



# Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society

Registered Charity No. 246145

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Newsletter  
November 2014



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*Students and Graduates we need your help! See inside for details*

## CHAIR'S REPORT

2014 marks the Society's 50th year. This newsletter will describe various ongoing projects and our successes.

We are working in partnership with other groups in Altrincham and have formed ACT (Altrincham Community Team) as an umbrella organisation to promote culture, heritage, environment and business corporate social responsibility. Our first big project under the ACT banner is Altrincham in Bloom. I am pleased to report that ACT received a Gold Award in the RHS North West in Bloom competition in Southport as well as the best planters and best community entry in the North West. Their success was celebrated in the town centre by the Altrincham Town Crier Peter Powell.

We are also working with the Manchester Tourist Guides who are running regular tours of the Altrincham area.



Refurbished Market House & Cafe

Many of the major projects in Altrincham Town centre are about to conclude. The Interchange will be ready either just before or after Christmas. The new Hospital will be ready in Spring and there are exciting plans for an Integrated Care Hub on the old site together with the new library. The refurbished Market House is a great success and it is hoped the Lower Market canopy and stalls will be finished shortly. The public realm redesign is now funded and news is awaited re Altair and an improved Altrincham Leisure Centre.

Stamford Quarter under new ownership continues to work closely with the community and their incomplete refurbishment is due to restart. Many thanks go to our hardworking management committee and to our parent organisation, Civic Voice. The committee continues to include representatives from Friends of Altrincham Interchange, Broadheath Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce. Please continue to let us know of your views and concerns. **Judie Collins, Chair**

## REPORT FROM THE VICE CHAIR

A great deal has happened and will, we hope, continue to happen in Altrincham and I am happy to say that much is due to the continuing efforts of your committee.

Station Buildings looks better than it has done for many decades and the ground floor has already started to accept new tenants on the Moss Lane frontage. We wish them well and also congratulate Petros Ltd on their fine achievement. We also welcome the new tenants on the Cross Street/George Street corner, which has been an eyesore since Montague Burton's/Dorothy Perkins moved out. Sadly we cannot say the same about the McDonald's corner, which we understand was left in such a dilapidated condition that the current owners are unwilling to spend huge amounts of money to get it in a fit state for any prospective tenant.

The new Altrincham General Hospital work remains on schedule, as far as we know, and hopes to open its doors in spring 2015. We understand that Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group has exciting plans

for the original hospital site. Your Committee very much hopes that whatever its future, the Market Street and Regent Road facades will remain as essential elements of the street-scape of that part of Altrincham and we remain in frequent contact with Adam Gross of Citybranch, who will almost certainly be involved with its redevelopment.

However it is in the public domain that when the new AGH opens, leaving Market Street and Greenwood Street for development, a replacement library will be put probably on Pott Street, so that at last it will be easier of access than the one on Stamford New Road, which must be among the least



**Altrincham General Hospital in 1914, showing the architects Peter Pons' 1870 facade and Frank Dunkerley's 1914 extension towards the rear**

convenient public libraries one can imagine. Also, Altrincham lost its museum when Trafford allowed the demolition of the Stamford Hall and its associated facilities. The writer has been agitating for some time that we need a new museum and he has badgered the previous and the present Leader of the Council, who both expressed an interest in the idea. Watch this space. But the good news is that the new library is to be located at ground level, not first floor level as originally planned. You will all have seen the market developments, particularly the covered area for stalls on Central Way. It has to be said there are mixed feelings about it, but no one can deny that it gives a totally new and better

aspect to Central Way, which only recently looked as though only high explosive could improve it!

Finally, Altrincham's future development looks likely to be in the hands of a Neighbourhood Business Forum, which remains in a rather lengthy gestation period. It began as an idea about a year ago under the terms of the Localism Act and evoked interest from your Chairman and Vice Chairman, Mrs Amy Sharpe and Messrs Cupitt and Armstrong, all of whom have stayed active. The development work has been accepted by Trafford Council and as I write, work proceeds on organising the next phase which is a Public Consultation.

Finally, our plans for 2015 will be based again on Civic Day, when Councillor John Lamb, the Council's Heritage Champion, will concentrate efforts on the three Town Halls, Altrincham, Sale and Stretford. The present writer has been asked to be the 'expert' on Altrincham Town Hall (not without reason!) and is working on a history of the building at the moment.

