



Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society

Registered Charity No. 246145

The Civic Society promotes appropriate and high-quality standards for the development of Altrincham, in order to create a pleasant, attractive and thriving environment, of which its residents and businesses can be proud

altrinchamandbowdoncs.com altrinchamandbowdoncs@gmail.com

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.

NEWSLETTER 2013

A Word from the Chair

2013 is going to be a very busy year for Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society, with several of our initiatives and campaigns of several years, gradually coming to fruition.

We now have 100 members and in 2014 we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary, so the history of the Civic Society is presently being researched. If any member has old Minutes, other records or memorabilia of the Society's early days in the 1960s, 70s or 80s, please get in touch with our Clerk, Sandra Stone, on 01948 663 220 or at the email address above. A first look at the archive we already hold, shows that for the regeneration of Altrincham town centre, we have been there many times before. However, with the increased input and expertise of the Civic Society, this time something is more likely to happen in an appropriate way.

As a boost to regeneration, the new build Hospital is about to start, with more health services than we have now. Most of our members will know what a significant part Pat Morris, her helpers and active committee members of the Civic Society have played in making this happen. St Anne's Home has been saved and restored; the public realm strategy is advancing; Station Buildings moves towards completion and Altrincham Market House has proved a great success as an events venue and will improve further. All these projects have involved the Civic Society.

As founder members of Civic Voice, which now has influence at government level as a major consultee, we continue to support its campaigns and use it as a useful information resource (civicvoice.org.uk). We have also joined and support the North West Association of Civic Trusts and Societies (nwacts.org.uk). We continue to work with the Victorian Society on our key historic buildings.

We were sad to lose Harry Scholar last year. Harry was our past Chair and he was passionate about the Society to the very end. We also said goodbye to Basil Morrison - Altrincham stalwart, historian and long standing member of the Society. Many thanks to Don and Hilda Bayliss, Patricia Kovach and Julia Taylor for all their hard work over the years. They have left the committee, but are still very supportive of the Society. Thanks must also go to Peter Noble who was a committee member and chaired the Society for a number of years, but is now pursuing other interests.

In this newsletter, we hope our committee members will give you a brief taste of their particular passions, jointly shared. Our new logo sponsored by a kind donor, has been inspired by the Altrincham shield. It showcases our current interests: heritage, green spaces, the market, shared spaces, quality public realm and most importantly people.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Judie Collins

Glasshouse Community Led Design Workshops

In March 2012, the Council Chamber in Altrincham's fine Town Hall, became the venue for two workshops, set up to engage with a selection of residents and local business people. This tailored support by Glasshouse was the result of the Society's successful application to the government funded Building Community Consortium, which provides support to groups involved in forming Neighbourhood Plans under the Localism Act. Specific topics for the regeneration of the town centre were explored. These emerged out of the results of a survey of shoppers and visitors conducted by the Civic Society in the summer of 2011, as part of Civic Voice's national Civic Day, when we had a stall on Shaws Road.



The topics explored were increasing the flexibility of the market buildings and streets so they can be used for additional events and activities; improving connectivity through quality and green public realm; the idea of pedestrian dominated shared main streets, free of clutter; improving accessibility to Kings Court and some innovative thinking on the under-used large space in the centre of Altrincham - The Causeway (off Cross Street). Visual Minutes were taken in the form of an expansive 'Mind Map'.

Design engineer, Martin Stockley, founder of Stockley's, facilitated in explaining the now well-accepted and proven idea of shared streets. The idea is that pedestrians, cyclists and motorists share roads in town centres, in order to revitalise the area and improve traffic flow. Subsequently, five committee members spent the afternoon in Poynton, with the Town Council team who successfully implemented such a scheme there. In June, we hosted an illustrated talk on 'Sharing Our Streets -Towards a New Civility' by Martin Stockley. Then at our stall on Cross Street on Civic Day 2012, we asked shoppers if the 'sharing our streets' concept could help revitalise Altrincham. On all occasions there was a very positive response, once initial concerns had been addressed.

Much of the vision created at the workshops and subsequent events, is being fed into forthcoming plans for the Market House, covered market, the old Altrincham General Hospital site and all the surrounding streets, including Central Way (which in part could become a new green square) and beyond to the main

roads. The public realm and movement strategy plans have been commissioned by Trafford Council and Citybranch, the developer of both the new hospital on Railway Street and the old site on Market Street, from local company Planit-ie and Martin Stockley. In October, it was also announced that a library and hub would be built as a joint venture on the old hospital site. The Civic Society is asking for it to be on the ground floor and to include within it, a proper art and heritage centre for the use of the community.

