



NEWSLETTER

Autumn/Winter 2017

NOTICES of FORTHCOMING EVENTS

THE FUTURE OF THE CIVIC MOVEMENT

WEDNESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER 2017, 7.30 PM, ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, INSIDE TAMWORTH PARISH CHURCH

A Presentation and Discussion by David Evans, Trustee of Civic Voice FREE ADMISSION

We were excited to be bringing Ian Harvey, co-founder and Executive Director of Civic Voice, all the way from Liverpool to Tamworth to talk to us, but he has now had to pull out, so we are excited to have David Evans come all the way from Chester to talk to us.

David is currently the Secretary of Chester Civic Trust, an active and thriving civic society which runs its own (Grade 1 listed) premises. He was chair of the Trust for six years from 2008 to 2015. He is also on the Steering Group of the Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns (ACT, formerly HCCA), an alliance of civic societies within Civic Voice.

For most of his life David has worked in higher education and is now a (mostly) retired Professor of Biology at the University of Chester. He also spent 20 years as a member of Chester City Council, serving both as Lord Mayor and as Leader of the Council as well as a term as Cabinet member for economic development. This experience gives David an understanding of how local government and strategic planning works and experience of negotiating with and lobbying MPs and ministers.

David also served for over 20 years on his local parish council and he is still actively involved with drawing up a Local Heritage List and trying to develop a Neighbourhood Development Plan. We are currently striving to achieve a proper comprehensive Local List in Tamworth.

Membership of The Tamworth and District Civic Society gives you membership of **Civic Voice**, the **national charity** for the **civic movement** in England. "We make places more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. We promote civic pride." As a member you are eligible for a **free day access pass to the National Trust** (worth up to £14). If you are already NT members this can be given to a friend or relative.

Civic Voice believes everyone has the right to live somewhere they can be proud of. Their reputation and authority makes them the first port of call for anyone seeking to develop, conserve or interpret the quality, beauty and character of our towns, cities and villages or to engage people in shaping their future. They listen, advise, support and act on behalf of communities everywhere. Communities everywhere will know they have a voice and a champion for the place where they live.

As a national voice with a strong local presence they make a difference where it matters. They lobby in Whitehall and Westminster, campaign with local volunteers, speak out in the media, undertake research, build partnerships and promote civic pride. They support local groups and help them work together. They combine community action with sense of place for the benefit of everyone. They talk civic sense. Civic Voice has complimented TDCS as "**one of the most active Societies in England**" and we hope to have a good turnout for this talk to prove that reputation true again.

You care about where you live, so come along and find out more about what you and the civic movement can do together to safeguard, improve, promote, celebrate and enjoy our towns and villages.



CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND SUPPER FAZELEY TOWN HALL, FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER, 7.00PM

This year's Christmas Event is extra special and features the **Mercian Singers**, Tamworth's mixed-voice choir, formerly the Male Voice Choir, performing festive, show-time, and popular songs. We will also enjoy an exclusive **behind-the-scenes tour** of the historic 1898 Fazeley Town Hall with the Mayor, and a hot **fish and chip supper**, as well as other entertainments like a raffle and mini-quizzes. Treat yourself; bring family and friends. Book now.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL, ST. EDITHA'S CHURCH ~ 24 - 30 NOVEMBER

TDCS will be decorating our tree. Call into the Church any day to view the magical display and vote for best tree.

ACTCIVICTIES

An active Summer for TDCS members, with visits around the district, thought-provoking talks, involvement with all the heritage and local promotional events, bringing our voice to the many important planning issues, and doing everything possible to achieve our aims: **to preserve, promote and celebrate the heritage and history of Tamworth and District; to protect and improve the environment ; to advance civic pride and engagement.**

Members continued our support of our local wildlife havens with a guided walk through **Dosthill Park** in May, and in August visited the **Town Wall Local Nature Reserve** at Wilnecote. We marked **Civic Day** in June ("A day each year to say I care about the place I live", co-ordinated by Civic Voice) in style with a superb **lunch at Drayton Manor**, with displays by many local community organisations, and fascinating illustrated presentation and **Talk by the Honourable Robert Peel**, great-great grandson of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, a Vice President of the Gardens Trust, the only national charity dedicated to the research and conservation of designed landscapes in England and Wales and to campaigning on their behalf. **The Gardens Trust** as the statutory consultee for registered parks and gardens plays a key conservation role and supports the County Gardens Trusts in protecting and conserving our landscape heritage. In brilliant sunshine we toured the Manor Gardens with Robert Peel and our generous host Colin Bryan, OBE, admiring the venerable trees including an ancient oak.