**David Eastwood, Vice Chairman**

### **THE MACDONALD'S CORNER**

The demolition of the unloved shacks on Railway Street, where the new Altrincham General Hospital is being built and the refurbishment of Station Buildings leaves only one major Grot Spot in the Town Centre, the site of what used to be McDonalds until they moved out some years ago. There is still no visible sign of development, but the management tells us that the owners have on-going plans and a number of meetings have been taking place. However everything is at an early stage and they can give us no firm information at this time.

## BUSINESS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR ALTRINCHAM TOWN CENTRE

The Neighbourhood Forum is a way to get local people to influence the way their community will look and work going forward until 2030. It will draw up a business neighbourhood plan for Altrincham Town Centre, a task which would otherwise be done by the strategic planners at Trafford MBC. It is our way of saying what we want to happen. It is a bottom up approach to how Altrincham town centre will change in the future.



**Consultation event starts outside Altrincham Market House about the Business Neighbourhood Plan, October 2014**

A key aspect of the Forum is engagement with the community. The first stage of public consultation started on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 with the launch of the web site [myaltrincham.org](http://myaltrincham.org) and questionnaire and a series of street stalls over the following weeks. At the end of the process when the draft final plan is ready it will be voted on by the public and businesses and if there is a majority the plan will be adopted by the Council. All upcoming events will be advertised on the new website and publicised through local media and by posters and leaflets throughout Altrincham town centre.

The work of the Neighbourhood Forum is all voluntary and we are looking for help with distributing leaflets, working on the consultations and with areas such as co-ordination, photography and communication. If you wish to become involved in shaping your town centre then please call Amy on 0161-980 0448 or Leslie on 0161-925 4900.

## ALTRINCHAM TOWN HALL

We were seriously worried last year when reports began to spread that Trafford Council was planning to sell the Town Hall off for commercial purposes. What made this more likely was that it was far too much under-used and the income from room rents and weddings was less than the cost of upkeep. Also, the firm contracted to manage it had had its contract terminated. However, when we contacted the then Leader of the Council, Councillor Matt Colledge, he replied that he had not heard of the rumours and, emphatically, there were no plans to offer the Town Hall for sale. We were very relieved at this because in 2002 one of our members had been instrumental and influential in persuading the then Council to have the building refurbished rather than demolished. Nevertheless we will still



**The Town Hall Entrance**



**Splendid Stained Glass Windows**

keep a careful eye on it. The worry remains that annual running costs greatly exceed income and there seems to be no urgency to market the Town Hall in a professional pro-active manner. It may therefore be a target for cost cutting in the future, but we are assured there is no danger at this time. Meanwhile, next time you go there, just have a glance at the Diamond Jubilee stone outside.

## CIVIC DAY – 22<sup>nd</sup> JUNE 2013

National Civic Day is celebrated each year by civic societies affiliated to Civic Voice (the national body for the civic society movement). In 2013 our Society chose the theme of 'Culture in Altrincham and Bowdon'. We produced an illustrated booklet, entitled '*Uncovering Our Cultural Connections*'. It covered the lives and work of local musicians, actors, artists and writers, highlighting our rich heritage and also the spirit continuing today by individuals, groups and societies.

The week before and the one following Civic Day, our Society held a wide ranging exhibition of the arts in Altrincham. The exhibition took place in the display area of the Altrincham Forward Office. With the cooperation of local arts groups and centres the display included material from Art With A Heart, Altrincham Society of Artists, Altrincham Choral Society, Bowdon Festival, The Club Theatre, The Garrick Theatre and Local Creation. It also included illustrations from the booklet and maps produced as part of the Heritage of Altrincham Area Project. Recent work and successes by our society was also included. Approximately 300 people visited the exhibition who gave very positive feedback.



**A&BCS Vice President Viv Labaton (on the right), receiving the award from Ian Harvey of Civic Voice.**

On Civic Day, in addition to the exhibition in Altrincham Forward, visitors were able to meet artists and see their work at the Society of Artists Studio, visit an Art with a Heart exhibition, see the theatres, and visit St Mary's Church in Bowdon where a concert was mounted by local young musicians.

