



SOUTHWELL CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter - October 2013

CIVIC SOCIETIES - PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE by Brendan Haigh

Until the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act buildings of historic or special and architectural interest had little protection. That Act established listing of such buildings with statutory provisions relating to any alterations to their fabric.

Southwell has one of the largest concentrations of listed buildings in the East Midlands. At the last count there were 208 listed properties, with two qualifying as Grade I namely the Minster and the ruins of the Archbishop's Palace. Four are graded as Grade II* including the Saracens Head and Cranfield House with the remainder falling within Grade II.

Listing does not, however, afford protection for historic town or village settings or areas of particular local character. That had to await the creation of Conservation Areas under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, a Private Member's Bill introduced by Duncan Sandys a former Conservative cabinet member and son in law of Sir Winston Churchill. The Southwell Conservation Area which now stretches from Westhorpe to Easthorpe and includes the town centre and the Burgage was one of the earliest to be so designated. It was last reviewed in 2006 in a comprehensive policy document prepared by the then Conser-

vation Officer (an endangered species!) of the Newark and Sherwood District Council. The Act also spawned the formation of many Civic Societies including our own in 1971. There had been some earlier Civic Societies, that in Nottingham having been established in 1962. Indeed the Sid Vale Association in East Devon claims to be the first having been founded in 1841. Incidentally that Society has 2,450 members and financial reserves in excess of £2.5 million thanks to a very generous bequest. Having the good fortune of being in the field so early with substantial resources it was able to purchase, in conjunction with the National Trust, land on the hillsides and cliffs surrounding Sidmouth in order to very effectively determine the bound-

aries of any development. It is perhaps a forlorn hope that we could emulate them, although the Town Council has over the last few years acquired some land close to the town centre with that as one of the objects.

The prime role of all Civic Societies is to engage in the planning process by making representations to the local planning authority to protect the character of the built up environment and to preserve adjoining countryside. In doing so it will promote sympathetic high quality design including good examples of contemporary architecture in appropriate locations such as the new Diocesan offices in Westgate.

Southwell Civic Society has also involved itself in other

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The new Southwell Diocesan offices in Westgate designed by local architects Maber.

PLANNING REPORT

by Mike Struggles

Two major issues have dominated the activities of the planning committee over the last twelve months: the Allocations and Development Management Options Report (ADMOR), and the redevelopment of the old Minster School site on Church Street.

The District Council adopted the ADMOR in the spring of this year. The Society took an active part in the proceedings with Peter Kent, Peter Scorer and Mike Struggles giving oral evidence at a Public Hearing.

The adoption of the report was rapidly followed by a planning application to build 9 houses on the Church Street site. Planning Approval was given to the scheme. We were disappointed with the outcome although it was not unexpected. Three councillors voted against approval, including Paul Handley. The other Southwell councillor Julian Hamilton voted for the scheme. It was regrettable that our own Town Council failed to turn up to speak against the application, especially as they had been strongly against the scheme. The application by The Southwell Heritage Trust for a Heritage Park on the same site was rejected on the basis that it did not meet the allocations strategy, which stated that the site should be used for housing as well as open space.

It has been a long hard fight by many people over many years. We must reflect that when we started, the School Governors' scheme had no open space whatsoever, and views out of the town towards the



The Developer's sales board for new dwellings planned for the old Minster School site in Church Street.

countryside would have been completely blocked. Consistent opposition by the heritage organisations in the town resulted in the developer carrying out an extensive archaeological investigation. This led to a better understanding of the site. English Heritage has now agreed to extend the Scheduled Ancient Monument and this is due to the hard work put in by Peter Kent. We would never have known the true significance of the site or have the open space if the School Governors' scheme had been built. The Orchard Land adjacent to the site is not part of the development and this has enabled an explanatory notice board to be erected as the first stage of a mini heritage park.

Other developers have not wasted much time since the allocated sites in the ADMOR were confirmed. An application to construct a mini-roundabout at the junction of Kirklington Road and Lower Kirklington

Road has already been approved. This is to enable an access into the site for 45 houses on land running alongside Kirklington Road up to the allotments. We have had an application from Miller Homes for 40 houses on Beckett's Field at the junction of Hallowloughton Road and Nottingham Road. This is a very important gateway site. No decision has yet been reached. The Environment Agency has recommended refusal because following the July floods it is not in a position to ascertain where the limits of flooding from the Potwell Dyke are likely to be.

The committee has reviewed over 65 applications so far this year, 75% of which we had no objection to. This is consistent with previous years. N&SDC has reached the same conclusion on almost all of them. However, we could not comprehend the decision to approve an intrusive garage/

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EVENTS REPORT

by Katy Todd

There was a full programme this year, including a talk by new member Andy Wimble on Historic Designed Landscapes, and a Coronation themed musical evening at Brandreth, by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Alan Hawkes. There were two visits to historic houses namely Holme Pierrepont Hall in April and Ellys Manor in September. A repeat walk and talk through the Potwell Dyke Grasslands was also much appreciated.