Sue Nichols

The Market House

There are some new initiatives to report at Altrincham's Historic Market. Probably the most interesting development was the arrival of a third Sunday monthly event managed by Gail Titchener, an entrepreneur who has brought in vintage and craft stalls, combined with a group of producers selling a variety of interesting food and drink, set against a background of music. As this event gained a foothold, so the Listed Market House was also opened up by the Market Manager to extend the use of this interesting building and cater for the need for more space and refreshments. The 'Spookywoo' Halloween event organised by the community was very popular, drawing in big numbers of families and visitors. Story



telling took place in the Market House. Then just on Christmas, there were a series of atmospheric Thursday evening 'Twilight' events with the vintage, craft, food and drink stalls, plus seating and a pop-up bar in a transformed Market House. A wide selection of live music and songs from local talent, showed the potential for this currently under-used and unique event space, protected from all weathers. For more information, please visit trafford.gov.uk/altrinchammarket.

The planned re-development of the old Altrincham General Hospital site has increased the momentum to use the market buildings in a more enlightened way. Finance has been provisionally earmarked to improve the environmental quality of the Market. The Civic Society is up front in advocating the wider use of these facilities for the citizens of the town and around. We are also trying to ensure that the buildings are made as flexible as possible through the refurbishment, including the use and storage of new demountable stalls. More ideas are always welcome and we will work on how they could be turned into action!

Michael Armstrong

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

The Civic Society and Bowdon Conservation Group have been jointly campaigning for some time for these widely used planning documents, which assess the positive and negative aspects of our vulnerable Conservation Areas and provide robust and detailed guidance for any future development, large or small. They would help residents, developers and Trafford Highways ensure that the character and quality of our Conservation Areas are protected and enhanced in the work that is undertaken. The Areas with which we are particularly concerned are The Old Market Place; George Street; Goose Green; Stamford New Road; The Downs; The Devisdale; Bowdon and Ashley Heath.

Due to the necessity of having up-to-date boundaries for the Trafford Land Allocations document and because Planning Appeals have been lost due to there being no supporting Conservation Area documents, Kathryn Sather & Associates have now been commissioned to undertake the task for 9 out of the 21 Areas, which includes those listed above. The Civic Society, alongside other conservation, civic and history groups, is sharing its detailed knowledge and experience in their compilation, before a wider public consultation. The task of the community compiling a 'Local List' of significant 'heritage assets' – from cast iron lamps posts to early terraced houses through to Bowdon villas, is also being explored.

Related to this topic and to that of an improved public realm, is the removal and/or consolidation of street clutter i.e. unnecessary signs and poles; non-working telephone boxes used only for advertising; endless bollards; guard rails, along with poor quality and diverse bins and seats. A meeting in December 2011 between councillors, local groups, Highways and the Conservation Officer led to a street clutter 'audit' and Civic Society walk round with Highways. This has resulted in the ongoing and gradual removal of street clutter from the town centre, which is most welcome. The issue of the correct specification for yellow lines (pale primrose and thin paint as opposed to bright yellow and thick paint) is yet to be resolved, but the forthcoming Conservation Area Management Plans should finally address this.

Sue Nichols

St Anne's Home, Bowdon

This set of partially used and poorly maintained NHS hospital buildings was closed in December 2004. After this, there was much delay and active campaigning over many years to protect the site by the Civic Society, jointly with Bowdon Conservation Group, other community groups and the Victorian Society. A Planning Brief from Trafford emerged to support us. The site was finally sold in 2011 to P J Livesey Group for restoration and conversion as housing. Central Manchester NHS Foundation Trust (formerly Trafford Healthcare NHS Trust), is to use the proceeds to help finance the long-awaited new Altrincham hospital.

The pre-consultation process by P J Livesey was excellent, as was the high standard of its application and proposal. The significance of the buildings and the Conservation Area in which they are situated were really understood. We just wish that this was routine in Trafford, rather than the exception.



The campaign to retain all the 19th century buildings on the site and to sympathetically restore them was successful. These include the original 1837 villa, with its 1870s Italianate extensions; the handsome half-butterfly hospital wing commissioned by engineer William Crossley, completed in 1886 and a third building along Bowdon Road added in 1891, in the style of the Crossley Wing. To these have been added a modest new build of three town houses, angled to optimise overall privacy. The majority of trees have been retained, including the mature green beech tree. The stone and brick boundary walls and original entrances have also been respected, so the streetscene remains unaffected.

