

## RETFORD'S ART WORKS! TWO NEW ARTWORKS WERE UNVEILED IN 2019

### SCULPTURE IN CAROLGATE

A crowd gathered on Carolgate on Thursday 28 March as a specially commissioned piece of artwork was unveiled by the Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council, David Challinor, outside the HSBC Bank. The sculpture has been created using recycled materials by local artist and designer, Kenny Roach, together with ideas and metal work from local students Millie Cave, Arun Neilson and Liam Dawson from the Inspire Learning Programme.



This art project had started to take shape when Retford Civic Society received a bequest from the late Laurie Hudson. There was much discussion at the Committee meetings about how we should spend this gift: we wanted something to commemorate Laurie, who had been a keen member and loyal supporter of RCS because he loved the town, and we wanted it to be prominent and attractive. We had all sorts of ideas, such as a planter with flowers in the space outside the HSBC bank, but that was dismissed as not being suitable for growing plants. Eventually we were helped by the advice of Brian Cane, Laurie's friend and also a member of RCS; he told us Laurie would have welcomed the involvement of young people. Joan then had a bright idea: flowers, yes, but not real ones.



We needed to find a local artist who could lead the sculpture project with a community-centered approach: local young people could play a significant creative role, benefiting from time spent exploring ideas and experiencing collaboration

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### CANAL HERITAGE MURAL

Early in 2019, Retford Civic Society, in partnership with Retford Business Forum, successfully brought in funding from Notts County Council's Local Improvement Scheme and Bassetlaw District Council, to improve the signage within the town. This project has seen the refurbishment of the canal and town centre information panels, new finger posts within the town, and, soon to be installed, a Town Lock archway and Chesterfield Canal signage.



As part of this scheme, Jenny King was asked by Pam Barnsdale of the Retford Civic Society to lead a piece of artwork to reflect the History and Heritage of the Chesterfield Canal in Retford. As a Retford artist and member of the Art Society, Jenny had previously helped with painting the 'Sheep Mural' on Spa Lane in town.

This piece of work was designed to improve and brighten the walkway into town from the station, between Albert Road and Town Lock. The brief also included the involvement of the community and children's work. As this was a huge undertaking, Jenny invited fellow members of Artempo to paint buildings and aspects of the canal.



Children from Ordsall Primary School created footprints for the path with help from Cath Ray, while 5th Retford Rainbows coloured most of the trees and wildlife. Artempo is a Retford-based group of twelve well-known artists, and was formed in 2012 by Carol Eason. Other members who took part included Polly Warren, Ann Everitt, Pat Carrington, Rose Elkington, Michael Eason, Cath Ray, Wendy Smith and Christine Howard. They have exhibited work in Retford, Doncaster, Hull and Clumber Park.

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# CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

It's that time of year again! It doesn't seem very long ago that I was looking back over 2018. This Newsletter and the News Sheet published in August celebrate our achievements in 2019. We've an interesting mix of news and articles for you to enjoy. I'd like to comment on them and the role of the Civic Society. 2019 was once more a busy year, with lots to occupy the attention of our committee and, I hope, plenty of activities to keep members interested in what we do.

We've three celebrations to look forward to in 2020. It's our 30th Anniversary and, to celebrate our achievements, we'll be holding a Celebration Lunch at the West Retford Hotel on Sunday 12 November – put the date in your diary. Friday 8 May will be VE Day when we celebrate the end of WWII in Europe; activities and entertainments are being planned for Retford on that day. Later, lots of activities will be taking place to honour the Mayflower Pilgrims' journey to America in 1620. In November the Mayflower 400 Project culminates in a week of events in Retford and the surrounding area. Much to look forward to!

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

It was great news that Kings' Park received a Green Flag Award for the 12th year running. This international award is a sign to the public that it boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. They also won the Fields in Trust's award of 'The Best Park in the East Midlands' – a 'sheer delight'. Well done all involved in the planning and maintenance, and to the volunteer work force.

One major litter-pick took place, with participants enjoying the fellowship of working together and improving our local environment. Our efforts are appreciated by the general public and BDC. Although the number of bags of rubbish remains high, overall things are improving. More volunteers means that we are able to pick up litter over a larger area. Plastic bottles are still a major problem – perhaps the solution is a returnable deposit system and more free water stations around town and at service stations?

We still have two major concerns: the Masons' Arms and St Alban's Church,

the latter not giving a good first impression of Retford; let's hope that the planning application succeeds. It's good to see the restoration of Beardsall Row completed and that the old TSB building in The Square is being renovated; work has now started on Swannacks Furniture building. Our Planning Committee continues to monitor, comment on and discuss planning applications whilst overseeing developments. They have regular meetings with BDC Officials and it's obvious, by the turnout of relevant Officers, that they also find them beneficial. Thanks go to Bruce Barnett, Bob Lamb, Simon Holdaway and Andy Massey for their continuing enthusiasm and active involvement.

On Retford Charter Day in May we had a stall on Carolgate to publicise our work and launch our Grand Book Draw in support of projects in the town.