In October the Society was surprised and delighted to learn that we had received an award at the Annual General Meeting of Civic Voice for our outstanding contribution to national Civic Day. It was some achievement, as out of some 200 events, our award was one of only seven presented.

## CIVIC DAY 21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2014

Every year Civic Voice, the umbrella organisation for local Civic Societies, encourages a Civic Day. It is a national day when we stand up and say "we care about where we live".

A&BCS, along with 250 other Civic Societies, had events on the day. Our theme this year was to encourage more people to volunteer and get involved. We took advantage of the newly opened 'Art With A Heart' in the former Superdrug store on George Street (thank you Karen) and had our marquee on the pavement to capture interest from passersby. Thanks also go to Sarah of Our Altrincham for the loan of her marquee on the day. Highlighted were our involvement in Altrincham Community Team and Altrincham in Bloom. Judging by the number of other voluntary organisations we spoke to we can comfortably say it was very successful.

What is our theme for Civic Day 2015? Ideas on a post card please.

## STATION BUILDINGS

I believe this has been a notable success story in our many attempts to help in the regeneration of our town. Station Buildings, otherwise known as Stamford House, was built in 1906. It is a Grade II Listed Building and stands in an important iconic place in the middle of the town, but for a number of years it has stood empty and deteriorating. Our members have been vociferous and active in our efforts to have the building refurbished, restored and back in occupation, with a large number of meetings with the owners, Trafford Council representatives and ourselves. A major difficulty was the contribution to the



local environment assessed under S.106 of the Town & Country Planning Act of 1980 and we were very pleased when the owners submitted a revised planning application, which resulted in a substantially lower S.106 contribution and regeneration work began almost immediately. Now completed, tenants are being secured for its ground floor shop units. Moreover the design for the proposed replacement Atlanta Chamber behind, but part of Station Buildings, appears to be much more acceptable to us.

*Pictured left: Newly revealed and restored Edwardian Tiles in Station Buildings*

## CIVIC VOICE AND PLANNING CHANGES

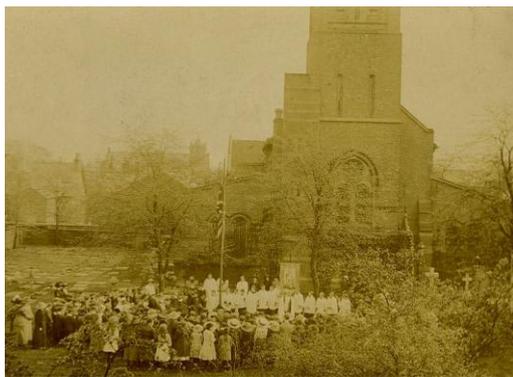
A&BCS are active members of Civic Voice, the national association of Civic Societies. Civic Voice represents our views to Government in an extremely effective way. At the Labour Party conference in Manchester this year they hosted a fringe session on the recent changes to the planning rules, more specifically the presumption in favour of development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and its consequences. The need to increase construction of (affordable) homes was a focus of the eminent panel of speakers, which included Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, the Shadow Planning Minister. Even using all available brown field sites would not provide the large numbers needed and so green belt must be considered.

A new term introduced was Charrette, a process already used effectively in places like Scarborough, to consult and involve the local community well in advance of any major development, so the development addresses their concerns and wishes. Current planning objections are an after the event conflict, but using the Charrette method the public can have their say from the start. Contrary to expectation the public support is more positive than negative and has contributed well to the development plans.

The question still remains where will all the required new homes go?

**Leslie Cupitt, Committee Member For Green Spaces**

## HERITAGE OF THE ALTRINCHAM AREA



Saluting the Flag on Ascension Day in 1913 at St George's Church, Altrincham

The Civic Society successfully applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund and was awarded a grant of £50,000 to undertake a series of projects carried out by volunteers. The purpose is to present the rich and fascinating heritage of the local area in a variety of accessible ways and to uncover, preserve and share new material. A key project has been the borrowing and high quality scanning of local photographs, publications and historic ephemera, from the diverse collections of individuals and local societies. Over 6,000 images now form the Altrincham Area Image Archive. They have been shared and used in exhibitions; talks; school projects; books; calendars; souvenirs; web sites; family history; restoration

projects; heritage statements for planning purposes and the forthcoming Conservation Area Appraisals. Historic photographic portraits were also displayed in Geoff Crossley's pop-up studio, where he took a photo and asked the sitter to reflect and write about themselves, at a point in time.

