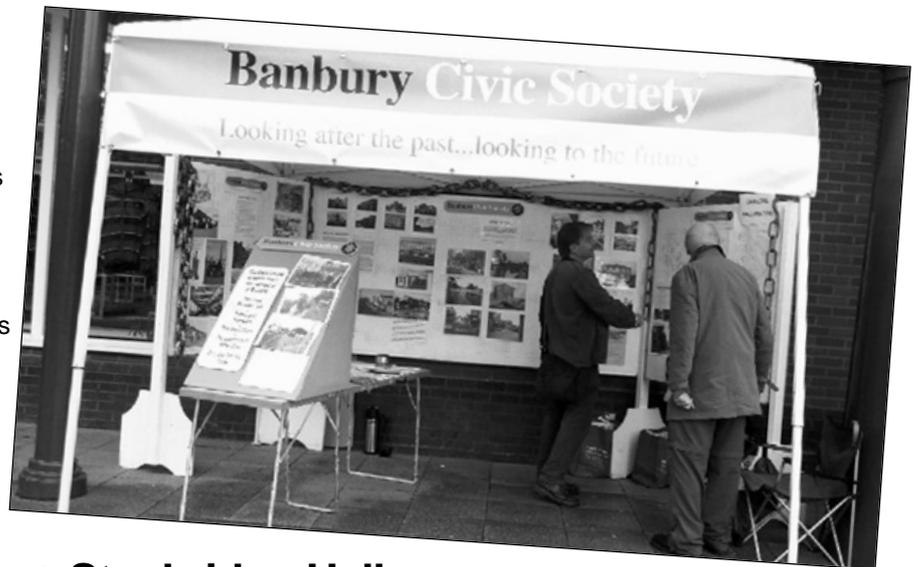


## Canal Day 2010

Banbury's Canal Day is now an established feature of the Town's annual events and despite miserable weather this year, the event was well attended, spirits were high and the BCS stand was busy. (see report on page 4)



## Stanbridge Hall

Pictures showing the demolition of the back of the building, the view from Ruskin Road of the front of the building due to be retained, an aerial view before demolition and a plan of the proposed redevelopment to provide 60 2-bed and 10 1-bed 'Extra Care' residential apartments.



## 2009-10 Chairman's Report

Despite the Credit Crunch of September 2009, the last year has been a very busy one for both the town and this Society.

Landmark events have included the completion of Town Council's renovation of People's Park, the 150th anniversary of Banbury Cross, the Town Council's restoration of the Main Chamber at the Town Hall, the restoration of the Unicorn gates, and the return to Banbury of the former Brown's Original Cake Shop mural.

The biggest investments of all have been the new Spiceball sports centre and CDC's pedestrianisation of Parsons Street and Cornhill. Whilst the latter was criticised for being rather bland in execution, the potential of the area as a key asset to the town was brilliantly demonstrated at CDC's fun day in the summer. With the recent launch by the local traders of an Old Town association, we look forward to more 'place-making' initiatives that will generate the buzz and excitement that the Old Town so desperately needs. A first and very welcome step has been the return of the Reine Deer gibbet and sign.

The financial downturn has seen planning applications and new starts decimated. Schemes shelved include the proposed redevelopment schemes for the derelict former Crest Offices and for Iceland and Calthorpe House in Calthorpe Street. Other schemes that have (mercifully) gone into abeyance have included the redevelopment as flats of the 1812 Wesleyan chapel and the demolition of nos. 11-12, both in the historic Church Walk.

September 2009 sadly saw the demolition of the former Alcan works, although the offices, gates and war memorial have been saved. The frontage block of the former Banbury Grammar (Stanbridge Hall) has also been saved and conversion to old-peoples flats' is currently underway. Whether the consented scheme to convert Dashwood School to residential use will proceed

seems less clear, as this is dependent on funding from the Homes & Communities Agency.

The quality of planning decisions and enforcement actions have improved markedly in the last year, particularly with regard to subdivisions and degrading alterations within the Conservation Areas. CDC's elected members have put a Planning Scrutiny Committee in place, promoting changes in practice long asked for by this Society. These include a public right to address the Planning Committee and the publication of conservation officers' reports where these are contrary to officer advice.

It has been an immensely busy year for responses to public consultations. These have included participation in CDC's Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership consultation event, further iterations of πCDC's draft Core Strategy regarding the location and number of new residential and employment development sites, CDC's landscape appraisal of potential Core Strategy sites, OCC's Local Transport Plan 3 2011 – 2030, and the Government's consultation on the now-published Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment. The most gratifying immediate result was CDC's abandonment of the Wykham Lane and Crouch Hill sites, which are now safe from development. Much the most high-profile for us has been CDC's consultation on its Draft Canalside Supplementary Planning Document. Our response, the Vision for the Regeneration of Canalside (available on our website) has been highly praised in many quarters, including within CDC, as a very positive and professional contribution to the masterplanning process.