In September we organised our 12th Heritage Open Day; it took place alongside the very first North Notts Literary Festival as well as the start of the Chesterfield Canal Walking Festival. The combination provided a tourism boost and a showcase of our rich heritage, literary talent and beautiful scenery. The weekend was a great success, bringing together many organisations. This year Heritage Open Day will be on Saturday, 12 September, sponsored by North Notts Bid. The theme is 'Journeys' and links into the second North Notts Literary Festival and The Chesterfield Canal Walking Festival. As usual we have an enthusiastic Committee planning and working closely with Bassetlaw Museum, BDC and North Notts Bid. Please note the date, come and support us and offer your help for an hour or two on a stall if you can.

During the year our Social Committee organised a number of events both for fund-raising and fellowship. Our

thanks to Joan Turner and Hilary Holdaway for organising our visits so well, and to all of our members who came along and joined in the raffles. Thanks also to Tina and Roger Jones for organising a most enjoyable quiz.

Pam Barnsdale, as always, worked tirelessly moving projects on with BDC, the Business Forum, North Notts Bid and other organisations, as well as applying for funding to finance future projects. You can read about all of these projects elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Our maintenance team continues to work hard repairing and improving the town centre. Amongst other projects, they have repainted the Dyers Court passageway and repaired the broken Cannon Square information panel. Thanks to Butch Barnsdale, Gavin Johnston, Roger Jones and Barrie King.

I'd also like to thank the editor of our Newsletter, Tina Jones, for producing such a professional publication, Pat Barnett for the Summer News-sheet and Barrie King, who continues to move us forward through our website and social media. A younger generation is now receiving information about our activities through Facebook, and we are noticing a huge increase in interest in our website.

Retford-in-Bloom was a great success and encouraged commercial, retail, residential areas and schools to make Retford more attractive for visitors and the community. The pubs really exceeded expectation. The sub-committee (Adrian and Lesley Sumner, Jan Williamson, Richard Lyon, Bob Davenport, Joan Turner, Alan Laurie and me) are now working hard to make 2020 a success. A special thank-you must go to Bob Lamb and Pam Barnsdale for securing sponsorship.

We continue to support the Retford Business Forum; a representative attends their meetings. The Forum's

aim is to create an attractive image of Retford as a market town with individual shopping offering great value, and to increase awareness over a wider area of Retford as a successful shopping environment, thus increasing footfall.

We now have 281 members; we would like more, and the easiest way is through personal contact: please ask neighbours and friends to join. Forms are available from The Hub and Bassetlaw Museum. Remember: the 300th member recruited will receive free membership for the year! At times you might ask: 'Do we make a difference?' Surely everyone reading the reports in our Newsletters 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're unable to support physically, your membership gives us the finance to continue our work; and the greater the number of members we represent, the more authority we have when negotiating.

*I've thoroughly enjoyed my 12th year as your Chairman and feel really proud of what we achieved in 2019. It's been wonderful to see more members responding to the calls for help: manning stalls, collecting litter and offering their skills and knowledge, etc to help improve the quality of life in our town. Volunteers are now bringing cakes to Open Meetings and helping to wash up, freeing the committee to answer members' queries during the interval. Many thanks to all those people. Special thanks 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 – and, once again, I end with what should be the Retford Civic Society motto and call for action: 'Onwards and Upwards'.*

Derek Turner

## PLANNING

It is good to see the old TSB building in The Square being renovated at last. The flats and studios will meet a need and let's hope the shop and restaurant on the ground floor are occupied soon. Well done local developer, Glynn Beech who has tackled not just this building but the previously derelict one on Beardsall's Row. Planning permission has been granted for the restoration and conversion of St Alban's church into dwellings, but it is not yet clear that the building has been sold and that it will actually happen. We can only hope!

Bassetlaw District Council still does not have an up-to-date Local Plan allowing them to control where new housing and other development take place. As a result, planning permission has had to be given for several large developments around Retford which might otherwise have been refused. A recent refusal of permission for up to 60 dwellings off Longholme Road is being appealed and there is a current application for 160 more off Bigsby Road. Producing a Local Plan is not easy but the Council needs to get it done so that we can again have proper planning control in Bassetlaw.

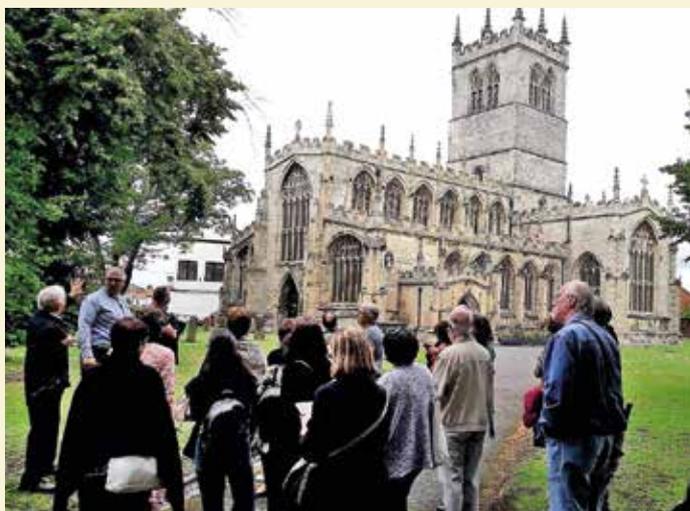
## HERITAGE WALKS

During 2019 the Heritage Walks team have led some very informative walks to interesting and interested groups.