The sun also shone on our visit to the wonderful, peaceful, verdant **Elford Hall Walled Gardens** in July, for a **guided tour** and indulgent **cream tea**, combined with a look inside the magnificent **Parish Church**. The Elford Hall Garden Project began life in 2009 with the object of saving the walled garden from becoming a housing development. The project is entirely conceived, delivered, and maintained by volunteers – a tremendous community effort which has received recognition through the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, several Royal Horticultural Society Awards and an Award of the British Empire Medal to Chairman and founder member David Watton. The garden offers a range of allotments, an orchard, flower borders, a rose garden, and a sensory garden, and at its serene riparian limit, a restored boathouse used as a wildlife watching hide, and has many interesting historical features.



More glorious sunshine for this year's private visit to the **Statfold Barn Farm Steam Railway**, a fascinating visit where we enjoyed the beautiful gardens, steam train and tram rides. Huge thanks again to Graham Lee, Henry Noon and all the volunteers for such a memorable day



At our **AGM** in May the Chairman named and thanked each of the outgoing committee members, and said that they made a great team. The treasurer reported a gratifying level of funds, but hoped that another volunteer would soon step into the breach to relieve her of the responsibility. Members then enjoyed a presentation by Peter Johnson on the **Knowle Society**, established in 1962 to maintain the character of that village, and having over 3,000 members. Constitutional amendments were duly approved at the AGM and subsequent EGM.

The Chairman would like to take this opportunity to thank Committee colleagues and members again for all of their support over the last year.

Friday 13th October saw us packed into the **mediaeval crypt** of Tamworth Church to hear John Harper's informative and entertaining talk, with a select few brave members spending the entire night there. The 75th anniversary of the death of **Colin Grazier** was marked by our inaugural Grazier Memorial Lecture, staged jointly with Tamworth Litfest, for naval historian Steve Dunn's talk on heroic deeds of the first world war. For the third year we held the **Armistice Service of Remembrance** in Tamworth's Hall of Memory with a record attendance of Standard Bearers, Bugler, Vicar of Tamworth, the Presidents of Soroptimists International Club of Tamworth & the Rotary Club of Tamworth Anker, Chief Inspector of Tamworth Police, the Head Boy & Head Girl of Rawlett School, the League of Friends of Tamworth Hospitals, Tamworth Lions Club, Tamworth Literary Festival, the magistracy, Town and District Mayors, Service Associations, Parish Councillors, TDCS Members, M.P., and a Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire.

A committee member attended the **Civic Voice Annual Convention** and gained lots of information and inspiration.

TDCS also arranged to take several groups on a tour of **Defence Medical Services** at Whittington. We have been delivering our message to the wider public. Our Chairman gave a talk about TDCS to the Austrey W.I., and we have set out our stalls at **The Lichfield and Tamworth Tourism Swapshop** at Drayton Manor, **Tamefest** (where we presented the prize to the winner of our joint TDCS/Tamworth Litfest short story competition) and **We Love Tamworth** in the Castle Grounds, **Tamworth Church Fayre**, the **Library Family History Day**, and in the Town Hall for **Heritage Open Day**.

We were pleased to be awarded a grant from the **Heart of England Community Foundation** which has enabled us to purchase equipment to help with our work in the community, and are delighted to acknowledge this support, and the help given by **Tame Valley Wetlands**.

Conservation Areas: We marked the 50th anniversary of the introduction of conservation areas into the UK under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 with a presentation on today's historic environment. Tamworth Borough Council's part-time Conservation Officer, John Somers, addressed an audience including Tamworth's Deputy Mayor Peter Thurgood, Fazeley Town Mayor Brian Hoult, & Dr. Geoff Noon the founder Chairman of the Tamworth Conservation Area Advisory Committee which Tamworth Civic Society successfully campaigned to establish after it was formed in 1973. 50 years on our country still needs vigilant & active civic societies to prevent our conservation areas from being neglected, mismanaged, & undermined. Join us in our battle! Our remaining heritage is worth the fight!

PLANNING MATTERS

Arkall Farm: Lichfield District Council is trying to build 1,000 houses on green field land right on Tamworth's borders, which will place an intolerable further burden on this town's strained infrastructure, roads, schools, and services, to the detriment of the environment, without any benefit to our community. Submissions are still being received on this application by the Planning Inspector. If you wish to make your own written submission you can do so to Leanne Palmer at Major Casework, Planning Inspectorate, 3 / O, TQH, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6PN quoting case reference number: APP/K3415/V/17/3174379 or comment online at acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk.