Without doubt the Southwell "Then and Now" photographic presentation in April was an enormous success, attracting young and old members and non members too. Our thanks to our Chairman and also to Chris Knapton for the "Now" photos and his technical expertise in this presentation. Further "Then and Now" presentations have been requested by other organisations, which we hope will generate further interest in the Civic Society.

There have been regular articles in the Bramley newspaper including inviting read-

ers to identify uncaptioned photographs from the Society's archive. This has resulted in increased interest in the Civic Society and more new members. The move to the Library for talks has been very successful and we are grateful to Nicola Ellis and her team for being our hosts, running an excellent bar and acting as a box office as well as joining in.

Tickets were sold out weeks in advance for the "Three Tales from Canterbury" held in Brendan Haigh's garden at the end of August. About £1,200 was raised towards the refurbishment of the Robin Hood Theatre. The performance, by the RHT Company, was preceded by a drinks reception hosted by Brendan.

This is my first year as the events organiser and I have a draft schedule of things to do, places to visit and talks for 2014. It has, I think, been a most enjoyable year and I look forward to meeting many more members at future events.



The ARKangel duo who played at the Society's event celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Queen's coronation in June.

Catering for Social Events

Vanessa Johnston is leading a team of volunteers to help with refreshments at Society events. If we cater for ourselves we will save money and guarantee quality. Volunteers will be reimbursed for the cost of ingredients used. The more volunteers the less onerous the workload, and taking part in the run-up to events is an enjoyable part of the life of the Civic Society. To become part of the catering team please contact Vanessa by telephoning 01636 812195.

Final event in this year's programme

Our next event will be on 13th November at 7.30 in the Library. An evening of Comic Songs with Guy Turner accompanied by Jeremy Jepson. Guy is an accomplished performer of the works of Flanders and Swann and also a composer, including original comic songs. Guy is a lay clerk at the Minster and proceeds from this evening will go to support the Choir Foundation. You should be warned that the evening is likely to lead to excessive laughter. Tickets are £10 available from the Library and will include light refreshments.

STALWARTS OF THE SOCIETY

2013 sees the retirement of two stalwart members of the Society, and the sad passing of another.

Barbara “Bar” Masters retires after some fifteen years in the office of Treasurer. Her first accounts were for 1997/98 having taken over the books from Major George Dodd, another long serving Treasurer. Bar has attended to the accounts meticulously at a time of growth and increased activity for the Society.

Betty Arundel retired as Planning Secretary in 2012 after three decades and more of undivided commitment to the Society. An appreciation of her work appeared in the last newsletter. She now retires upon taking up residence in Eastwood because of failing health. Her unique collection of photographic slides of properties in the town will become part of the Society’s archives.

Margaret Austen, a founder member of the Society and Hon Secretary for some years, sadly died in May this year. She will be much missed by her many friends in the Society and our condolences go to her husband Barry who continues to serve on the committee.

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related activities such as the former Museum in the King Street Car Park Barn which was reported on in an earlier Newsletter.

The Society published Betty Arundel’s History Walk Booklet which has over the years sold several thousand copies and been the single largest contributor to the Society’s present healthy reserves. In 1996 the Society joined with Southwell & District Local History Society in the production of a book of old photographs of Southwell, many of which came from our own archive now housed in a cell at the Old Courthouse.

Since its origins the Society has belonged to the Civic Trust (founded by Duncan Sandys in 1957) and its successor organisation Civic Voice. The Society received a national award from the Trust in the 1970’s for a plan to enhance the streetscape in King Street and Queen Street. The prize money was used to provide York paving under the archway entrance to Waterloo Yard.

On the lighter side many and varied social events have been held over the years including some notable occasions in the Great Hall with settings, publicity material and tickets designed by David and Christine Measures which deserve an article of their own some time.

All told our Society and others like ourselves have helped to change public attitudes on conservation issues so that, with one or two notable exceptions, we have been able to move away in Southwell at least from the destructive planning policies which so marred many town centres in the 60’s and 70’s.

Planning Report (Continued from page 2)

study extension on Nottingham Road next to the Baptist Church whilst at the same time refusing an unseen extension on the opposite side of the road.

There was satisfaction that the proposal by Nottingham Trent University to erect two wind turbines at Brackenhurst was comprehensively refused by N&SDC.

The Society has written to Newark and Sherwood Planning Committee to request that there should be a moratorium on all planning applications to develop any of the newly allocated sites until there is a thorough study of the recent flooding and a full understanding of the flood regimes in the town.

I would like to thank all the members of the Society’s Planning Committee for their time and diligence in studying the applications so that we can come to fair and objective decisions.