On 30 May, a group from our twin town, Pfungstadt, Germany, visited Retford. It was a fine sunny day when they were dropped off at the Market Square; it was difficult to keep an eye on them, so interested were they by the lively market! Rounded up, we then walked through to St Swithun's Church where, seated, more of the town's history could be explained, aided by their translator. Unfortunately, the short time they had in the town could not do justice to all there is to reveal, but let's hope they will return to learn more! Bob Lamb, Pam Barnsdale, Adrian Sumner and Mylle West were the guides on this day.

On 27 June, Newark Civic Society visited for an evening walk, led by Jenny King and Roger Stenson. The group was fascinated by the history, stories and architecture of Retford. Kings' Park, at its summer best, amazed the visitors by its diverse areas and beauty. They also commented on the vibrancy of the town and our "coffee culture", well worth a future outing. Although only 20 miles away, many of them had never visited Retford. They also expressed the hope that our Civic Society could arrange a visit to Newark.

On 6 July, a party of Palestinian Christians were taken on a tour of the town by Derek Turner. The group were being hosted by members of All Hallows Church, Ordsall. They were greeted by the Town Mayor, Gary Clarkson, in the Town Hall and were really excited to have their photographs taken with him in full regalia. Following a tour, the morning culminated with a fish and chip lunch.



The Civic Society joined with the Chesterfield Canal Trust, as part of their Canal Walking Festival, to lead walks around Retford on 15 and 22 September. There were four walks, two on each Sunday, for walkers visiting the town and also some locals. The weather wasn't always kind and umbrellas were required. There was much interest from all the groups of visitors about the history of Retford and how it had developed with the routing of the canal and the railway. The walks were led by Derek and Joan Turner, Bruce Barnett, Jenny King, Roger Stenson and Mylle West. This is the second year that RCS has joined with the Canal Trust to promote walks around Retford through the Chesterfield Canal Walking Festival.

Roger Stenson.

# 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 school children.

A ceremony was held in the ballroom at Retford Town Hall: awards were presented on behalf of the Civic Society by the President of the Rotary Club, Judith Longden, and the Deputy Mayor, Carolyn Troop. The Rotary Club of Retford – Percy Laws Memorial Fund sponsored this year's event.

Certificates were awarded in four main categories: residential, shop and business fronts, public houses and schools, together with special community awards.

Chairman of the Civic Society, 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.' He also thanked North Notts BID and the Retford Business Forum for their support of the Retford Hanging Basket Scheme .

## BEST FRONT GARDEN:

**East Ward:** Large Garden – 27 Bigsby Road.  
Small Garden – 33 Armstrong Road.

**West Ward:** Large Garden – The Barn, Rectory Road.  
Small Garden – 9 West Park Place.

**North Ward:** Large Garden – 1 Tiln Court.  
Small Garden – 52 Galway Crescent.

**South Ward:** Large Garden – 33 High Street, Ordsall.  
Small Garden – 26 The Oval & 17 Glen Eagles Way, Ordsall.

## JUDGES' AWARD:

An award of excellence was presented to 27 Bigsby Road for high standards of floral display that was designed to provide maximum interest in every season.

## HIGHLY COMMENDED:

29 & 31 Gomersall Close



## SHIELD FOR THE BEST PUBLIC HOUSE DISPLAY:

Whitehouses Inn

## BEST FLORAL SHOP AND BUSINESS FRONT:

King's Furnishing & Coffee Shop

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

West Street Pre-School

## BEST PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT – POTATO-GROWING:

Bracken Lane Primary Academy

## BEST SECONDARY SCHOOL – POTATO PROJECT

Retford Oaks Academy

**THE MAGGIE BATTERSBY SHIELD** was presented to St Swithun's C of E Primary School to acknowledge the continuing development of the school garden and growing projects.

## THE INSPIRED SCHOOL GARDEN AWARD 2019:

Carr Hill Primary for a whole school carrot-growing competition, team vegetable growing areas and a special feature garden full of flowers and an insect 'hotel'.

## CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION:

Certificates of appreciation were presented to:

- Alf Needham for maintaining the flowerbeds in front of Goodwin Hall.
- North Notts BID for sponsoring the Retford-in-Bloom Hanging Basket Scheme.

## COMMUNITY AWARD:

The 2019 Community Awards were presented to:

- Acer Landscape for freely maintaining grassed areas around the town.
- Retford Litter Heroes for maintaining and keeping litter-free an area of the Chesterfield Canal.
- Liam Wildish for organising litter picks and cleaning dirty road signs.
- Python Litter Pickers for keeping the tow paths and canal clear of rubbish.



