

A warm welcome to Members and visitors to the 2016 Annual General Meeting, the end of my first year "in the Chair". The last twelve months have proved to be another successful and busy year for the Wigston Civic Society, with successful events, campaigns, and publicity undertaken by the Committee on behalf of the members of the Society and of course of the people of Wigston.

During the year we have campaigned on several important local issues.

Firstly, having been informed that Abington House on the school site on Station Road was being planned for demolition to make way for new buildings, we submitted an application to obtain listed status for the building. We were not successful in this application, but the planners then changed tack and submitted new designs which do not include the demolition of the house.

The Horse & Trumpet public house started to build an external decking area for smokers on the front their premises, visible from the main road. Informed by Duncan Lucas that this was on the site of a right of way through Wigston's former 'Green', we challenged the Council on this fact with the result that the building was stopped and eventually taken down.

The façade of the former British Legion premises in Bushloe End, now called the Elms Social and Services Club, is in a sorry state of repair and looks very run down. We have contacted the owners of the building several times, but they have informed us that they are looking for funds to renovate the outside of the property.

Another building in a rundown condition is the brickwork on the J Hoots Chemist building on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road in South Wigston We have contacted the manager several times, but as yet have not received a reply.

We submitted a long document concerning the Town Centre consultation and Local Development Orders.

In order to make sure we cover and discuss all local issues which sometimes the allotted time of a Committee meeting does not allow us to do, we now have a yearly regular Away Day, where we catch up on all the outstanding issues. On the 11<sup>th</sup> February this year our Away Day took place in the Wigston Fire Station Community room with lunch at the Horse & Trumpet.

We of courses also continue to work closely with the Leicester and Oadby Civic Societies, and continue to take part in the yearly bulb planting activities to brighten the roads of Wigston in the winter and spring months.

We have strived to publicise the society during the year in various ways.

In March we again attended the Leicestershire & Rutland Family History Society AGM event, putting on a display of the Society, with the first outing of our new pop-up banner which you can see tonight. The banner was purchased from the kind legacy of £1000 bequeathed to the Society by Barry Roe.

We now regularly advertise our activities on the new very effective Bell Street rolling display information board, which was set up and is being run by the Council

The Civic Society website was re-designed last year, making it cleaner, easier to navigate, and with more information about our activities.

Our newly designed Newsletter Wigstons' Voice has been very well received, as we have tried to make it full of news and views about the Society and local issues. We have received some very complimentary comments about the publication and its contents.

In the current edition there is a mystery photo competition, if you look closely at the screen displays later during the commendation awards you may spot the answer!

The society has several projects under way, as well as keeping a watching brief over local issues.

One of the projects we have done further work on this year with the Council and Historical Society is the review of the list of local Significant Buildings Review, which hopefully will be published in the coming year.

Some of the local issues and planning applications we are keeping an eye on are:

The pedestrianisation and pavement blocking in Wigston Magna centre, and in conjunction with the County Council we are striving to stop shops using the pavement areas and highways outside their premises.

The Pochin's Bridge Road development

The Newton Lane housing development, which is between outline and full planning permission.

Peacock Place, the Moat Street housing development, which I am pleased to say I now well under way.

The Station Road/Kirkdale Road housing development for which we have submitted several street name ideas.

We also submitted school or house names ideas for the Wigston College developments, with our suggestions to perpetuate the old names of the schools.

In 2015 we ran a couple of very successful events, open to both Members and the public.

The well attended 2015 illustrated lecture took place on 29 September at this venue when Rowan Roenisch gave us an excellent and enthusiastic lecture on the subject of Ernest Gimson and Stoneywell, the newly opened National Trust property at Ulverscroft.

The main event and highlight of the year was of course our Wigston Remembers World War One commemoration concert organised jointly by the Civic, Greater Wigston and Family History societies. It was a privilege to take part in organising the event along with Colin Towell, Jane Callis and Nicola Alexander, and many thanks to all of the volunteers who gave up their time to make it a very successful and moving evening of commemoration.

The programme consisted of music, songs and words with a local community choir The Harmonics; Marion Morley with poignant readings; Banjo Des with World War 1 songs; Robin Jenkins with his Humour in the Trenches and Dave Andrews of Radio Leicester reading very moving World War 1 poetry. The evening finished with a video recording of the last post ceremony at the Menin Gate.

To me the most amazing and pleasing aspect of the whole evening was that although all of the performers knew their parts in the Concert, there had not been a rehearsal, such was the skill of the contributors that it went together seamlessly without a hitch.

This collaboration is a good example of us working together with other cultural groups and apart from this already mentioned we work with Leicester and Oadby civic societies, East Midlands Association of Civic and Heritage Societies and our local Framework Knitters Museum, Traders organisations and residents forums.

We have several upcoming events covering the rest of this year.

Firstly, the South Wigston Station plaque unveiling which will take place on Tuesday 10 May 2016. This project, funded by the Wigston Forum and The Traders Association, is to mark the opening of the station on the same date 30 years ago. In attendance at the opening will be the Mayor of Oadby and Wigston. All members and visitors are most welcome. I will have to give my apologies, I cannot attend the event as I will be about 400 miles away on a tour of the D-Day landing beaches in Normandy.

On Wednesday 1 June, which is St. Wistan's Day, the Society will be relaunching the Two Steeples Walk. The walk, inaugurated and designed in the year 2000 by Colin Hames and Mary Essinger as part of the Millennium celebrations, will be a 10 mile walk starting from St. Wistan's Church going through Newton Harcourt, Wistow, Kilby and Kilby Bridge, finishing at All Saints Church in Wigston. It is split in to three stages, so that you can take part in the whole walk or just one or two of the stages, with a team leader on each stage. Please do take part if you can and make it a memorable day out.

On Tuesday 27 September our yearly illustrated lecture will take place at a new venue, the South Wigston High School. The lecture will be "THE RAILWAYS OF WIGSTON JUNCTION FROM 1840 TO TODAY" by John Stevenson, a speaker with a vast knowledge of his subject. The new venue will give us capacity for an audience of over 200, and has plenty of on-site car parking. At just £3 entrance including refreshments, for members and the public, this is an unmissable evening out.

It is not all work and no play as far as your Committee and members are concerned. We have had several social events throughout the year.

As well as lunches out, we also held another skittles match evening on January 29 against the Leicester Civic Society at Aylestone which Wigston won.

Finally, I would like to give thanks from the Society for the many years of contributions by Alan Kind and Mary Essinger, both of whom last year decided to relinquish their Committee duties. I would also wish to express my thanks to fellow Committee members and those members who attend committee meetings regularly for their work over the year.