The images will also feature in an illustrated heritage trail booklet for Altrincham town centre, highlighting the best of the historic street scene and delving into its social history. This free booklet due next March, will initially only be available in Altrincham, thus encouraging visits to the town and helping in its regeneration. The booklet will replace the original project for freestanding trail panels, which became unsuitable under the new plans for redesigned streets and public realm. The detailed and unique Altrincham Board of Health watercolour Plans dating from 1852, held in Trafford Local Studies, have also been scanned to ensure the longevity of their content. Volunteers, many of whom are novices learning the skill, have been transcribing the associated documents. The OS Township Plans of Altrincham and Bowdon, surveyed in 1876, have also been scanned. Both sets of Plans have been printed full-size and have been on display at a variety of events. An interactive web site dedicated to Altrincham heritage will feature the Plans, along with the transcriptions, local history documents and publications and a selection of retro adverts and 19<sup>th</sup> century photos.



Following on from our successful heritage display at the Art with a Heart exhibition space on Shaw's Road in 2012, we were given the opportunity to have a dedicated heritage section at the Art with a Heart new community art centre in Norman's Place for a whole year *pictured left*. Plans, maps, books and changing photographic and artefact displays reflected the theme of each art exhibition. In June 2014, Art with a Heart moved to a larger, more central venue at 82- 84 George Street and the heritage section has moved with it. It is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm, still with free

entry. A unique narrative of the area is also being built up, through the oral history project, whereby engaging and observant local people kindly share their memories with us. These will be summarised and deposited with the North West Sound Archive. We would like to thank all the volunteers, contributors, supporters and suppliers to date and look forward to the completion of these worthwhile projects, promoting the area's rich and fascinating heritage. **Sue Nichols, Project Coordinator**

## GREEN SPACES

Green spaces make Altrincham and Bowdon a desirable place to live. But they are always under threat from so many directions. Trafford MBC wants to make savings and the maintenance of green spaces is also coming under the knife. For most existing green spaces TMBC has confirmed it will continue to cut the grass but very little more. Soon this may be put out to tender for a contractor to do the work. Many colourful flowerbeds have already been grassed over and not all of those remaining will be planted up in future.

This presents an opportunity for the community to get involved in planting, maintenance and support. Already there are three Friends groups for local parks (Stamford, John Leigh and Navigation). Through Altrincham in Bloom, the Civic Society is trying to establish Friends for other small green spaces like Shaw's Green and The Triangle on Ellesmere Road, both of which have had recent scares about being sold to developers. If you want to become involved with a Friends group the Society can point you in the right direction.



Along with the Altrincham Community Team the Civic Society will be drawing up plans for the improvement of much neglected areas like Spring Garden (junction of Stamford St and Stamford New Road) and Woodlands Bank. Once we have approval for the improvements from TMBC we will be looking for volunteers to get involved.

**Leslie Cupitt**

*Picture: Shaw's Green Altrincham, which was a 'Pleasure Ground' in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

## TOWN AND VILLAGE GREENS (TVG)

Until 2013 green and recreational spaces which have been used by a local community for over 20 continuous years could be registered as a Town & Village Green subject to many conditions and scrutiny. The government, believing that people were registering greens purely to stop development, last year passed the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013. This Act makes it impossible to register lands as a TVG if it is threatened with development.

To make it even more difficult to register land as a TVG since October 2013 landowners have been able to submit to the registration authority a statement and map which challenge people's informal use of land (what is known as 'as of right' use). Once the statement has been deposited and notices posted on the site local people have only one year in which to submit an application to register the land. This overrides any 20 years of continuous use. On three sites in Kent notices posted on the site were removed within 24 hours so local residents were in the dark about the loss of their rights.

Ask your local MP if he supports the rights of local people to keep their local green spaces green or does he/she put the rights of landowners and developers first.