The Coalition Government has brought about a huge upheaval in planning, resulting in the abolition of Regional Government, Regional Development Agencies, centrally directed housing targets and (hopefully) 'garden grabbing'. These changes have placed major uncertainties against CDC's emerging

Core Strategy and the Canalside regeneration scheme. Hopefully the 'Localism' agenda will mean a greatly enhanced role for civic and amenity societies such as ours.

As well as responding to consultation and planning applications, members have also attended at their own expense the Civic Trust South East Conference in Guildford, the Civic Society Initiative Conference in Blackpool, and the Historic Towns Forum conference in Chichester. Members have also regularly attended the Town Council's standing committees, the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee, Built Heritage Working Party and new this year, the Banbury Town Centre Partnership. We have had stalls and displays at Banbury Canal Day, 'Bloxfest' and Banbury History Fair.

In past years we have been very aware that we could have put on more for our members and the wider community. Thus in 2009-10 we organised a series of events focussing on the Canalside regeneration proposals, including discussion fora and talks, a guided walk round Banbury's historic Canalside and a fact-finding coach trip to Stourport, Droitwich, Worcester and Stratford. In addition, we had a highly enjoyable social evening at the Thai Orchid, where we heard about recycling and waste management in Cherwell.

Finally, 2009 saw the demise of our umbrella organisation, the Civic Trust. To many the Civic Trust was viewed as overly reliant on Government contracts and out of touch with its grass roots. Its loss nevertheless left the civic movement without a national voice at a particularly critical time. With the wholehearted support of the National Trust and surviving regional Civic Trusts, a wholly independent successor body, Civic Voice, has been brought into being to fill the vacuum. The Executive of our Society moved to transfer our Civic Trust affiliation to Civic Voice. As the subscription rate was on a per-capita basis rather than banded as previously, the move to Civic Voice prompted us to

review our own subscriptions for the first time since our inception in 1997. My thanks go out to all of our members who have so obligingly amended their standing orders in consequence.

It's been an honour and a privilege to have worked with our committees and volunteers through such an exciting time of change. My thanks go out to all our members for their continued support and particularly to the most active committee stalwarts who have carried a particularly heavy load over the last couple of years. In all ways our Society and the wider Civic movement in general are in better shape than ever and well placed for the challenges and opportunities presented by 'Localism' and the Big Society.

## Civic Voice

### Civic Voice and its achievements so far

Rising with the energy of an adolescent phoenix from the ashes of the Civic Trust, the Civic Voice came into being in April 2010 following a year-long, comprehensive, consultation process. Learning from the demise of the Civic Trust the new organisation, representing over 270 civic and amenity societies in England, has been constituted specifically to maintain grassroots authority and financial independence: the board of trustees being all civic society members, with only 2 paid staff.

Free workshops have been held across the country and more are planned on issues including Street Pride (street clutter), introduction to the planning system, Understanding Places (urban design) and planning for a national Civic Day on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2011. It is pleasing to know that some of these courses, and useful contacts with other like-minded organisations, are the result of suggestions and introductions by BCS members, reinforcing the central principle of grassroots involvement.

*Mo Mant (Vice Chairman)*

### Reasons for joining

A major change in 2010 was the financial collapse of the Civic Trust and the birth of a new umbrella organisation, Civic Voice. We were previously affiliated to the Civic Trust and a substantial majority of the management committee remained fully committed to the belief that the civic movement must have a unified, national voice to lobby on our behalf at a national level.

Clearly other societies are equally keen to support the new umbrella organisation and Civic Voice boasts by Christmas 271 affiliated civic and amenity societies, including, locally, the societies at Abingdon, Bedford, Buckingham, Coventry, Droitwich, Kenilworth, Kidderminster, Lichfield, Maidenhead, Newbury, Oxford, Warwick and Worcester. After less than a year, Civic Voice thus provides a national voice for over 70,000 individual civic society members. The voice of these members has already had a significant influence on heritage planning policy during the final days of Labour and is currently proving highly influential in current debates on emerging planning and localism initiatives. If for these reasons alone, Civic Voice appears to be amply proving its worth.

A minority of our management committee remained reluctant to commit funds to a new and untried national body. Others passionately believed that we must support the new body from the start. In the event, our first year's membership (approximately £1.50 per head) was paid in full by a kind donation from a single member.

*Rob Kinchin-Smith (Chairman)*

### What others say:

*(Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary, Oxford Civic Trust, from OCS Newsletter No116, July 2010)*

#### Civic Voice – Talking Civic Sense

Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement. It aims to make places more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive, and promotes civic pride.

Oxford Civic Society is a large and active Society. We enjoy good relationships with the local Councils and media. We have our successes. But we recognise that there are times when we need the support of a national organisation – some things are beyond our local reach.

That is why we contributed to the extensive consultation and discussion about the future of the civic movement following closure of the Civic Trust in April 2009. (Civic and amenity societies and their members with over 100 other interested organisations and partners were all involved.) And that is why we decided to join Civic Voice as founder members and why Peter Thompson, Vice Chairman, and I attended the Launch in April 2010.