The 2019 Planning Committee consisted of Adrian Sumner, Lesley Sumner, Karen Hall, Alan Laurie, Jan Williamson, Joan Turner, Bob Davenport, Richard Lyon and Derek Turner.

## HANGING BASKETS

The town centre hanging basket scheme, managed by Acer Landscapes and overseen by the Civic Society and Business Forum, to brighten up our town centre, looks set to go from strength to strength in 2020. This is due to the much-appreciated and valued sponsorship from Strawsons Property Ltd and the Business Improvement District.

If you have a town centre business or property and would like to know more about this subsidised scheme that provides a fully maintained hanging basket, flags and a Christmas tree during the year, then contact Acer Landscapes at [info@acer-landscapes.com](mailto:info@acer-landscapes.com) for further details.

## REGENERATION FUNDING

Thanks to Government funding via Bassetlaw District Council, the Civic Society was able to work with Acer Landscapes on a clearing and planting scheme for Retford's ring road, which over the years had become overgrown with weeds and self sets.

Volunteers (whom we thank) from Kings' Park and the Civic Society helped to plant out the raised beds. The North Notts BID has kindly agreed to fund the on-going maintenance of these beds by Acer Landscapes, which will help provide a real floral and well-maintained welcome to the town.

The funding has also enabled RCS volunteers to undertake repairs to the cannon information panel, paint and brighten up neglected areas of the town, and carry out repairs to the pawnbroker's balls off Carolgate (high up in the alley opposite Costa).



## STREET SIGNS

Members of the Society have long wanted to see the Retford wall-mounted, Victorian cast iron street signs restored, and thanks to a NCC Community Fund grant from Councillor Steve Vickers, this project can now go ahead.

Jay Chapman, who undertook the restoration of the London-to-York sign on the Herbalist (White Hart) pub, has been commissioned to take on the project.

So far, nineteen of the Town Centre street signs have been re-furbished, and, thanks to the funding we received, we can now extend



the project to other outlying areas of the town where these signs are situated. They are very elegant and enhance the street scene; do look out for them.



## SCULPTURE IN CAROLGATE *Continued from p1*

with others, and have a real sense of achievement and pride with the end result. Who better to do this than Kenny Roach from West Street Gallery, who had already made many contributions to the town, like his giant poppies, and often had youngsters working with him?

So a small delegation, headed by Pam, went to see Kenny, and he was most enthusiastic. He produced sketches, but warned that his sculptures always 'evolved' – he couldn't guarantee that they would turn out exactly like the drawing!

Pam discussed the project with HSBC, the landlord and local authorities; and eventually permissions were given to install the artwork outside the HSBC building. Meanwhile, occasionally someone would go to peep at what was evolving in Kenny's yard – and marvel.

More money had to be found to support the bequest. Requests to support a community Retford-in-Bloom floral artwork project were met with enthusiasm and funding from Notts County Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Inspire Learning, the Rotary Club of Retford and Retford Lions, enabling the project to be completed.

After many months of creative work from Kenny and Inspire Learning students, the space outside HSBC was cleared, and the sculpture was lifted into place. Immediately it became a talking point, with people sitting to chat on the bench conveniently opposite, and children inspecting all the minute details, like the insects. An information board was added, and then it was ready to be officially unveiled, in the presence of members of the late Laurie Hudson's family.



Kenny said, 'Apart from the fact that I've had my eye on that space for some time, I welcome any opportunity where the community can come together and just "create". Being able to include students from the Inspire Learning Programme also makes me feel there's an investment in the future somehow.'



Jenny King and Pam Barnsdale

## CANAL HERITAGE MURAL *Continued from p1*

Work for this project took five months to complete. Initial tasks for Jenny included liaising with the printers, then several research visits to the Denman Library and Bassetlaw Museum, where she found staff most helpful.

Friends from the Canal and River Trust helped her to track down Kevin, who accidentally 'pulled the plug' and drained the canal back in 1978. She needed to know the colour of his dredger in order to paint a picture of the event! Old historical black and white photographs were also sent, and redrawn and painted in imagined colours. A continuous background of canal footpath and scenery was painted on six A3 landscape sheets to meet specifications for the later printing and enlarging by Burgess Design and Print. Gradually the artwork arrived from the other artists in many different sizes. Each piece had to be scanned and re-sized on the computer to fit the specified A3 sized background. Help from Jenny's husband, Barrie, was invaluable at this point. The small component pieces were printed, cut out, and arranged chronologically and glued in position by Artempo.

Several helpful visits to Rob at Burgess Design and Print and liaison with Pam resulted in the text and subsequent transformation into the thirty-six foot long piece of artwork you see today in the passage between



Town Lock and Albert Road in Retford.

Civic Society volunteers undertook the removal of graffiti, litter and weeds in the area and the painting of a dreary concrete wall, prior to the installation.

All those who had contributed to the project were invited to an official unveiling and reception on 28 August by the Chair of NCC, the Chair of BDC, and our Retford Mayor.