Our thanks to the Open Spaces Society for bringing this to our attention. [www.oss.org.uk](http://www.oss.org.uk)

**Leslie Cupitt, Committee Member For Green Spaces**

## NEWS FROM OLDFIELD BROW COMMUNITY

Last year the A&BCS committee invited me to deliver a personal statement on Oldfield Brow and how I hoped it might be kept in mind as a part of Altrincham with its own special heritage and character.



Cow Field - Under Threat

Things have moved along since then. Now some of us resident in Oldfield Brow have set up a Facebook community page to encourage the community to talk about what they would like to see happen to their local green space in Cow Field, adjacent to the Bridgewater Canal. The page can be visited at: <https://www.facebook.com/OldfieldBrowCowField>

One of the residents has also started an e-petition asking people to support efforts to

save Cow Field. In a little over a day after launching the petition, over 1000 people had

viewed the link on the Facebook page and nearly 100 had signed it. Not bad for a small local issue in a tiny community like ours. The petition is open until March 2015 and can be accessed at: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/69147> We'd be very pleased if you would give it your support and pass it on to anyone else you think might be interested and willing to support us.

Meanwhile we are still trying to get Trafford Council to say what they are going to do about the



Japanese Knotweed taking over

Japanese knotweed that has over-run the old allotment land adjacent to Cow Field. It seems likely the law will become tougher on landowners who fail to treat knotweed where it threatens neighbouring properties. And it could be 20 years from start of treatment before infested land can be safely built on. Oldfield Brow is a special community, and we believe it has a valuable part to play in the economic regeneration in Altrincham and Broadheath. We're really grateful for the support A&BCS has given us so far.

Mike O'Neill

## ALTRINCHAM COMMUNITY TEAM

A&BCS are part of Altrincham Community Team, which brings together voluntary groups to make our town thrive again. The Team is always looking for volunteers to help on an array of projects. Why don't you get involved? Contact Angela Stone if you think your group would like to make a contribution no matter how small. Email: [info@altrinchamcommunityteam.co.uk](mailto:info@altrinchamcommunityteam.co.uk)

## TRAFFORD MBC CONSULTATION ON STREET LIGHTING.

It's not just about well illuminated streets it's about the money to run the street lights. However, the proposed LED lights can cause more pollution than older lamps. Have your say after you have read the consultation document at [www.trafford.gov.uk/streetlightingconsultation](http://www.trafford.gov.uk/streetlightingconsultation). The Civic Society can point you to information on the problems of LED lights, or go to [www.ledpollution.com](http://www.ledpollution.com).

## ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE RE-DEVELOPMENT

The £19m re-development of The Interchange continues apace.

TfGM gave a re-assurance that early work would cause the travelling public little or no inconvenience at all and so it proved to be. A couple of months later, with the modernised Booking Hall re-opened, the next stage started and the bus station closed with all service departures re-located to temporary kerbside stops around the north end of the town centre.

The re-aligned taxi rank is now also completed, this lay-by is now destined to be an official spot for private (and private hire) vehicles to drop-off and pick-up passengers at the interchange. The area adjacent to the landmark clock of 1881 is now attractively paved, though not yet accessible to the public. Ultimately it will have benches for waiting passengers and the clock itself will no longer merely serve as an island around which taxis turn. The new footbridge, lifted into position in April, can be brought into service once the ground level concourse is ready to be opened to passengers and the lifts are installed and running. The removal of the old footbridge should be done before the end of November.



Old meets new - the 1881 and 2014 pedestrian bridges at Altrincham Station

Altrincham Interchange now, courtesy of Northern Rail, boasts a 'bike & go' facility on platform 4 with 10 cycles suitable for use by either men or women. Their livery is distinctive and hire, *after pre-registration*, can be hired for up to 72 hours at £3.80 per 24 hours – just 24p/waking hour; the bikes were all new when it opened for service last October and are well maintained. Unfortunately there were some minor teething problems which did delay the facility becoming operational but these were soon ironed out. There is a corresponding facility available at Knutsford though the cycles have to be returned to the point from which they were hired in the first place. Find out more at [www.bikeandgo.co.uk](http://www.bikeandgo.co.uk).

The Interchange, when it's finished, will feature another of the growing number of cycle hubs around Manchester with secure parking for more than fifty cycles. Such facilities are being set up to encourage passengers to access the tram system at strategic locations by their own independent means.