Civic Voice's mission statement says:

'As a national voice with a strong local presence we make a difference where it matters.'

You will find us lobbying in Whitehall and Westminster, campaigning with local volunteers, speaking out in the media, undertaking research, building partnerships and promoting civic pride.

We support local groups and help them work together.'

Hopefully you saw some of the media coverage of the launch and the endorsements by HRH Prince Charles, Griff Rhys Jones and others.

Civic Voice is the result of an analysis of what the civic movement needs. This was supported by The National Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, CPRE, North of England Civic Trust, English Heritage and the RIBA and civic societies country-wide.

The aim is to establish a light footed, energetic organisation with clear, focused ambitions – with a particular emphasis on getting people more actively involved in their local community.

Campaigns that have already been launched include: Street Pride, supporting local action to help rid streets of unnecessary clutter; Love Local,

uncovering the local DNA of different places. Readers with access to the Internet can follow and indeed help their campaigns by going to [civicvoice.org.uk](http://civicvoice.org.uk)

Oxford Civic Society welcomes the arrival of Civic Voice, which gives us:

- contacts with Societies facing similar challenges to our own – sharing experiences and frustrations should lead to more appropriate and effective solutions
- a public profile for the movement – the better known the movement is, the easier it is for us to recruit new members and make our voice heard
- an authoritative voice to speak on our behalf to Government and national organisations such as English Heritage

The need for an authoritative voice is of particular importance given the changes to the planning system being introduced: as you may be aware, the new Coalition Government have announced the abandonment of centrally set planning. This could mean a more fruitful dialogue with our local councils. But central government will still set the rules. Civic Voice gives us an opportunity to influence those rules.

Oxford Civic Society faces many challenges in the coming years. We believe Civic Voice will help us meet them.

Members of civic societies who join Civic Voice will be eligible for a free day access pass to the National Trust (worth up to £14). If they are already members this can be given to a friend or relative.

For more information about the Civic Voice and how to access the free day access pass to the National Trust please contact Mo Mant ([momant@btconnect.com](mailto:momant@btconnect.com) / 01295 721630). Alternatively, simply log on to the Civic Voice website: [www.civicvoice.org.uk](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk).

We shall soon start preparations for Civic Day and need volunteers. Please contact Mo if you will be willing to help.

## CDC Planning Policy

### Update on Canalside and Cherwell Core Strategy

The change of government and abolition of regional housing targets means that Cherwell can now determine for itself the amount of growth it feels appropriate. Further, the dismantling of Regional Development Agencies and the subsuming of English Partnerships into a cut-down Homes and Communities Agency will result in a reduction of central government partnership funding towards complex regeneration initiatives.

With many UK towns and cities currently blighted by stalled large-scale regeneration projects driven by 'buy-to-let', commercial property investment and big retail, it is to be hoped that the demise of these regeneration agencies may eventually result in a more sustainable, bottom-up approach to regeneration that is more locally distinctive and makes better use of existing assets.

These changes have all had a significant effect on the progress of CDC's Core Strategy (where to focus growth) and on the Canalside Supplementary Planning Document.

CDC have issued the following statement:

*'The Core Strategy timetable has been affected by the announcement of the new Secretary of State in July 2010 to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies including the South East Plan. This has (amongst other matters) removed the strategic housing requirement within the district. Cherwell District Council is currently reviewing its existing evidence base and undertaking some further work to enable it to take a view on an appropriate level of growth to recommend for the district. Technical studies are being undertaken for Banbury Canalside, including further work to determine flood risk. The Flood Alleviation Scheme for Banbury has now been approved. The Council hopes to indicate soon a revised timetable for the Core Strategy, which may include additional public consultations.'*

## Canal Day

The theme of this Canal Day was to celebrate the work of Tom Rolt who was instrumental in the founding of the Inland Waterways Association, the first railway preservation society (the Tallylyn), the National Railway Museum, and by association, the Landmark Trust and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. The Society supports the activities generated by such bodies which create employment and contribute to the economy by way of the heritage tourist industry and its suppliers. They also consolidate local traditions and communities. This is regeneration through heritage: the core strategy of the recent BCS Canalside development proposals, which were on show.

Once again this year visitors to the stand raised the issue of the loss of 'iconic' Banbury buildings and the poor quality of their replacements, BCS committee members were able to point to examples where the Society had worked to save the buildings or influence the quality of their replacements, and made the point that more members would mean more influence.

Many thanks to all those who braved the weather: both members and visitors. We look forward to next year and hope to welcome new volunteers to help with the stand and promote the Society.

Please send your letters via e-mail to [design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk](mailto:design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk)

### Banbury Civic Society Membership

Help us recruit new members. Membership forms can be obtained from the Membership Secretary.  
**More members = more action.**  
**More members = a louder voice.**  
**Help us help Banbury.**

Please write to:  
Chris Seddon,  
BCS Membership Secretary  
34 Wodhams Drive, Brackley  
Northamptonshire, NN13 6NB  
m. 07747 884770 t.01280 706240  
<mailto:info@banburycivicsociety.org>