

# ST. MARY'S CHURCH

## *The inside story!*

Dust, dust and more dust! However I am telling myself it is "creative dust"; the result of labour and craftsmanship. Sunday worship continues but it is increasingly a challenge as scaffolding now regales the inside as well as the outside. Then there are the day to day issues which arise

- when will the vestry safe be moved so that the plumbers can start?
- The archaeologist has given the all clear about the bones - will you rebury them?

But day by day the building progresses, and the shape of the stage rises from the foundations and the many, many timbers now running across the chancel floor. Shielded from our current worship area by a screen, it takes a trip into the gallery to get a feel for how impressive the finished product will be.

Meanwhile we are receiving a steady flow of enquiries about when will it be finished." My daughter is looking for a venue to put on a ballet as part of her degree - any chance? "I have had this idea for a concert - what do you think?" What about a rock opera, fashion show, a brass band? There is no shortage of ideas of how to use the new stage area. I think I had better make sure all the Sunday services are in the booking diary now!

*Janet Chapman. Priest in charge.*

BANBURY CIVIC SOCIETY.

## **PUBLIC MEETING. "TOWN CENTRE FUTURE PLANS".**

**Speakers include**

**Tom Thompson (Banbury Town Clerk)  
David Pinkney (Urban Centre Manager)**

**Wednesday January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002  
St Mary's Centre Horsefair. 7.30pm.**

# Banbury Civic Society



This edition of the Civic Societies "Newsletter" brings you details of the various activities and issues which your committee has been concerned with over the last six months. They are many and varied and all are important.

Perhaps the one that has had the most publicity, is the County Council's plan to alter the roads in The Horsefair by the introduction of so called "safety bumps". It was quite clear to the Committee that this would alter the character of the area, and was not needed

As a result we circulated all of you with a form to give your individual views. Because many of you then sent these in, the Council changed their plans and dropped the controversial bumps in the road. Some other measures were accepted and will be put into action.

It is quite clear that, although the Civic Society sent a very detailed response, it was the numerical weight of replies that changed the County Council's mind.

This shows the importance of your membership if we are to reflect informed public opinion on matters concerning our town and its amenities. At the moment our membership is still under fifty, and we very much want to increase this both to help our limited finances (only £10 a member), and also our influence. There will be a couple of meetings in the year which we invite you to take part, but the Management Committee does not expect attendance at all events we organise.

*It would help us greatly if, each of you would make a determined effort this year to recruit one new member or family so as to forward our work*

Looking after the past... looking to the future

## PEOPLE'S PARK WINS EXCLUSIVE AWARD.

On Thursday November 8<sup>th</sup> Banbury received its first coveted Green Flag Award for People's Park at a ceremony organised by The Civic Trust at Knowsley in Merseyside for the 81 Parks in the Country judged worthy of the award.

It was received by John Crowther (representing Cherwell District Council who manages the Park, and co-ordinated the award entry on behalf of the Banbury Town) and Canon Derek Palmer (Hon Secretary of the Banbury Civic Society) who have taken a keen interest in the development of it



The Green Flag award recognises and encourages good quality in public accessible green space. To win the award a Park must meet the environmental, community landscape and safety criteria of experienced judges who make the site visits and score all parks against pre-defined criteria related to set standards. Last year only 55 United Kingdom parks achieved the Green Flag status, and this year People's Park is the only one in Oxfordshire to achieve this accepted high standard.

George Ball gave the land for the People's Park to the people of Banbury in 1887 as part of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. It is very appropriate therefore that, over one hundred years later in the year of our present Queen's Jubilee the Green Flag will be flying on its special flag pole in the Park. The award is for one year only and to win it again in future years it will need to be reassessed

It is also appropriate that this has been achieved this year, because at the end of it John Crowther (Principal Landscape Officer of C.D.C) leaves the area to become Parks Superintendent at Cheltenham, which is a very well known town for its parks and plants.

## BANBURY FLOOD PREVENTION.

For decades the Cherwell Valley has been prone to run-off and flooding to an increasing degree. The tributaries and drainage system in the large rural catchment area to the north flows southwards into the urban bottleneck, the River Cherwell, and through the centre of Banbury.

The heavy rainfall and floods of Easter 1998 with their subsequent disruption and property damage brought consideration of flooding to a head. That event led to the formation of a Banbury Flood Alleviation Scheme under the auspices of the Environment Agency and Cherwell District Council with other public Bodies Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Water among them.

The Civic Society has been an active and regular contributor on the Feasibility Study Steering Group. Our stated concern has been, since the inception of this study, that until an overall scheme of flood alleviation is put in place that any development in the Cherwell Valley flood plain would be premature and this would lead to an increase in the problem. We believe that any planning application should be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

At the time of writing it is encouraging to see the Environment Agency exerting its statutory powers and proposing practical answers for the widest benefit. The Civic Society has expressed its concern that powerful bodies would follow their unilateral interest with regard to water and flooding, thence one man's solution becoming another man's problem.

We continue to contribute to these discussions drawing on the professional and practical experience of the members within the Banbury Civic Society. *John Stokes.*

In the past few months the work in the Civic Society about planning matters has been concentrated on two fronts, namely the scrutinising of small and large planning matters, and strategic forward planning.

The small planning application that has caused concern is the alterations of 18-20 Broad St resulting from a change of use from a house to commercial premises. The building is thought to be the last remaining pre-canal ironstone house within the Town Centre, and alterations included the rendering of external stonework and the replacement of historic doors and windows. No response has come for C.D.C. but the development has not taken place.

