

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008 (John Pritchard)

I must thank the Society's Officers and Executive Committee members for their support during the past year. Anne Winter has continued as our Honorary Secretary, whilst serving the community in so many other ways. One of the Society's founder members, Dr Dorothy Pearson, is standing down from the position of Honorary Treasurer that she has held for many years. We owe Dorothy a very big 'thank you'. Our Society depends upon the success of our Coffee Mornings in the Mechanics Institute. Thanks to Dorothy Johnson (whose first call has been to be with her husband and our President Alan), Marlene Bate, our Vice-Chairman Joy Brown, Mike Brunt, Ivan McDonagh, Bronwyn Strugnell, Barbara Pritchard and other volunteers for their support.

Mike Brunt has represented us at the Whaley Bridge Regeneration Partnership, Barbara Pritchard at the Central Area Forum, and Bert Bowles at EMACS (East Midlands Association of Civic Societies) meetings. Bert and Joy also serve on the Board of the Whaley Bridge-based High Peak CVS (Community and Voluntary Support). Joan Gibson brought to our attention difficulties experienced by residents in the Reddish Road area; these have been able to be resolved by two new bus stops. I also must thank Dr Bernard Treves Brown for his work on maintaining our website (www.wbas.org.uk) and for helping Mr Ivan McDonagh with various planning matters. Ivan is standing down from the Executive Committee, as is Bronwen Strugnell. Mrs Ivy Lomas has not been able to attend meetings, but continues to monitor international, national and local affairs from her fireside.

Since the last AGM there have been two Coffee Mornings and six ordinary meetings of the Executive Committee, which are open to all members. The business of the Society is conducted in the context of promoting the Objects of the Society:

- to promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit (ie the civil parish of Whaley Bridge)
- to stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of this area and its surroundings
- to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit.

CLUBROOM: Thanks to the volunteers for keeping the weeds at bay on the steps and in the garden, for keeping the room clean and tidy, and for providing refreshments at meetings. It is becoming increasingly difficult to justify continuing with our Club Room in Old Road, because of the cost incurred annually. The Executive Committee has asked a small group of members to look at the options and report back. The retention option has not been ruled out, but would seem attractive only if greater usage by, and increased revenue from, other community groups can be achieved.

MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN: For the annual MWH Mersey Basin Week in October, the Society carried out Clean ups of the Canal Basin and Memorial Park areas, supported by the Friends of Memorial Park, and High Peak Borough Council. There were two Whaley Water Walks and two Canalside Walks. Volunteers enjoyed a Whaley Hot Pot at the Navigation Inn, prepared by Judith Mary II.

I have attended the 2007 Conference at Manchester Town Hall, a European Water Framework Directive event at Manchester Mechanics Institute, the Greater Manchester Waters Forum at Manchester Town Hall, and the Cheshire Waters Forum at Northwich. I have also attended a MBC Action Partnerships Chairs and Co-ordinators review meeting with Professor Batey, Chairman of the Campaign, and chaired Action Etherow Goyt Partnership meetings.

REGENERATION: The £583,000 Destination Bugsworth regeneration project - an East Midlands Development Agency (emda) backed scheme - is to deliver a pilot waterbus service between Whaley Bridge and Bugsworth Basin, new visitor facilities at Bugsworth and information signs along the canal, an improved towpath connection between Whaley Bridge and Bugsworth Canal Basins, formal access points to the towpath at Tesco and at the Grade II listed Horse Tunnel which will itself benefit from rehabilitation work. Negotiations are continuing between the new Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Accessibility Partnership and Derbyshire County Council for the improvement of the towpath from Bridgemont junction northwards through Furness Vale and New Mills to the Stockport MBC boundary with funding from the Local Transport Plan using additional South East Manchester Multi-Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) resources.

British Waterways appointed Heritage Works to carry out a Feasibility Study, 100%-funded by emda, at the Canal Basin. The Study, now nearing completion, will produce viable options, deliverable in the short term and sustainable in the long term, for usage of the Grade 2* Listed Transshipment Warehouse and associated land at the Canal Basin to achieve social, economic and environmental benefits. The Society is an active participant on the Study Steering Group.

High Peak Borough Council is appointing a consultant to complete (by April 2009) a comprehensive Masterplan Study, 100%-funded by the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership (DDEP). This will produce a detailed implementation plan to guide the future development of the Bingswood Industrial Estate and surrounding land.

The Society has commented on the HPBC's Draft Tree Strategy, and Draft Revised Whaley Bridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal, which has regard to the evolving landscape characterisation approach to maintaining and enhancing the overall quality and of landscape character.

Whaley Bridge falls within two distinct diversity landscape types: riverside meadows and settled valley pastures. The town and the conservation area are set within a wooded landscaped area. Views from north to south, especially, show the town nestled under the escarpment of trees known as Bings Wood. This area provides an ancient and important backdrop and setting for the town. The wood is covered by a Tree Preservation Order and contains a good selection of broad leaf mature trees. Mature oak trees extend in a linear route down the southern edge of Bings Road towards the town centre.

Tree cover within the centre of the town predominately follows the line of the canal, river Goyt and railway. Occasionally, where the river passes under the town, tree cover pops through the building line and offers a pleasant break from the otherwise

continuous built frontage. The predominately broad leaf mature tree cover within the gardens of Whaley Lane, in combination with the high stone boundary wall, helps to intensify the sense of enclosure to this route.

The Youth Club site in Wharf Road is being redeveloped for six affordable housing units.

PLANNING: The replacement High Peak Local Plan (adopted March 2005) has undergone a significant change of status in an attempt to introduce a speedier and more flexible development plan system. A schedule of proposed 'saved' policies had been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration in September 2007. In March 2008, in a 'Direction' letter from the Government Office of the East Midlands (GOEM), the Secretary of State approved the submitted Saved Policies Schedule. Accordingly all Local Plan policies not saved cease to have Development Plan status as of the 30 March and are NOT considered during the determination of planning applications.

Saved Local Plan policies now need to be read alongside the adopted Regional Plan and adopted Development Plan Documents as they emerge. In time, the emerging Local Development Framework's Development Plan Documents setting out the spatial planning strategy for the Borough will replace most Local Plan policies.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAYS (PROWs): The Society continues to make representations to Derbyshire County Council (DCC) about problems as they are brought to our attention. The claim for a PROW between Whaley Lane and Orchard Avenue has recently started to make progress through the process. Volunteers have surveyed the 106 PROWs in Whaley Bridge Parish, and Groundwork Trust have recruited a replacement officer to take this work forward. Contact has been established with DCC officers working on the Derbyshire ROW Improvement Plan.

CENTRAL AREA FORUM (Mrs B Pritchard *, and Cllr Mrs Anne Winter **):

The Society has been represented at the three meetings:

'Policing' (7th February at Chapel School) *

'Shaping the Future of High Peak' (15th May at New Mills School) *

'Council Tax' (18th September at The Royal Hotel, Hayfield) **

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Friday, 5th December: 6.45pm: Doors open and Refreshments at Mechanics Institute. 7pm: Talks, followed by 7.30pm: Start of Whaley Bridge Amenity Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2009 (*) to be confirmed)**

Spring clean of Club Room (*)**

Thursday, 19th February: 6.45pm for 7pm Central Area Forum (*)**

Saturday, 7th March: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Saturday, 27th June: WBAS Coffee Morning, Mechanics Institute

Tuesday, 22nd September: Mersey Basin Campaign Annual Conference, BT Convention Centre, Liverpool (*)**

John A T Pritchard (Chairman)

November 2008