

HINCKLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

www.hinckleycivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

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NO.1 – APRIL 2007

Welcome to the first issue of the newsletter of the re-formed Hinckley Civic Society. It is planned to produce this newsletter four times per annum. The Society has been most fortunate in obtaining a grant from the George Ward Charitable Trust to help with the not inconsiderable cost of its production and distribution. Will all those members happy to receive future editions by e-mail, please advise the editor of their e-mail address. Such action will save the Society precious funds that would be swallowed in ever increasing postage costs.

Chairman's Message - Hinckley Matters

Last year English Heritage produced badges to promote awareness of our heritage with the legend on them saying "History Matters" - History does matter and so does Hinckley. History is our memories; history teaches us how to live. I have a friend in Florida; a retired history teacher who contends that he didn't teach history; he says that he taught his students living skills, using examples from the past. Hinckley's history is part of the fabric of the town – what happened in the past in Hinckley shapes what is happening here at the moment, and will continue to affect what happens here in the future. How a town feels about itself governs how the town portrays itself to the rest of the world. If a town is bursting with civic pride it will convince the rest of the world that it is an interesting place; a place worth visiting; a place worth investing in: a place where a visitor wants to spend his money; a place where an investor wants to spend his money and bring more success to the place. I feel that this sense of pride is missing in Hinckley – we need to be proud of our town, its history; its buildings, its parks; its green spaces. I feel that we as the Hinckley Civic Society need to engender this sense of pride; protect the buildings and natural environment that are worth preserving; lobby for the amenities that will make Hinckley a place to be proud of; a place where people want to live and spend their leisure time. If other towns in the UK can do it I am sure that we can.

Howard

Society's Council Chamber debut

The Society made its first appearance before the Council Planning Committee on Monday 6th March 2007, when Hugh Beavin represented the Society at the proposed development of Elm Lea on Ashby Road. The Society's objection to the development was probably academic as the Council Planning Officers were recommending to the Committee that the proposal be turned down in its present format and this recommendation was duly carried. Whether the developers will submit revised plans or an appeal against the decision remains to be seen.

Civic Trust Membership attained

Our society is now a member of the Civic Trust; an independent, national organisation with charitable status. It acts as an umbrella body for over 800 civic societies, representing over 250,000 individuals committed to improving and caring for places where people live and work.

The Civic Trust is the leading UK charity dedicated to bringing vitality, sustainability and high quality design to the built environment. It aims to promote thriving towns and villages, develop dynamic partnerships between communities, government and business to deliver regeneration and local improvement.

As a result of our link to the Civic Trust, we are also affiliated to The East Midlands Association of Civic Societies (www.eastmidlandcivicsocieties.org.uk).

Charitable Status

Now we have achieved recognition by the Civic Trust, one of the next milestones the Trustees have to accomplish in bringing the Society to fruition is attainment of charitable status. This will enable us to claim tax rebates (albeit reduced in the latest budget) through the 'gift aid' mechanism on subscriptions from members who pay income tax.

NEXT MEETINGS

MONDAY 30TH APRIL

7.30pm GREAT MEETING

"WHEN HINCKLEY HAD FOUR
CINEMAS"

MICHAEL ROBERTS

TUESDAY 29TH MAY

HUGH BEAVIN WILL LEAD US
ON A WALK AROUND
HINCKLEY'S HISTORIC
QUARTERS

Leave from GREAT MEETING at
7.30pm

Please note the May meeting has been changed to Tuesday because of the Bank Holiday on the usual Monday date.

Website now fully operational

Thanks to our Chairman's professional expertise, we already have a fully operational website

(www.hinckleycivicsociety.org.uk).

Here you will find the full detail of findings from survey conducted at the February meeting and also a 'blog feature', giving all members an opportunity to air the views; please use it.

'Save our suburbs' says English Heritage

English Heritage has warned about small-scale changes eroding the local character of suburban areas, including insensitive infill developments such as the increasingly common practice of 'garden grabbing' to build blocks of flats. The comments come in a new publication *Suburbs and the Historic Environment* intended to give residents and local councils ways of protecting the character of suburbs that rarely enjoy listed status and are therefore outside legislation that English Heritage is able to enforce. The full document can be downloaded from www.helm.org

Heritage Open Days

Many of you will be familiar with the Heritage Open Weekend, normally in early September (6-9th September this year). The key organiser of the event is the Civic Trust in partnership with English Heritage, supported by many local Civic Societies and local Councils. Each year thousands of volunteers from all walks of

life share their knowledge and memories with some 850,000 visitors, making Heritage Open Days England's largest voluntary cultural event. Our Society was formed too late to play a major role in 2007, but the Trustees have already indicated that in 2008 it is the Society's intention to be actively involved in the event. It is a great opportunity to promote both local heritage and the aims and work of the Society. Therefore, planning must begin very soon and it would be most useful to hear of suggestions from members of any buildings or special events that they might feel appropriate choices to be part of the occasion. It is also not too soon to point out that volunteers will almost certainly be needed to staff some of the sites.

Pro-active rather re-active

At the last Trustees' Meeting some discussion took place about the need to be seen not just as a re-active group. The situation over Elm Lea highlighted this position, when the Society's concern was merely re-active to a given planning situation. It was felt by several Trustees that, in the longer term, the Society ought to be pro-active. Thus, there is a need to begin the task of identifying currently unprotected buildings and examine the possibility of winning protected status for such buildings, thereby pre-empting the need to be merely re-active. Some ideas are already under discussion, but suggestions from members regarding

buildings about which they would be concerned if threatened by major change or development would be most welcome. Although there are more than three hundred listed buildings and sites within Hinckley & Bosworth Borough (a full list is on the Council website), the number in Hinckley itself is quite small, numbering about thirty.

Atkins Building

Plans to use the Atkins Building for the Hinckley site of the local FE College are clearly going to have a major impact on Hinckley Town Centre. The Society will be watching closely the planned developments, especially provision in respect of amenities such as access and car parking.

The Barker Report

Too complex to cover in detail here, but an issue at national level of which we need to be aware, for, if adopted, Kate Barker's recent review of land-use planning seems likely to be a threat to the interests of conservation.

Her interim report, commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggests the planning system should be based on market forces rather than delivering sustainable development. The report specifically identifies local community interests as a problem in making the system deliver for business.

Tight purse strings ahead for heritage

The outlook on funding for heritage projects at national level is beginning to look bleak. Already, funds from Heritage Lottery Fund are being diverted to prop up the apparently bizarrely costed London Olympic budget. Now, in the recent budget, proposed tax changes for 2008 will hit many museums and heritage organisations as their 'gift aid' rebate on subscriptions is reduced. Leading arts organisations are also expressing concern about the situation as the Arts Council has been forced into cutting more than a third (£29 million) from its Grants for the Arts Fund that finances many small enterprises (*Weekend Financial Times 07Apr2007 p3*).

End Note

A search through old Hinckley newspapers for a quite different topic, turned up the following item from *The Hinckley News Saturday 16th August 1862*.

"A lecture was delivered in the Town Hall on Monday last by Mr Benson of New York, an African, on 'Slavery in America and the present rebellion'. There was not a large audience, but those who were there were much pleased with the lecturer's lucid description of slavery now prevailing in the southern states."

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