From the outset TfGM stated that the project would take about eighteen months and have promised that everything reasonable will be done to ensure that the work will be complete by the end of November this year, in time for all Christmas visitors to the town to be suitably impressed by our new interchange!

**Ian Stuart, Chairman**  
**Friends of Altrincham Interchange**

## IT WILL ALL BE OVER BY CHRISTMAS – WORLD WAR ONE

### Altrincham Remembers

This is centenary year of the start of World War 1 on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914. In that war some 890 soldiers from Altrincham and local places died. There is a website which records the details of those soldiers at <http://www.traffordwardead.co.uk/>.

Chapel Street in Altrincham was called 'Britain's bravest street' by King George V when 161 men and boys joined up to fight. Although Chapel Street was demolished in the 1960s there remains on wall very close to where it stood a plaque commemorating their bravery. The plaque is on Regent Road on the side of the Portofino restaurant.

Every year on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, immediately following the main ceremony at the Cenotaph near St Margaret's church, there is a small wreath laying ceremony by the plaque. Join in if you can this year and every year until 2018.



You may remember in the entrance to the former Post Office on Stamford New Road was a tablet commemorating the employees of the Post Office who died in World War 1. When the Post Office was closed the tablet was moved to the new postal sorting office off Moss Lane. Today this commemoration to those brave men is just propped up against a wall in the entrance. Harry Scholar, the late Chairman of the A&BCS, was an ardent campaigner to get the tablet erected somewhere which gave respect to their sacrifice. All sort of excuses were used by the Post Office as to why it could not be placed somewhere more befitting, from walls not being strong enough, to it needing to be kept on Crown Property. It is time we said thank you to these men in a proper way. This is a cause which needs a champion.

There has been a suggestion that this Post Office tablet could be located at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. They are our brave men and I would like to see them being looked after by the people of Altrincham.

We are fortunate to have on our doorstep the Imperial War Museum North very close to Media City. There is a special exhibition at the Museum on the conflict. It is well worth a visit.

Sale Waterside is hosting an exhibition 'Our Heroes' from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August – Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014. 'Our Heroes' explores the consequences of the war to the local area and the challenges that were faced by our ancestors. Using photographs, memorabilia and original archives it reveals personal stories, some of which have remained hidden for over 100 years including a young nurse from Altrincham who was captured as a prisoner of war.

### Leslie Cupitt, Green Spaces

## DENMARK STREET WALKWAY

Everybody loves to be loved and Denmark Street Walkway is no exception. The Walkway is the wide path from the front of the cinema through to the back of Tesco. It has been neglected almost since it was laid just after the building of Tesco. The ground is the property of Trafford MBC and its maintenance was lost in their confusion as to whether it is Highways or Leisure or Assets.

Working with Altrincham in Bloom (AIB) the Walkway is getting some TLC. Sarah Walmsley of AIB has been the driving force behind the improvements. She has obtained a grant of £2,000 from the Manchester Airport Trust for the preparation of the green space and then its planting. Volunteers from A&BCS have joined other local community groups in preparing the ground. In October the main planting began in readiness for a display of colour next Spring and for many years to come.

It just shows how working together we can MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

**Leslie Cupitt, Committee Member For Green Spaces**

### ***Students and Graduates we need your help!***

The society is eager to encourage young people, college students and graduates to become involved with various ongoing projects. We look forward to hearing from you - please send us a tweet or email us with your views, suggestions and skills you could contribute.

## **Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society Membership Form**

To join and support the Society, please fill in the form and post it along with the annual subscription of **£7.00 per individual** or **£11.00 for two living at the same address**, to our Treasurer, Martin Stone.

Name/s \_\_\_\_\_ Signature/s \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ (for our occasional updates)

Please make cheques out to 'Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society' and send to Martin Stone, The Old Vicarage, Ash Magna, Whitchurch SY13 4EA. You may telephone him on 01948 663 220.

Chair: Judie Collins 0161 962 7108

Vice Chair: David Eastwood Treasurer: Martin Stone Clerk: Sandra Stone

President: William Speakman V. C. Vice Presidents: Dr Don Bayliss, Vivian Labaton M.Sc.

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**Compiled and Edited by Richard Hagon © Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society 2014**