Our sincere thanks go to all those involved, especially Jenny, for making this such a successful community project.



## RETFORD STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements have been taking place at Retford Railway Station, thanks to a successful bid from Bassetlaw Council for a Community Grant from LNER.

The Ordsall subway has seen new surfacing, lighting and repair to the stairs take place. A fresh coat of paint has also lightened the area, and is now waiting for the installation of artwork. It is hoped that CCTV can be installed on site to further improve what was an intimidating area.



Graphics have been applied to the seating, along with the installation of heritage panels within the brick arches on Platform 1, including one from the Civic Society.

Off-site new finger post signs have been installed leading into the town; further signage works are due to take place at and on the station.

## OPEN MEETINGS 2019

It has been very encouraging to see so many people at the Open Meetings this year. The talks have been very different from one another, while all being relevant to our town, from Retford's importance in the Mayflower Pilgrims' story, to the Union Workhouse in the more recent past, and policing in Retford today.

In March, having been sent members' questions beforehand, Andy Rooke spoke about policing. Austerity was the key to all he said. There were questions about drugs, the lack of police on the streets, and CCTV. Andy encouraged everyone to be observant and report what they see. The message overall was that resources only allow police to be reactive, not proactive.



The AGM in July was well attended as usual, and we heard about 'The Deserving Poor - the East Retford Union Workhouse' from Harry Foxley, a most knowledgeable speaker. Without notes and with illustrations, he told us about the history of workhouses, and about ours in particular, built in 1838 on Spital Hill at a cost of £4,400.

There were many fascinating details. The workhouse closed in 1930; the building was demolished in 1975.

After refreshments, the AGM took place. As well as the usual reports, the election of officers took place, and Derek gave a special vote of thanks to Hilary Holdaway, who was stepping down. Hilary has organised several of our successful trips and will be missed. We also had a short talk on the progress of the Canal Mural by Jenny King, and were thrilled to see the artwork on the panels.



At the October meeting Rick Brand, Chair of Bassetlaw Christian Heritage, told us about 'Mayflower 2020'. His conversational style was easy to listen to, and the many illustrations and charts were most instructive. Retford is the central point of an area with a radius of 30 miles, which is where the key players in the Mayflower story originated. The story is being told in the museums at Bassetlaw Museum, The Hub and Gainsborough United Reformed Church. With places like Scrooby, Babworth and Austerfield, in 2020 we should expect many American visitors wanting to see where it all started.



As well as the talks, we conduct 'business', reporting on the RCS finances, planning, projects, events, etc, all covered here in other articles. Members are able to ask questions and make suggestions: we are improving the sound system!

The break for refreshments is a time for socialising and enjoying the cakes, very kindly contributed by members, whom we thank very much. In fact, there were so many at the last meeting that Pat Barnett has volunteered to be 'controller of cakes' in future!

## HERITAGE OPEN DAY

This year's Heritage Day took place in sunshine on Saturday 14 September; the theme was 'The Chesterfield Canal and Retford's Working Heritage'. Twelve heritage venues were open, free for the public to enjoy, with exhibitions, tours and talks taking place throughout the town.



The Retford Community Choir sang working songs at the Town Hall, where Mayor Garry Clarkson kindly led a tour, for the public to learn more of the building's history. Vintage buses and cars were on show, and took trips out to the various venues.

The Chesterfield Canal Trust pulled out all the stops with stalls, vintage

boats and boat trips taking place, and the Alarum Theatre performed 'Idle Women' at Retford Little Theatre, a tale of women who worked on the waterways, during the 2nd World War. The theatre was also the venue for an art exhibition with relevance to the Canal.

A Victorian family of paupers, with a taste for pickpocketing and begging,



could be seen roaming the streets of Retford, along with a Yorkshire navy who had worked digging out the canal.

It was a great day for the town, bringing increased visitor numbers to appreciate the history and heritage of Retford, and to the benefit of local businesses. The day finished with an excellent evening performance by Harworth Brass at the Town Hall.

A big thank-you must go to all those who took part, and our special thanks go to the North Notts Business Improvement District for funding the event and to Bassetlaw District Council for their support with the printing of posters and programmes.

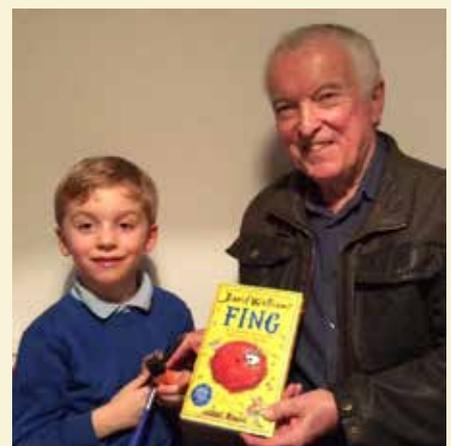
Heritage Day 2020 will take place on 12 September. Linking in to the Mayflower Pilgrim celebrations, the theme will revolve around 'Journeys' of all kinds.

