and worth a visit to Birmingham just to see the collection.

The following morning we gathered for refreshments at 'The Shakespeare', a very interesting Victorian pub, and were welcomed to Birmingham by Sarah James from Civic Voice (the umbrella organisation for civic societies). A group photograph was taken.

We divided into two groups for visits – to the intriguingly named 'Coffin Works' and to the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter. Both are firms' premises which closed and have been left unchanged since then.

The Coffin Works is the premises of Newman Brothers, who made high-end 'coffin-furniture' for 100 years until 1998. Our tour included the workshop where the metal parts were made, with machinery still able to demonstrate part of the process, and also the 'Shroud Room', where the sewing machines and rolls of material used to make the shrouds are still on display.

The Jewellery Museum is in the premises of Smith and Pepper, who made gold jewellery. The workshop is just as it was in 1981. We saw the benches where the various skilled processes were carried out, and were intrigued by the extreme care taken to collect and recycle every last bit of gold dust produced in the making of the jewellery.

This was a very enjoyable trip, with an excellent choice of visits, and an overnight stay giving opportunity for members to get to know each other better.



## QUIZ AND PIE & PEAS SUPPER

Our team was 'RBN': Helen Nelson, David and Astrid Frazer, Bob Lamb, Jane Black and me. There were six other teams, all eager to answer as many questions as possible (as well as having a good time).

The annual Civic Society Quiz took place on the evening of 10 May at the Clumber Inn. There was as usual a strong turnout and a convivial atmosphere. The pub supplied excellent and much appreciated refreshments. Six rounds each of ten questions were supplemented by twenty celebrity recognition posers – some challenging, some more familiar. Special thanks are due to Tina and Roger for their efforts in setting the questions and hosting a most enjoyable evening. (And we won!)

*Richard Nelson*

This year's Pie-and-Peas Quiz Night will be at the Clumber Inn, Ordsall, on 2 May, 7.00 for 7.30pm. Cost £7.50. Come as a team, or individually (and make some new friends). Please let Tina Jones know (email: grovevill@aol.com or tel. 869549) by 11 April – and mention any dietary requirements.

## STAR FESTIVAL 2018

The Star Festival at The Grove was opened by Amelia Durdy, a young flautist, who was aiming to raise £3,000 for the Bassetlaw Food Bank, the chosen charity for 2018. Amelia recently auditioned for 'Britain's Got Talent', and she is just eight years old!

Both weekends of the Star Festival saw a steady stream of visitors who came to admire the inventive displays housed within the Sanctuary of the Church. Among the stars were two very special displays: red knitted poppies spilling from the pulpit were the backdrop to World War I soldier's and nurse's uniforms, kindly loaned by Bassetlaw Museum to complement the World War I memorial photograph; in the side chapel was a quiet reflective angel corner to remember loved ones, set up by members from The Grove in memory of Christine Carter, the Church Secretary, who suddenly passed away in 2018.

On the opposite side of the church, the Children's Corner was set up with star activities. It proved to be very popular with younger visitors during both weekend openings, and with the primary schools who visited during the week.

The Civic Society's contribution, designed and set up by Joan and Derek, was entitled 'Making Retford Shine', as it, and the whole church, did. On both weekends the catering team at The Grove did a wonderful job once again in providing food, the favourites being the home-made soup and the bacon sandwiches.

The Star Festival closed on Sunday 2 December with a church service in the vestibule at 4:00pm. Including the sale for food and donations, the Church raised over £1,500, thanks to the generosity of visitors.

*Chris White*



## ST SWITHUN'S CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

The Christmas season is heralded every year by this wonderful eight-day Christmas tree display in our town church.

Outside, there was a huge tree, donated by members Anna and Chris Holliland, and erected by the usual team of stalwarts. The Festival is made possible by numerous volunteers who help to stage it, including a team from Retford Civic Society. All groups provide individual and interesting trees (and this year there were over ninety!), while other volunteers help on the

door and with the provision of catering. RCS again had a fresh, seven-foot tree bought at a discount price from Retford and Gainsborough Garden centre by members Christine and John Hayward. They, together with Joan and Alan Cordall, decorated the tree in gold baubles displaying the angels from St Swithun's Church ceiling. Our tree remained in the church until the New Year as usual. Over £6,000 was raised for much-needed church funds, and we are glad to have been able to take part in it and support it once again.



## VISITS 2019

Derby is our destination on Wednesday 10 April. At the Royal Crown Derby Factory we'll see all the processes involved in the production of this iconic china. In the afternoon we'll have a talk on Derby's famous artist, Joseph Wright, in the City

Museum and Art Gallery, followed by free time in the city.

On 3 July we visit the town of another Joseph, this time Joseph Banks the botanist, who was born and lived in Horncastle. We'll hear about his voyage to Australia with Captain Cook and see gardens of the plants he brought back at

the Heritage Centre. A tour of Horncastle and a visit to Woodhall Spa are included.

4 September sees us in Lichfield for a Heritage Tour of the city, with the chance to visit the Cathedral, the Samuel Johnson Museum and the Erasmus Darwin House.

## RCS & SOCIAL MEDIA - 'Like' is good but 'sharing' is better!

[www.retfordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.retfordcivicsociety.org.uk) E: [rcs@retfordcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:rcs@retfordcivicsociety.org.uk) Facebook: RetfordCivicSociety

Although the Society's website contains a great deal of information such as event reports, pictures and newsletters, it is only accessed by a few people each month, whereas our Facebook page was seen by over 600 people for one post alone! This clearly shows the benefits of social media over traditional websites, especially when promoting an event such as the Christmas Tree Festival at St Swithun's. Can we ask if you do use Facebook please 'like' and 'share' our posts to all your friends. Please remember also that you can pay your membership subs using PayPal on our website.

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