#### LARGER DEVELOPMENTS.

1. In May and June we objected to two large adjoining housing developments on the Warwick Rd/North Bar/North Bar Place/the Lays site. We objected on several grounds; traffic vehicular access and parking; the demolition of three historic buildings within the Conservation Area (17 19 North Bar); the effect of the development on the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Building ( 20 North Bar) and that two housing proposals were incompatible with the local plan. The archaeological potential of both sites was noted.

2. In August we objected to a proposed Lidl store on the former Hartwell Ford Site on the Warwick Road on the grounds of traffic, noise and parking.

3. In July we made observations regarding aspects of the proposed multiplex on the Littlewoods car-park site, notably the 50foot high elevation of the proposed multi-storey car

the Bridge to Bankside threatens to sweep away virtually all remaining canalside structures, irrespective of their historic or potential visual merit.

Other contentious issues include clauses stating a presumption in favour of development with Conservation Areas and the exclusion of dwelling houses from Conservation Area controls against partial demolition.

The new Local Plan will be with us for a very long time and its policies will be crucial for the wellbeing (or otherwise) of the town's historic environment.

**We will continue to strive to win allies in these matters and appeal to our members for any practical assistance that they can give.**

Robert Kinchin-Smith, Planning and historic Environment Group.

## THE LADY WILL RIDE!

**For many years the idea of a statue of a lady on a white horse has been talked about in Banbury, and now it seems very likely that it will come about.**

The Civic Society revived the possibility of this two years ago, and is delighted that the Town Council has taken it over. A small committee has been set up and our Chairman will represent us on this.

The hope is that it might be up in the year of the Queen's Jubilee. But if that is to happen there will have to be a considerable sum of money raised, and this will be one of the first tasks that the committee will have to address. But we are confident it will meet with a ready response from all Banbury people.

# KEEPING AN EYE ON OUR TOWN

park on Cherwell St, which could develop into a deep wind-swept canyon once its eastern side is redeveloped

4. Currently we are making representations on a proposal to demolish the old county police station on the Marborough/Newlands Rd corner. The proposal is for four storey flats in Victorian -esque style. The Police Station was built in 1861 is neither listed or in a Conservation Area, although we have listed it as a candidate for our "Local List". Its proposed demolition highlights the fact that many of our historical buildings still enjoy no measure of statutory protection

#### NEW LOCAL PLAN

Our strategic planning function continues to centre on the Deposit Draft of the new Local Plan (DDLDP). We are very disappointed that our representations regarding the extension of the Banbury Conservation Area (unchanged since 1969), and the adoption of a "Local List" of buildings of local significance were not included in the DDLDP. We are increasingly concerned that the DDLDP instead continues policies of systematically targeting the town's remaining industrial heritage for development. This is most notable in the canalside area where a 6-meter wide canalside "promenade" from

# TRANSPORT AND HOUSING ISSUES.

In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has come under pressure from Central Government, to introduce to Banbury, "Green" transport measures in the form of street furniture and road appendages.

These plans have been unworkable and on the County Council's own admissions, inaccurate. The inaccuracies were explained away, unsuccessfully, in that they were only in a rough guide subject to alterations depending upon the outcome of the Exhibitions, of which three or four have been held.

The Civic Society drafted a denouement of the plans which had included the now notorious roads bumps, or so called "traffic calmers" which would damage suspension systems, as well as coloured cycle lanes along the highway from South Bar to North Bar inclusive, in places where they could never give safety to the cyclists. There were also cycle gates proposed to keep traffic out of the area and a number of other proposals most of which did not meet with local approval

**The Civic Society itself, and through the work of it's members, was successful in dealing with this, and the main items of it have been withdrawn showing what can be done, and we can do so again with other matters, when they arise.**

At the moment the County Council is only sending us what it wants for Banbury. The time has come for us to tell them what we want, and this is local democracy

We need more industry, commerce, houses and roads over the next 25 years but while we see plenty of sites for housing, we do not see proposed improvement in traffic carrying capacity.

The residential areas should develop on the south and west of the town, upwind of the industrial development in the north and east, but above all we must preserve and maintain our town's heritage and history for the future of its spiritual wellbeing and for our visitors.

*Cllr A.J.Milne Home*

# OUR PARENT BODY

Our Civic Society is one of about nine hundred similar societies in England affiliated to the Civic Trust, a national organisation formed in 1957 to provide information and support locally. Through the Trust by means of its periodic newsletters and regular emails, local Societies such as our own can be warned of potential threats before they may have appeared in their areas.

One such threat at the moment is unsightly advertising in streets such as in Bus Shelters, and in particular B.T.s recent ploy of using phone boxes as advertising hoardings. The wider and more vocal the pressure against such excesses can be, the better will be our urban and country scene.

On a more positive note, the Civic Trust is currently devoting a lot of energy towards the future of market towns. The street signs upon entering into Banbury erected by the Town Council, declare us still to be a Market Town, although the disappearance of the Cattle Market and the arrival of the new supermarkets and the Shopping area make this definition less obvious. However we still have our bi-weekly markets and now our monthly Farmers Market.

The biggest issue for Market Towns is the protection of local, traditional shops and the Trust is encouraging numerous tailor-made local initiatives with this objective in mind. Another issue is the broadening of a town's visitor appeal, which also extends to its appearance. Banbury is actively looking to do this already.

Other activities of the Trust include the actual presentation of Awards for high standards in the design of new buildings, The Green Flag awards in the provision, management and care of Parks and our Secretary was present last week at the presentation of the Green Flag for People's Park.

*They also arrange the Heritage Open Days weekend each September for buildings of distinction not normally open to the public. Altogether a very varied and helpful source of support*

*John Bell (Chairman)*