## GRAND BOOK DRAW

**Rudi Gate (5) was the lucky winner of the First Prize £50 voucher in our Grand Book Draw on Heritage Day. He spent some of the money on Fing by David Walliams and pens from W H Smith, as well as a book for his little brother. The other 18 prize-winners included 7 of our members.**

The success of the project was due to generous donations from local authors and from member Roger Billingsley, who left us his grand collection of unopened Folio Society books. Thanks are also due to members who bought and sold tickets for us, both before and on Charter Day and Heritage Day.

After costs, a healthy profit of £254 was made. The Committee decided that we should donate this to support the framing of the Separatists' Embroideries (see separate article).



## THE PILGRIM EMBROIDERIES

The Pilgrim Embroideries are individual, sewn artworks depicting the five churches in our area which feature in the Mayflower Pilgrims' story. They have been created to commemorate the 1620 Separatists' departure for America, and will feature in the Mayflower 400 celebrations.

RCS member, Jenny King, designed and worked the pieces, with Janet Archer, Fay Evason, Lynn Hadland, Beverley Naylor and Jo Walker – all members of the newly-formed Pilgrim Embroiderers Group. Many friends, councillors and members of the public have helped and added several stitches each.

The embroideries will eventually be given to the five Pilgrim churches of Babworth, Austerfield, Scrooby, St Swithun's Retford and Sturton-le-Steeple.



In the style of the Quaker Tapestries, care has been taken to use only authentic fabric and threads. They will be framed in medium oak and glazed at a cost of just over £1000, to ensure that they last for many years.

Retford Civic Society has donated £254 towards this commemorative project and we look forward to seeing them on display at Bassetlaw Museum later this year.

## A JOB WELL DONE

For some years the Society has been urging the District Council to clamp down on the display of advertising banners on fences around the town; we offered to help. The Council has legal power to remove these banners and can even prosecute those responsible for them, but has done very little.



In October we were asked to act on the Council's behalf and remove over 30 banners which had accumulated on the fence near Morrisons. Within a week, about 15 volunteers from the Society had not only removed the banners but cut back the vegetation almost blocking the footway. As the photographs show, the improvement has been dramatic. We continue to make it clear that we are willing to tackle other banners but, as the legal powers rest with the Council, we can only act if requested to do so.



## LITTER-PICKING

On a sunny day in March, a large number of members and friends turned out for a big Spring clean-up of the town centre and towpath. The pictures show the well-equipped group, and the bags that were filled by just three members working in the car park behind Boots.

Unfortunately, the Autumn litter-pick had to be cancelled, because of bad weather.



## QUIZ AND PIE & PEAS SUPPER

The annual quiz and supper on 2 May was well attended as usual. One round in particular was very popular: guessing small everyday objects concealed in bags. It will be difficult to devise something equally intriguing this year.

The 2020 quiz will be at the Clumber Inn, Ordsall, on 30 April, 7.00 for 7.30 pm. Cost: £7.50. Come as a team, or individually (and make some new friends). Please let Tina Jones know (email [grovevill@aol.com](mailto:grovevill@aol.com) or tel. 869549) by 10 April, and mention any dietary requirements.

## RETFORD'S DENMAN LIBRARY: THE NEXT CHAPTER

As Retford Library undergoes extensive refurbishment and prepares to reopen its doors in Spring 2020, it is timely to look back on its fascinating history. On 6 October 2017, the library celebrated the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Denman Public Library – an event made possible through the generosity of local philanthropist Mr Thomas Hercy Denman, who presented his fine old Georgian house to the Retford Borough for use as a library and museum.



The Denman building has seen many changes since it opened as a public library. In 1933 the children's library on the first floor was opened. Soon after, Nottinghamshire County Council took over control from Retford Borough. As use of the service steadily increased in the following years, it was recognised that the building needed extending, but it was

not until 1960 that this much-needed work finally took place, providing increased library and cultural facilities and also preserving the character and charm of the Georgian house.

The Opening of Retford Library Extensions, 13 September 1961 reported: "The ground floor now contains a large Junior Library at the front of the building in the old part of the house which was formerly the Adult Library. In the new extension there is a light and airy Adult Lending Library with an Exhibition Gallery leading directly from it and a Lecture Room. These rooms are grouped round a small garden, and the use of glass and French windows help to give the feeling that the garden is a part of the library. On the first floor, the Junior Library has been converted into a Reference Library."

Further building alterations were carried out in the 1980s, followed by the introduction of a computerised library catalogue and issue system in 1991, and of self-service machines in 2010. From 2016, the cultural organisation Inspire has been in charge of the county's library service; Retford Library now offers an increasingly wide range of cultural experiences and learning opportunities. Its current refurbishment, according to Inspire's Chief Executive Peter Gaw, "will create a high quality and sustainable library building whilst reflecting the building's heritage. Providing better access to the unique heritage collection and making better use of the outside spaces are key improvements customers will see". 2020 thus marks an exciting new chapter for the Denman Library, which remains at the heart of the local community and will continue to play an important role in the town's cultural heritage.

