



Chesterfield & District Local History Society

NEWSLETTER February - March 2023

Our next meetings

February 20th

A brief **AGM** followed by

Brimington Hall – a Lost Jacobean Treasure - Philip Cousins

March 20th

100 Years of Chesterfield Music

David McPhie

Meetings are held at the St Thomas Centre, Chatsworth Road. Doors open 7pm, for a start at 7.30pm. Members free, visitors £3. Light refreshments are available before and after the meeting.

Annual General Meeting February 20th 2023

At a recent committee meeting, the present office holders agreed to stand again at the AGM 2023.

However, it was also agreed that we would appreciate help from members to enable the meetings to run smoothly. This does not involve becoming a committee member. As a starter, we'd really like some help putting out tables and chairs at the start of our meeting. We don't have to put them away afterwards. If you could give us some assistance this would be really appreciated. No need to contact us beforehand just turn-up at whatever meeting you are attending in time for doors opening, that's to say 7pm. As the year progresses there may be other areas where we would appreciate help.

You are reminded that the subscription is £12 for individuals, and £18 for partners. For visitors the cost remains £3. For the people who joined after last August their subscription covers 2023.

Please arrive early to reduce congestion.

Time for a town centre rethink?

Most people are concerned about the decline of our town centre. So too is the Chesterfield and District Civic Society, who are arranging a public meeting to discuss what might be done on **Monday 27 February at St Thomas Church Centre, Chatsworth Road, starting at 7.30pm (doors open at 7 pm)**. All are welcome (including non-members) and admission is free.



The Civic Society has invited three speakers to introduce the discussion:

- Neil Johnson, an officer of the Borough Council responsible for the town centre;
- Dom Stephens of Destination Chesterfield, which speaks for the business and professional community in the town;
- Lisa Hopkinson of Transition Chesterfield, which campaigns for a more sustainable future for the town.

The decline of town and city centres is not just a challenge for Chesterfield, but is an acknowledged national issue. Some cities and towns have revised their plans for dealing with the expected drop in retail presence, empty buildings and the post Covid economic climate, the out-of-town and internet shopping age. Some have come up with what might be seen as radical proposals. The Civic Society are posting about just some of these, alongside a series of questions about what our town centre might look like, on their website and Facebook pages in the run-up to the meeting.

<http://www.chesterfieldcivicsociety.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079777451157>

What's the main expected outcome? Firstly, the Civic Society want to hear what the council have done and propose to do, and what other organisations believe should be done. They also want to find out what people feel about the balance between shopping, leisure activities, and housing in the town. For example, if housing what sort of housing? What sort of retail can be retained in the town centre? What sort of leisure do people want?

If you're interested in this important subject please pop-along to the Civic Society's meeting.

