

HINCKLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

www.hinckleycivicsociety.org.uk

"striving for a better Hinckley"

NEWSLETTER

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NO. 5 – APRIL 2008

SPRING / SUMMER MEETINGS

MONDAY 28TH APRIL 2008

Bob Gibson - ' What is Heritage? '

At The Great Meeting, Baines Lane - 7.30PM

This talk will include a breakdown on different forms of heritage, the often difficult relationship between history and heritage and will conclude by leading into a debate on

Hinckley's future use of its local heritage

WEDNESDAY 28th MAY 2008

A visit to St Mary's Parish Church Hinckley

Tour & Talk with Rev. Canon Brian Davis

MONDAY 30th JUNE 2008

Greg Drozd -

'Slates and Satchels - 100 years of St Peter's School'

At St Peter's School

All meetings commence at 7.30pm

A BREAKTHROUGH ON BLUE PLAQUES

SOCIETY LINED UP FOR MAJOR ROLE IN NEW HINCKLEY INITIATIVE

The last month has seen a major development in the Society's campaign for the resumption of Blue Plaques in Hinckley. The Society has been promised a sum of money from Hinckley & Bosworth Council to enable three Plaques to be mounted in the current (2008-9) financial year. It is envisaged that the Society will plan this initiative with help and support from the appropriate sources within the Council.

The first two plaques are likely to be in honour of Robert James Lees (1849-1937) and Elizabeth Coxhead (1909-1979). The latter lady, born in Hinckley in February 1909, was the daughter of the then Head of Hinckley Grammar School, who after studying at Oxford University, went on to become a high-quality journalist and literary author. The centenary of her birth seems a fitting time to mark her role. Robert James Lees was born in Upper Bond Street in premises now used a florists.

The Society has already received valuable advice from Birmingham Civic Society, responsible for Blue Plaques in the city since 1953, on various aspects of sourcing and design.

LET'S PROMOTE AND CELEBRATE LOCAL LITERARY HERITAGE

Partly in connection with the Blue Plaque campaign, the Society is proposing to organise an event in the summer of 2009, to celebrate Hinckley & Bosworth's little known literary heritage. The event will focus on three eminent literary ladies, Elizabeth Coxhead, Charlotte Brame and Lady Florence Dixie. A speaker of national repute has already indicated willingness to support the event and speak on Elizabeth Coxhead and the Society is in the process of contacting suitable speakers on the other two writers.

The event will focus on just one aspect of the area's much undervalued and greatly undersold literary links (*Tourist Board please note*) and it is hoped it maybe the precursor of further similar events or even a **Hinckley & Bosworth Literary Festival**!!!!!!!

Bus Station Development Proposals

A shortlist of five preferred developers for the Bus Station Development Plan has now been announced. All have been invited to show off their proposals for this key area of the town in a public exhibition next month.

The plans and proposals from all five developers will be available for all to see in the **Council Chamber, Argents Mead** from **Wednesday 7th May to Saturday 10th May** inclusive.

It is hoped that the Society will be asked to make a formal submission on the plans, though time will be very short, as we understand a preferred developer is likely to be 'anointed' by the end of June and any comments and ideas should be made to known to the Trustees **immediately** after the May exhibition.

Regional Meeting Date for Hinckley

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Hinckley Civic Society is to host the quarterly East Midlands Regional meetings of Civic Societies. The date is **SATURDAY 18TH OCTOBER** at the Great Meeting. It comes just as the revived Society will be celebrating its second anniversary.

Elm Lea is lost

Since the last newsletter, the decision on the appeal over the proposals for Elm Lea has been announced. Sadly, it now seems

inevitable the landmark building will be soon be just a memory, another part of the town's hosiery heritage lost for ever.

We can all mourn this, but until both finance and firm ideas are in place for alternatives to speculation on potentially unwanted flats, more of the same is likely to occur and forthcoming changes in the planning process seem likely to accelerate this trend.

Our thanks are due to Hugh Beavin, who represented the Society at both the original planning hearing and the subsequent appeal.

Argents Mead

There are rumours and hints from 'informed sources' that there may be huge changes to the Council Office building within the foreseeable future. The town needs to think very carefully about the future use of Argents Mead – potentially a very valuable space in the town centre and one arguably undervalued and under-used for many years. Decisions made in the next year or so could affect the landscape of the town for decades to come.

Atkins Building

As this newsletter went to press, it was reported that North Warwickshire & Hinckley College had been successful in its bid to secure funding from the Learning and Skills Council to assist

funding of its Hinckley project. Suggestions are that, by 2011, Hinckley will have its new town centre student campus. Perhaps some real thought should now go into the use of the adjoining proposed Creative Arts Centre .. can the town find a philanthropic benefactor to put some real inspiration into this proposed arts project that, thus far, seems very sketchy.... (no pun intended).

And finally ... our Chairman has a Dream.....

It seems appropriate on the 40th anniversary of his death to repeat the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King Junior, "I have a dream": I too have a dream. My dream is not about integrating little children of various racial backgrounds but of integrating the disparate parts of the town we all love and care about – Hinckley.

I dream about having a mandated council employee who has a total vision of the whole of Hinckley; someone whose vision unifies the old and the new in Hinckley so that the historic buildings of Hinckley can sit side by side with the necessary new developments without either seeming out of place. I dream of someone who can commission a sports facility for the young that is in harmony with a recreational facility for the not so young and that is not out of place next to a building where those working days are done can enjoy their

well-earned summer wine days. In my mind's eye I envision a town where each building fulfils its purpose without being obtrusive, without its presence denigrating its neighbour; where a old building sits cheek by jowl with its newer neighbour without either seeming out of place; where each new building has a touch of its constructor. Maybe it could be a little touch left by the builder that says "I made this"; a different coloured brick; an emblem on a brick or impressed into the concrete; a conventional brick replaced with a glazed brick; something that catches the eye and makes a passer-by stop and say "I know who made that – he built that building over there – see it has the same little touch". I dream of a town that enchants a casual visitor and makes him want to come on a return visit; a town that is joy to both resident and visitor alike. I have just been to the annual Unitarian General Assembly, which climaxed in an Anniversary Service where the sermon was entitled "Reasonless Hope and Joy". I'd like to feel the same way about Hinckley or maybe I'm just dreaming.....

(Howard Wilkins – Chair).

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