*Helen Fox, Librarian, has kindly written this article.*

## VISIT TO DERBY: 10 APRIL

Off we went to Derby on 10 April to enjoy a very special and informative day. The museum attached to the Royal Crown Derby factory was fascinating and depicted some of the earliest and rarest pieces produced in their history. We were full of admiration for the craftspeople we saw at work; the factory tour gave us all a greater understanding of how each piece is produced. Several of us fell in love with the hand-painted designs, which were incredibly beautiful as well as expensive!



Afterwards there was the opportunity for a little retail therapy, and a delightful lunch of fresh sandwiches, cake and scones all served perfectly on Royal Crown Derby.

The afternoon tour of Derby Museum enabled us all to learn about Derby and its Enlightenment connection. We were introduced to the paintings of Joseph Wright; they demonstrated the use of light and shade as well as the new thinking of the era. We were privileged to see the 500th anniversary display of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings from the Queen's Collection. Special mention needs to be made of his anatomical drawings, which were just breathtaking.

Then it was on to Derby Cathedral: the green man; Florence Nightingale; Bess of Hardwick and the Cavendish connection. The beautiful yellow and blue stained glass windows with their clear images may just inspire me into producing some textile work.

Thank you to Joan and Derek for yet another wonderfully organised and informative trip. Just a small point: the raffle wasn't quite as culturally uplifting as the rest of the day but there is always hope when Derek is around.

*Carrie Young*

## VISITS 2020

### Wednesday 29 April – Harrogate

A visit to this magnificent Spa Town, with a talk in the Royal Pump Room on its history and free time in Harrogate.

### Wednesday 15 July 15 – Arkwright's Cromford Mills, Derbyshire

Discover this UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a tour of the birthplace of the modern factory system, the Visitor Centre, village, canal and St Mary's Church.

### Wednesday 18 November – Leeds at Christmas

Come with us, meet Leeds Civic Trust guides, tour the main historic highlights of the city centre and enjoy the decorated streets.

## WONDERS OF WOODHALL SPA & HEROES OF HORNCASTLE: 3 JULY

Woodhall Spa is deep in the heart of Lincolnshire and there in the woods you will find..... a cinema dating from 1922, or rather the Kinema in the Woods with its famous Compton Kinestar Organ!



We were given a short talk on the history of the Kinema and were then enthralled to hear a well-known melody played on the organ as it rose from its central lift onto the stage. Further tunes followed with, of course, *The Dambusters* (we were in the centre of much WW2 RAF action). The organ dates from 1927 when it was installed in the Super Cinema, Charing Cross Road; it moved to the Kinema in 1986. Joy and much hilarity was to come with the black and white Laurel and Hardy film, *Busy Bodies*. What a wonderful way to spend an hour or so!

Then to Horncastle, for a visit to the Joseph Banks Centre, a walk around the town, and time to explore. Our guides showed us many fine buildings, two pretty rivers, a historic canal, a beautiful church, interesting small shops, and even some Roman remains. Then there was much to learn about distinguished local people, many of whom are celebrated with blue plaques.

Towering above these good citizens is Sir Joseph Banks, botanist, explorer and philanthropist, who spent his early life locally. Banks was fortunate to be born into wealth but, uninterested in being an idle landowner, he devoted his life to botany and scientific discovery. In 1769 he planned and raised money for his first voyage round the world with Captain Cook on *The Endeavour* and returned with thousands of plant specimens, which he classified and catalogued. Later he sponsored many other voyages, supervised the development of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and rose to be President of the Royal Society for 42 years.

We learned about current research into Lincolnshire wild flowers, which are being collected and preserved largely by volunteers under the guidance of London's Natural History Museum. The beautiful courtyard garden contains some 70 species, many now familiar in our gardens, collected by Sir Joseph or other plant collectors he supported.

Other highlights included the workshop of William Marwood, who rose to be Chief Executioner after 10 years perfecting the 'long drop' method of hanging. We visited the site of the annual Horse Fair, one of the biggest and best fairs in Europe at the time. It supplied Lincolnshire Blacks for the Charge of the Light Brigade, but was reputed to be a scene of much rollicking behaviour and provided busy employment for the local brothels, which maybe also maintained Horncastle's reputation for excellence in their own way (but no blue plaques).

We finished the day with cream tea at the Admiral Rodney and finally the excitement of Derek's raffle on the way home. A very big thank-you to Joan for organising such an interesting day.

*Rosie Allan and Judith Jones*

## RCS VISIT TO LICHFIELD: 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

Lichfield is a hidden gem. Most people are vaguely aware that it has a cathedral, but since it doesn't have the same public profile as, say, Lincoln or Durham, few Retfordians will seldom if ever have visited the city. But that was put right on a most enjoyable day of discovery in the early autumn sunshine.