Heritage Listed Building Loophole: A rare & beautiful 400-year-old Jacobean plaster ceiling in a former restaurant in Bristol was destroyed by a developer just 24 hours before it was due to be inspected & legally protected by Historic England. Shockingly, under current legislation the developer may escape penalty because the building was still unlisted. Civic Voice, the national body for civic societies is urging Bristol City Council & Historic England to take action in this case by all available means. Unfortunately, such destruction is not an isolated example in the UK. An on-line petition on website Change.org to "Give automatic interim protection to buildings proposed for listing" received a lot of support.

Grendon Methodist Church (1885): We made representations about the threatened demolition and replacement with two dwellings. Former churches & schools like this lend themselves so well to re-purposing & conversion. It seems a great waste for the village to lose its heritage unnecessarily, & for 2 modern dwellings to be greedily shoe-horned into this small site. Why not get rid of the inappropriate & unsightly modern porch & restore & convert the attractive 1885 building into a residential dwelling with history & architectural character that enhances the area & retains the 132 year old building for future generations?

Church Street, former delicatessen: A bland & unattractive shop frontage was been applied to a Grade II Listed Building in Church Street, within Tamworth's Conservation Area, without planning permission, & the existing frontage removed without consultation. TDCS understands that Tamworth Borough Council has been in discussion with the owners pending possible enforcement action.

Moorgate School: Described as an "educational palace" when it opened in 1898 it is an architectural gem that residents must continue to treasure, safeguard, & put to good use, now that Staffordshire County Council no longer use it. We have supported the Moorgate Action Group which is working hard with other agencies to find a secure future & good community use for this wonderful building that enhances our townscape & street scene.

Wilnecote Board Schools: In this 50th anniversary year of Britain's creation of conservation areas, Tamworth Borough Council failed to revise the boundaries of Wilnecote Conservation Area, despite urging by TDCS & villagers to improve its quality & coverage to more accurately reflect the history & development of Wilnecote. Consequently, the former Wilnecote Board Schools remain excluded & at risk. These Victorian buildings, designed by famous architect Basil Champneys & attended by footballing legend Harry Hibbs & WW2 Enigma Code hero Colin Grazier GC, were utilised for community groups until 2016. The present custodian of these significant Tamworth heritage buildings is Staffordshire County Council. We have just been alerted to the fact that the County Council has now decided to "dispose of" this site. We are told that Tamworth Borough Council has been notified as the site was designated an asset of community interest. It is said that interested parties will have until 20 December next to notify Tamworth Borough Council if they wish to express an interest in acquiring the buildings.

Sadly **The Polesworth Society** is to close on 31 December after 34 years. Tamworth Civic Society's then chairman, Norman Biggs, helped launch it in 1983. Huge credit to Margaret Henley for her devoted service. Polesworth & environs are still covered by a civic society, in the shape of TDCS. We would welcome Polesworth Society members to join TDCS to add their voice to ours and ensure that their good work continues.

War Memorials: Our War Memorials Project, in conjunction with Civic Voice, has been flourishing and thanks to the hard work of Diane Wells and other volunteers we have recorded nearly 70 local memorials. Great news that the Amington Cemetery War Memorial Cross has now been given grade II heritage listing status. TDCS joined other civic society representatives, Historic England, Imperial War Museums & War Memorials Trust at Civic Voice's workshop on war memorials held at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. Delegates heard about adding memorials to the National Heritage List for England, accessing funding for restorations, engaging communities, & plans for centenary commemorations in 2018 for the end of WW1.

R.I.P. Lloyd Jackson: A sad farewell on 30th May at the funeral of TDCS member Lloyd Jackson. Glascote-born & well known as a former engineer & newsagent; for his love of cycling & motor sports; of steam rollers & traction engines, including the one he restored himself, "Ethelfleda"; as a drummer with the Bob Mason Band & the Lloyd Jackson Band; as a devoted Rotarian - twice President of the Rotary Club of Tamworth Anker which he helped found in 1982, a District Governor, & a Paul Harris Fellow. A very nice, popular & respected man.

2018 ~ We already have an exciting agenda of events and projects for the new year. This will include visits to more local nature reserves, visits to other places of interest, lots of interesting talks, and a major nationally important commemoration for the 1100th anniversary of the death at Tamworth in 918 of Aethelflaed.

We also want members to become as fully involved as possible in the work of the Society. Let us know if there are issues you wish us to pursue. Membership is thriving, surpassing our first year, and still growing, and we have just welcomed our youngest member, aged 16.

As a member you will receive privileged priority notice and discounts. Our subscription price has been held at its 2015 rate.

If you have not already signed up for 2018 membership please renew you membership subscriptions now.

Together we will continue to have a strong voice and go on

Protecting the Past, Promoting the Present, Planning for Posterity