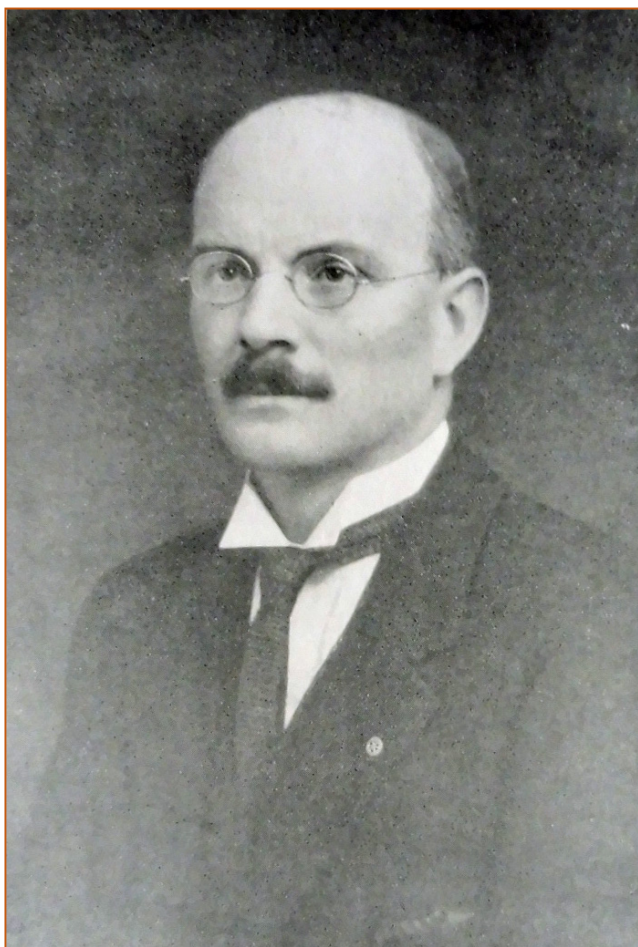
Harry Cropper 1882-1970

Harry Cropper did not have an easy start in life. He was born in 1882, the son of Thomas Cropper, a grocer's assistant and Eliza Priscilla. They lived at Bath Place. His father died in Chesterfield Workhouse in 1890 and a year later Eliza was living in Walton's Yard off Wheeldon Lane. Eliza was left with four young children. Also living there was a lodger James Lee who was a boot maker, which may be why, when Harry started his working life at the age of 12, he was an apprentice bootmaker and repairer with J. Harrison and Sons, but in 1903 he entered the tailoring and outfitting trade with the Swale family. He also took advantages of the classes organised by the

Workers Educational Authority and the Adult School Movement, becoming president of the Hasland Adult School in 1912. In 1904 he married Mary Selena Kirk at the Independent Chapel and they began their married life in Hasland.

During his younger days Harry had been a keen footballer. He had a trial with Derby County but his eyesight prevented him becoming a professional footballer. In 1917 the council established a Sports Committee to promote sport across the borough and in 1919 Chesterfield Municipal Football Club was formed – it is hardly surprising that Harry was one of the directors. He was also one of the deputation who petitioned the Football League for the establishment of a Third Division on geographical lines. Although a Third Division South was established, the League's Management Committee prevaricated about establishment of a Third Division North, and it was not until a meeting in 1921 was addressed by Cropper, who pointed out the only way a northern club could be elected to the League was by being elected to the Third Division South, which was unlikely, that the Third Division North was formed. In December 1920 the participation of the Council in the affairs of the club ceased. Harry Cropper was the chairman of Chesterfield FC from 1920 until 1928.

Early in life he developed an interest in politics. He stood unsuccessfully for the Town Council in 1910 but was returned as the member for South Ward in 1911. Although he was initially a supporter of the Liberal cause, and stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate in the 1929 General



Election, Harry Cropper is better known as a member of the Labour Party and was for a time the leader of the Labour Party on the Town Council. During 1917 and 1918 attendance at council meetings was limited as he was serving with the armed forces.

In November 1920 the borough was expanded once more with the inclusion of the Whittington and Newbold Urban District forming the largest part of the addition. After the ensuing election Harry Cropper was elected Alderman. He was Mayor of Chesterfield during the difficult period of the General Strike in 1926. He served on the Transport Committee for 30 years during a period which saw the development of the town's passenger transport system; he was a member of the Housing Committee which oversaw the massive increase in the number of council houses built, but it was as Chairman of the Education Committee that he made his greatest contribution. He was appointed chairman in December 1920 with Violet Markham as Vice-Chairman. In 1918 a

school leaving age of 14 had been made mandatory and in 1926 the Hadow report recommended that the transition between primary and secondary education should take place at age 11 which meant considerable change within Chesterfield. A new school, Violet Markham, was opened in

1928 before the Board of Education called for a three-year programme of reconstruction. Three schools were closed – Victoria, Soresby Street, and St Thomas (Brampton). William Rhodes primary, junior and secondary schools were built to serve the new Boythorpe estate and Highfield Hall, Hasland Hall and Tapton House were converted into schools; the other schools were reorganised and redeveloped.

The destination of students at age 11 was decided by the '11+ examination'. Increasingly parents complained about the transfer system and in 1952 a new system of transfer arrangements was introduced with emphasis being placed on parental choice. Parents were provided with a list of the thirteen secondary schools and asked to select five schools in order of preference. Not all parents placed one of the three grammar schools in first place a significant majority opting for Peter Webster and William Rhodes Schools, who specialised in engineering. and for Violet Markham School, specialising in nursing and preparation for teacher training. 70% of parents were given their first and second choice and the complaints by parents about the transfer system fell to a negligible figure. Chesterfield was one of the earliest boroughs to abandon the '11+' as a means of selection.



In recognition of his services Harry Cropper was made an Honorary Freeman of the borough in 1951 and it was decided that the Central School should be renamed Harry Cropper School.

Central School was built in 1901. It was later renamed the Harry Cropper School until 1964 when it combined with and became Manor School until it ceased to be a school in 1991.

Finally, it was demolished in 2011 despite many protests.

Robinson & Sons Ltd Chesterfield library event

Although much of the collection of material relating to Robinson and Sons is now held at Derbyshire Record Office, **Chesterfield Local Studies Library** still has a collection of books and images relating to the company. This will be on display during a coffee morning to be held at the library on **Thursday 30th March between 10am and 11:30am** when refreshments will be served.

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