On 18th October 2012, P J Livesey Group was awarded the 'Heritage Award' at the Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce's Business Awards, having been nominated by Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society and Bowdon Conservation Group, for the work at St Anne's Home.

Sue Nichols

New Altrincham General Hospital

Our committee members were thrilled that the contract for the new hospital has finally been signed by Central Manchester NHS Foundation Trust. Some older members will know that the local community has been pressing for a new hospital in Altrincham since the 1930s! Various committee members have worked tirelessly on this project, liaising with the original Trafford Healthcare NHS Trust and the three developers, in order to keep the process going and to analyse the suitability of the



proposed sites and schemes. While the Society's original preference was for the redevelopment of the existing hospital site, this proved to be simply too expensive and impractical, as it was essential that health services were continuous. As a long term campaigner for the new hospital and Chair of the Society, I was quoted as saying, "This is such good news for the town centre. What an excellent start to 2013."

The new hospital will be staggered in height and faced in stone, with some basement parking on site and easy access to a multi-storey public car park next door. Goose Green and Kings Court will benefit from extra footfall, as pedestrian links to other car parks. Facilities will include the popular minor injuries unit; a range of outpatient clinics; physiotherapy; x-ray unit and laboratories. It could also offer renal dialysis.

Demolition work is set to start imminently and the new hospital is expected to open by the end of 2014.

Judie Collins

Those Banners!

In June 2012, Trafford Council's planning committee narrowly approved an application for a 23 double-sided advertising banners to be erected in Stamford New Road and Railway Street, despite much opposition from the Civic Society. We felt that these would not be in keeping with the fine Victorian and Edwardian streetscene and its Conservation Area Status. Additionally, unlike other Councils, Trafford chose not to have any control over the content and quality. The first set advertised an external rival to Trafford College and currently the banners are only advertising themselves.



A small victory was achieved when 3 banners were removed from the application, after they were considered to be particularly sensitive locations adjacent to three listed buildings.

As the banners are attached to lampposts adjacent to the buildings, several projecting shop and business signs are hidden, to the detriment of their owners. The Civic Society is proposing that the Council's deal with the banner company is renegotiated, so that they are relocated to bleaker parts of the A56 – where they would also be seen by more people and be more effective.

Sue Nichols

Station Buildings

Last year, Michael Armstrong and myself had a private meeting with the directors of the Petros Development Company Ltd which owns the buildings and were told that the assessed S106 developer's financial contribution (for local environmental and highway improvements), was too high to be sustainable or affordable. Revised figures were submitted to Trafford Planners, which resulted in the approved contribution being reduced to almost half. Essential repairs, weatherproofing and partial refurbishment then began immediately on this outstanding Grade II Listed Edwardian office building, in such a prominent location.

Earlier this year, Petros submitted a revised planning application giving further details for a change of use of the upper floors from office space to 24 apartments, which we are in the process of assessing. The original plans to replace the detached brick building right next to the Interchange were also changed, for it to be refurbished and given a new roof layout rather than replaced and to include the active retail frontage we had requested. In principle the refurbished block ought to look much better than the original idea, which was to build new with a metallic bronze finish, which aroused a lot of opposition in the Society.

David Eastwood

Civic Voice AGM 2011

Over 140 volunteers, including four members of Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society, came together in Sheffield for an exciting programme of events and Civic Voice's second AGM in Sheffield in October 2011. After visits to Europe's largest listed building, Park Hill, and hearing about Sheffield Civic Trust's local campaigns, they enjoyed an evening reception in Sheffield Town Hall before the AGM business and talks the next day.

Everyone also heard the results of new research by English Heritage on how best to encourage new volunteers for civic societies and debated the kind of civic campaigns we should all be running in the future.



During the day, the first Marsh Heritage and Community Awards were given to the Wimbledon Society (Award for Civic Societies) and to Sue Nichols, Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society (Civic Volunteer Award) from a strong shortlist, for their outstanding contribution to the civic movement.

Sandra Stone

Civic Voice AGM 2012

The third AGM was held in Coventry on the 19th and 20th October 2012, at the Herbert Gallery in the City Centre. Hosted by the Coventry Society the day comprised a series of guided walks and tours around the historic and regeneration quarters of Coventry, including the medieval suburb of Far Gosford Street which is undergoing a significant Townscape Heritage Initiative funded restoration programme. En route we witnessed the success of the shared street approach and traffic light free junctions, which have been incorporated in the City Centre. Whilst the City has a large student population and struggles economically with the pull of attractive towns nearby like Stratford Upon Avon, it has a real charm with pockets of stunning medieval buildings, including the Medieval Guildhall where the dinner was held, and some very interesting post war architecture.

