



Chesterfield & District Local History Society

NEWSLETTER April 2023

Our next meetings

May 15th

Renishaw Hall and the Sitwells

Christine Beevers

Christine is an archivist and guide at Renishaw Hall.

June 19th

Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust

Peter Milner

The Trust and the restoration of Wingfield Station.

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.

The Chesterfield Settlement – Part 1

Despite being from a wealthy family, Violet Markham was well aware of the problems facing the poorer members of society. In 1898, she was elected to the Chesterfield School Board which was ahead of its time in attempting to raise the standard of children's education by raising the standard that the children had to reach before they could leave school. This reduced the pool of cheap, child labour and prevented parents increasing the family's income by sending young children out to work. She was on the executive committee of Chesterfield Civic Guild established in April 1907 for the purpose of relieving the poor in the days before state support was available.



The site of the Settlement building before it made way for Burlington House

However she is best remembered for the establishment of the Chesterfield Settlement House, part of the Settlement movement which sought to benefit the under privileged by bringing members of the upper and middle classes together with the

poorest members of society to join in activities such as education, sports and the arts.

In her mother's diary was an entry for December 5th 1902, reading: "Violet's first club opened today." This referred to the opening of the Chesterfield Settlement House in a building at the corner of Church Lane and Packers Row. It consisted of a long narrow club-room and cloak-room adjoining, three bedrooms, a little sitting room, dining room and kitchen. Initially the object was to

provide pleasant social meeting place for the working girls of the town, with amusements, a library and sewing classes. It was open three evenings a week for girls over 16 years of age and for two evenings for girls under that age. The subscription was 1d a week for seniors and ½d for juniors. Violet, and the newly appointed warden Elsie Willis, went round Robinson's Works and some of the potteries dropping off leaflets about the new girls' club, and inviting girls to come along. As a result between eighty and a hundred girls attended for the first meeting. Also present were people who were interested, and thought that they might volunteer to help. After Christmas, Violet and Elsie were joined by Hilda Cashmore, a recent Oxford graduate and these three were responsible for the establishment of the Settlement; only Elsie had any experience with working with clubs.

Initially activities were drilling, part-singing, music, games and sewing. When the girls wanted to make blouses there were problems as no one knew how to set the sleeves. Fortunately one of the volunteers, Miss Alice Pearson, came to the rescue and took over the sewing evening. On a Saturday morning there were games for youngsters.

Projects remembered with pride by Violet Markham were the formation of a school for young mothers, the development of a Baby Clinic, and the school for disabled children long before maternity and child welfare clinics were thought of. One of the earliest and the most successful of



The original club room

the clubs was the Mother's Club on a Thursday afternoon. The mothers brought their own sewing, took the opportunity to talk about their problems, and to share in the fellowship offered by the club. For disabled children, who were unable to get to the Settlement, volunteers visited them at home to teach them to read. Both the Baby Clinic and the school for disabled children were taken over by public bodies in the early 1920s.

As new clubs began it became the boast of the Settlement that a baby girl, who was brought into the clinic at three weeks could belong to the Settlement till she was a grandmother and too old to come. As soon as she began school at five, and had to leave the joys of the Toddlers' room, she could join the Saturday morning play hour for boys and girls from five to seven years old who learned attractive singing games, and both listened to and acted stories etc. Then she could join the children's club for seven- to eleven-year-old girls, and then the club for eleven years to school leaving age; which led her to the Junior Club until sixteen when she could join the Seniors Club. On marriage she could come to the Young Married Club; and then to the Baby Welfare clinic as a mother this time; and, when all her children were of school age, to the Mothers' Club where she could stay until she was too old to attend. This continuity enabled many members to make life-long friends.

As friendships grew Saturday afternoon walks began, introducing members to the enjoyment of the countryside which eventually led to holiday weeks and the use of a large wooden hut on the

hillside above Darley Dale. Teams entered inter-club competitions in Sheffield and Mansfield and the girls acquitted themselves well.

Miss Willis left in 1907 and Hilda Cashmore had already left to start a Settlement in Bristol. The new Warden was Jessie Richards who had been working at Bermondsey Settlement for eight years. She was joined by Charlotte Pattinson, who had already been on a country holiday with some of the girls. Under their leadership, classes and clubs proliferated and the work of the Settlement greatly increased. Each autumn and spring, companies, who employed numbers of girls, were visited to encourage girls to re-enrol and new girls to join activities.

More rooms were needed and the top floor of the Settlement building was brought into use providing three more club rooms and a girls' changing room. . As higher education opened up to women, young female graduates came into the Settlement Movement.

Despite the reduced numbers of helpers during the war the Settlement never closed its doors

Celebrating the reign of Queen Elizabeth II



Peter Martin was kind enough to send CADLHS this photograph which was taken by his father George W. Martin. The name will be familiar to some of you as George Martin gave slide presentations and produced a video about the changes in Chesterfield between 1956 and 1980.

Peter explains that seventy years ago Chesterfield Corporation Transport celebrated the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953 by decorating one of their buses to commemorate the occasion. The double decker vehicle was built by Crossley in 1947. It is seen here standing on Rose Hill waiting to commence its journey on Route 6 to Pratt Hall. The

decoration on the front of the bus obscured the destination indicator so the route is displayed in the lower deck front passenger window and can be partly seen (on the original image) through the lower part of the driver's cab window. To allow many residents of the town to see and travel on the coronation bus, I understand that it operated on a different route each day and can still recall my excitement when it passed my home when working on the Highfield route 27.

In the background can be seen the Town Hall and Rural District Council offices. Between the two buildings and just behind the bus were large grassed areas, converted to car parks many years ago.



More familiar today is this photograph of the bus designed by Stagecoach for the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth. The photograph was taken by Philip Cousins at the Peak Park Bus Gathering, Peak Rail Rowsley, on 19 June 2022.

Chesterfield and District Family History Society Fair 20 May 2023 10am – 4pm St Thomas' Centre

Dena Fanshaw, from CADFHS tells us that this showcase event is for us all, as family history, social, local history and heritage are all part and parcel of our town and this event is the showcase for us all.

The 2023 theme is Old and Curious Occupations. There will be displays by and items for sale from family and local history societies, including CADLHS, the Derbyshire Record Office and Chesterfield Library as well as Ask the Expert sessions and genealogy help desks. Admission £2, under 16 free.

Cestrefeld Journal Issue number 8 2023

is almost ready to go to the printers. There are articles about Holywell House; Whittington Glass; The Family History of the Slacks Part 3; Chesterfield Congregational Church Part I; John Adams and the Livingston Café; Thomas Humphrey Pedley of Stubbin Court; The Chesterfield Connection with Sir Harry Lauder; and Dr Jonathan Stokes (1754-1831).

Inevitably costs have risen sharply since the last issue of the Journal. Unfortunately it will no longer be free to members although it will be available to them at a reduced cost. The cost of the paper and digital copies will be the same. In order to help us to decide how many copies to have printed, please can you let me know whether you want a paper or a digital copy.

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