



# SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

## Newsletter - October 2015

### PROTECTING OUR OLD BUILDINGS

by Brendan Haigh, Chairman

One of the principal purposes of the Society is the protection, preservation and conservation of Southwell's old buildings. The town has one of the largest concentrations of listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest in the East Midlands. There are 243 such properties as well as two Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

It was as a response to the demolition, or the threat of demolition, of some of our old buildings that the Society was formed in 1971. Amongst such buildings was the small terrace of cottages known as "Sunnyside" at the junction of Westhorpe with Oxton Road. They were saved, came into the ownership of the Nottinghamshire Buildings Preservation Trust and were subsequently renovated by them. Not so fortunate were the buildings in King Street which fronted onto what is now the site of the Saturday market.

Perhaps the greatest loss was that of the "Red Prebend" (so called because it was the oldest brick-built building in Southwell) in Prebend Passage next to the Methodist Church. During its demolition in 1970 it was found to be a timber-framed construction from the early-16th century.

Another timber-framed building was an unprepossessing garage in King Street dating from late medieval times on what became the site of the former Co-op shop (now the library).

Other historic buildings have been substantially reduced in size. In particular the Residence in Vicars' Court, Burgage Manor and Elmfield House, although the current owners are no doubt grateful to have less space to heat.

The Society's planning committee looks very carefully at all applications to alter listed buildings. Fortunately there have been no applications in recent years to demolish any, although in a rather different category the development of the former school site in Church Street so close to the Roman villa Scheduled Ancient Monument caused, and continues to cause, concern.

The Neighbourhood Plan recently approved by the Town Council, but still subject to ratification at a public referendum, proposes a new class of protected building namely "non-registered designated heritage assets" which could include new buildings such as

the Diocesan offices at Jubilee House and some environmentally friendly contemporary properties.

As important to the listed buildings themselves is their setting, and it is this which poses the greatest future risk. Some are situated in large gardens which sooner or later, no doubt, will be eyed acquisitively by some speculative builder.

One such threatened setting was Brackenhurst Hall, where an application to construct two wind turbines was rejected following an appeal in which the Society played an active part.

Again, the Neighbourhood Plan, if it becomes a constituent element of the District Council's statutory Local Development Plan, should afford greater protection in such instances. The Society has helped to change public attitudes on conservation issues but must remain ever vigilant to new threats and challenges.



*"Sunnyside" cottages in Westhorpe as they are now.*

# PLANNING REPORT

by Mike Struggles, Planning Secretary

Last year we reported that three major reoccurring issues remained unresolved. They were Brackenhurst wind turbines, the old Minster School site and Beckett's Field.

Happily the secretary of state rejected NTU's (Brackenhurst) appeal against NSDC's decision to refuse planning permission for the two wind turbines. The application to build 34 houses on Beckett's field has finally been given the go-ahead after the secretary of state declined to call in the application. The Society continues to comment on amendments to the design as they are published. The old Minster School site has now had planning permission confirmed but there is no sign of action on site.

This year there have been planning applications for three of the allocated housing sites. They are the Rainbow's site on the Burgage, land at the back of Halloughton Road and land off Lower Kirklington Road. We have agreed with some aspects of all applications with

objection to other parts. In the case of the Rainbow's site (32 dwellings) we have welcomed the conversion of some of the prison buildings and the general concept of retaining the old prison layout. We have however criticized other details.

The Halloughton Road application covers the conversion of Springfield Bungalow into 12 supported living units for the Reach charity and the speculative development of 38 dwellings. The Society approved of the conversion of the bungalow. However we had objections to the housing development, including lack of detailed information as to how spring water on the site, which is considerable, would be controlled.

The third site is "High Gables" on Lower Kirklington Road. This application is for 12 houses and forms part of Allocation So/Ho/5. The Society objected on the grounds that there was no amenity space, an inadequate flood report and a dangerous entrance onto Lower Kirklington Road.

One significant redevelopment has been the BP garage. The Society strongly objected to this application. The demolition of the existing shop, which respected the neighbouring workhouse and surrounding properties has been replaced with a structure and signage unsympathetic to the gateway of our historic town.

The Society continues to be concerned with the lack of respect for Southwell's conservation area in terms of signage, whether it is banners nailed to listed buildings, A-boards blocking the footpaths or plastic shop signs.

Another area of concern is planning applications to convert so-called barns and stables into dwellings. We have not objected to the conversion of redundant brick farm buildings where they have some architectural or historic value.

This year our planning committee looked at just over sixty applications, which is a 40% reduction from previous years. Traditionally we have only objected to 20% of them, however this year it has been 30%.

The Society's submissions to Newark & Sherwood District planners can be viewed online on the Society's web site "[southwellcivicsociety.com](http://southwellcivicsociety.com)".