The AGM on Saturday was chaired by Paula Ridley and was followed by an inspiring and entertaining speech by the Patron of the society Griff Rhys Jones. He spoke of his own personal experience of being accused of nimbyism in his fight against inappropriate basement developments in Fitzroy Square. He stressed that Civic Voice needs to have a clear defining statement, one that talks about being the guardians of our towns and cities for the benefit of future generations. The morning session was concluded with a series of workshops. The session on High Streets was particularly lively and well attended. As there was so much to cover, further workshops were recommended and the following recommendations for Civic Voice members were to:

- know and work with your councillors and officers
- work on recruitment and widening profile of your group
- draw up neighbourhood plans

The theme of the afternoon session was 'Civic Movement 2020.' Sarah Spurrier from Civic Voice presented the new online resource protectourplace.org where all civic group projects can be uploaded as an information and networking tool. There was a survey and discussion about the use of the internet and social media to promote civic groups, as many groups do not have web sites or use Twitter or Facebook. A vote was taken in favour of a campaign against the government's relaxation of permitted development rights. The session concluded with a presentation of four separate proposals for a national Civic Voice campaign, one of which was the preparation of Local Lists. Finally, the 'Placecheck' approach and Neighbourhood Plans were often mentioned as being en vogue this year and promoted by the government. For more information on this please see placecheck.info.

Amy Sharpe

'Heritage of the Altrincham Area' Projects

Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society has been awarded a grant of £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake a set of projects to showcase the unique history of the Altrincham area and to utilise it as a conservation tool. The project team and their volunteers of all ages, continue to work on the Altrincham Area Image Archive, whereby photos and postcards are lent by local collectors and groups for scanning; the historic plans website and transcriptions, along with the oral history project. The heritage trail panels are currently on hold, as the locations of some of them will be determined by the new public realm and movement plans for Altrincham. Please see altrinchamheritage.com for further details.

Associated community events and projects occur on a regular basis. They include the prize giving for the successful 'Art Meets History' painting exhibition which took place at an afternoon tea party at the Greenhouse vegetarian restaurant on Oxford Road in Altrincham in 2011. There had been 244 votes from the public on their favourite individual art work, when it had been on display at Queenie Mumbles cafe. The young G-Force artists had been inspired by the vast selection of historic images from the HLF funded Altrincham Area Image Archive.



Also in 2011, prints of streetscenes were supplied to the Oxfam Bookshop in Altrincham, put in the window then auctioned, as part of their annual Bookfest.



In mid-December 2012, the Society took the opportunity to have a pop-up 'Heritage of the Altrincham Area' display at a Council-owned empty shop, formerly Chisnall's on Shaws Road. This was hosted by a new art for the community volunteer organisation called 'Art with a Heart'. There was plenty of wall hanging and floor space to show a selection of reprints of photographs and the historic 1852 and 1876 maps and plans. It was very well attended over the 10 days (c.1,500 people), in part due to the location en route to

the market. Visitors enjoyed asking questions and passing on fascinating information about the local history of the area. The Civic Society was kindly lent an oil painting by Margaret Norris; an historic sign from the market and some local bottles and crested china to add to their display. Several photographs and maps were offered up for scanning, along with four collections of bottles looking for a home.

David Eastwood, our Vice Chair, undertook two heritage walks around the town to coincide with the heritage display at Art with a Heart. In spite of the cold weather, plenty of people came along and there was a lot of encouraging feedback. The route led from the Library through the Stamford Quarter to the Old Market Place, including looking at buildings to the rear and then to Market Street to take in Altrincham Town Hall and Market. Next it was onto the old AGH, Chapel Street ('the bravest little street in England'), Goose Green and the site of the new AGH, before finishing with Station Buildings.

Sue Nichols

Altrincham's Sanjam Fair – A New Community Event For 2014

The 'Sanjam' (or St James's Day) Fair was part of Altrincham's commercial and social calendar for over 500 years. An opportunity for trade and commerce, it was also a catalyst for celebration, with entertainments, food, music and performance making a fun and social day out for all. A unique opportunity exists to reinvent the fair with a contemporary twist; celebrating the town's rich heritage and blending it with the best of what Altrincham offers today.

A community group supported by Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society plans to revive the Fair in summer 2014 and welcomes support from all sections of the local community to make it happen. For further information please contact Ruth Darling at sanjamfair@gmail.com or phone on 0779 648 6647.

Ruth Darling

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 for further details.