The arrangements followed a typical pattern for an RCS trip in that it began with coffee and biscuits, and continued with tours in two groups with knowledgeable guides. Ours, somewhat oddly, had a broad West Scotland accent, but he was actually one of the best tourist guides I've ever encountered; he'd clearly known the city inside-out for many years, and was a mine of information and thoroughly engaging. After ninety minutes in his delightful company we were free to get lunch and to explore the city at our leisure. The attractions on offer included the Georgian home and garden of Erasmus Darwin

(physician, inventor, poet, and grandfather of Charles Darwin); Samuel Johnson's home (yes, he was a son of Lichfield, despite being more readily associated with London); and of course the magnificent cathedral itself, built to a striking design, and the only three-spired one in England.

One slightly disappointing aspect was that there were a number of spare seats on the bus, and in fact in numerical terms it was the smallest RCS outing ever. Those who didn't go missed a treat. Those who did not only had a great day but distinguished themselves, comparatively few though they were, by raising the highest-ever sum in the raffle: £73 - doubled to £146 via match funding - for good causes in Retford. The raffle itself was as much fun as ever; commiserations if you won a prize, especially if it was the same one you won three trips previously.

We are indebted, not for the first time, to Hilary Holdaway for organising the

trip. Thanks, Hilary, for introducing us to this beautiful and historic city. I shall certainly be making a return trip under my own steam, as I'm sure others will.

*Rob White*



## CHRISTMAS TRIP TO YORK: 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

The trip to York set off from Kettlewells with everyone in good spirits. Joy of joys – it was not raining!

Our disembarkation point was near the Castle Museum. It is many years since we have visited and so after a coffee and biscuit we thoroughly enjoyed walking round. The special exhibitions were outstanding in both presentation and content, and included *1914 When the World Changed Forever* and *The Sixties* (John, my husband, has told me so much about the sixties that I feel as if I was there!)

Lunch and a gentle stroll around the Christmas Market were followed for some of the group by a tour of Fairfax House. This stunning Georgian Townhouse

was dressed for Christmas, eighteenth century style, and looked dazzling. The excellent guide outlined the history of the house and its owners, and pointed out the fine furniture and furnishings, richly decorated ceilings and a display of authentic period costumes. The delicious glass of mulled wine and mince pie enjoyed in the Fairfax House kitchen were an appropriate finale to a great day out. Good company and interesting venues plus excellent shopping opportunities – what more can you want?

Well, not quite the end of the day as things got even better. In Derek's traditional raffle on the way home I was (un)fortunate enough to win a prize. The quality of the prizes never ceases to amaze – and at least



that is John's Christmas present sorted!

Many and most sincere thanks to Joan for organizing, what was indeed, a great day out.

*Heather Reid*



## ST SWITHUN'S CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Once again the mass of colourful, community Christmas trees looked magnificent in St Swithun's Church from Saturday 30 November to Saturday 7 December. An astonishing 102 trees were this year submitted, requiring a last-minute opening up of the vestry area to accommodate them all.

Our trusty team of volunteers had already been busy during the week fixing the boards on the pews and organising the electrical connections, ready for the trees to be brought in on Thursday evening. The team also put up the large outside tree with its beautiful lights. There was a near catastrophe when it blew over; thanks go to the Retford firemen who responded to our cry for help.

During the event, many of our members volunteered to help on the door, to provide soup and cakes, as well as to serve refreshments. Every year two members collect our tree from the Retford and Gainsborough Garden Centre, where they kindly offer us a discount. The four members on the photo are John and Christine Hayward, and Joan and Alan Cordall, who decorate the tree each year. Our tree stands near the altar and stays there until Twelfth Night.

We have received a letter of thanks from the church for all of our support for this important annual event. Please consider volunteering your help next Christmas in any way you can. Give your details to Joan, who will pass them on to the church organiser. Well done all those people who already help.



## STAR FESTIVAL 2019

The Star Festival team at The Grove were delighted to welcome nearly 900 visitors to the Church during the two weekends of the Star Festival this year. This included two schools that came to visit during the week.

The main focus of the festival is to show the people of Retford that it is still a thriving church community even though the sanctuary cannot be fully opened to visitors yet, and to raise funds donated by visitors for a chosen charity. This year over £100 was raised for Bassetlaw Hospice.

People came through the Church doors for different reasons: some to reminisce and some visiting for the first time; some were old and some were very young; some for

refreshments (the bacon butties and soup are always popular, not to mention the cakes), and some just to see the beautiful displays, which were from 26 different groups or organisations. This year the Remembrance corner and the children's corners proved to be very popular.

The festival ended with a memorable and uplifting 'Startingle' service led by The Grove's new Minister, Rev. Julie Coates. Ask anyone who was present about Humphrey, the camel and his nose!

The Star Festival organising team thank you for all the support and encouragement they received before, during and after the event. They hope to be back in 2020 with more displays, and aim to have more visitors.

*Christine White*



*RCS writes: This was our third year with a display, and The Chesterfield Canal Project, showing the new mural, took centre stage, with some of our other art projects also starring. Our banner proclaimed "Making Retford Shine" – a fitting statement of our aspirations for the town as well as the Star Festival.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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