The role of the planning committee is very interesting and not onerous. Meetings are held about every two months depending on the number of applications made. If any member would like to join the planning committee please contact our chairman Brendan Haigh or myself.



*The Halloughton Road site viewed from Cundy Hill. The development will be alongside Springfield House seen bottom right.*

# EVENTS REPORT

by Katy Todd, Events Organiser

2015 has been a busy year. Around 450 members, as well as some non-members, came to the Society's events.

We started in January with a talk by Steff Wright, of Gusto Construction, and Councillor Roger Blaney on how conservation, flood alleviation and sustainability are addressed in the design and development of new homes.

There was a complete contrast in March when we considered the natural environment. Ian Johnston, Chair of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Conservation Officer Andy Lowe presented "Nightjars, Cuckoos and Sherwood".

In May we had a talk by Matt Beresford on the Archaeology of Roman Southwell. Matt is currently leading the Roman Southwell Project.

Our summer social event on a glorious July afternoon was a wedding murder mystery hosted by Ian and Vanessa Johnston. Southwell Theatre Group performed the parts of the wedding party, and our members and friends were



*The Red Tapestry Drawing Room at Welbeck Abbey visited on our August outing. Photo courtesy The Portland Collection.*

"guests". Thanks to everyone who helped in so many ways, especially with the catering, and to those who entered into the spirit of the occasion by being dressed as if attending a real wedding. It was great fun.

Our summer outing was to Welbeck Abbey. We were treated to a informative tour of the house with lunch at the School of Artisan Food, one of a number of enterprises set up on the Welbeck Estate.

The season concluded in September with a capacity audience at the Court House for Paul Mann QC's gripping presentation of the Winkburn Murder of 1821.

Also in September as part of the National Heritage Open Days the Old Theatre was opened and Roger and Sue Dobson gave a talk on its history. We are grateful to Sarah Elliot for welcoming members of the Society and visitors.

This year we promoted the Society at the Fun Day on the Burgage and at a Saturday market stall. The Society decided to have a Civic Society banner which was produced by local company Sportstar, and we are grateful to another local business, Pinfold Promotions, who have provided the Society with a quantity of coloured pens with the Society's logo.

Another series of events is being planned for next year which will include more talks, visits and social functions.



*At our Wedding Murder Mystery event members of Southwell Theatre Group played the parts of the "top table" at the wedding.*

## BETTY ARUNDEL

Most readers will remember Betty Arundel who was our Planning Secretary for many years. When Betty left Southwell she very generously presented to the Society her collection of prints which included a Speed map of Nottinghamshire dated 1610 and two of the earliest pictures of the Minster by Wenceslas Holler dated 1672. A first edition of Dickinson Rastall's History of Southwell published in 1787 was also included in the gift.

Betty's substantial photographic archive, covering virtually every development in the town from the 1970s until 2012, now forms part of the Society's archive housed in our "cell" at the Old Court House.

In recognition of Betty's many years of service, an inscribed natural stone planter was purchased by the Society and has been placed outside the offices of Reach (was the Southwell Care Project) in Prebend Passage.



*Betty's Planter installed outside the Reach offices in Prebend Passage.*

## PROGRESS ON SARACENS HEAD MILESTONE

After a protracted dialogue with the District Council Planners and English Heritage the replacement by the Society of the existing weather-worn late-18th century milestone by a specially carved Mansfield stone replica is at last nearing realisation. It should be produced and in place by the New Year at the latest.

The original heavily damaged stone needs a new home in order to comply with one of the planning conditions. Has any member any suggestion of a suitable location?

## NEWS OF SOUTHWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Society and several of its members, including our chairman who was appointed as Convenor in succession to the late Peter Pay, have played a prominent part in the compilation of the Southwell Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council gave their approval to the plan this September and it is now being formally submitted to the Newark & Sherwood District Council.

The latter will organise a further period of public consultation, followed by examination by an Independent Planning Inspector. All being well the Plan will be subject to ratification at a public referendum.

Subject to it being approved by a simple majority of registered electors it will become part of the District Council's statutory Local Development Plan. The first review of the latter has begun and the Neighbourhood Plan should play a vital part in that process.

## Interested in local history with a few hours to spare?

We are looking for an archivist for our invaluable collection of historical photos and slides, some of which can be seen on our website. Work has already started on digitizing the images for posterity but there is more to be done; also in rationalising the storage of hard copies, further identifying people and buildings captured on film, and responding to occasional requests from the public.

What do I need?

- A reasonable degree of computer literacy, especially with emails, attaching and sending image files and organising electronic folders. Training, a computer and scanner are available.
- A few hours on an ongoing basis to suit you.
- Enthusiasm and patience.
- Some experience in a related field – eg library work – would be ideal.

For more details call Katy Todd on (01636) 819233 or Peter Scorer on (01636) 813972.