



Chesterfield & District Local History Society

NEWSLETTER September 2023

September 18th

**Spireites from Saltergate to
Sheffield Road, a Chesterfield FC
Chronicle**

Phil Tooley

October 16th

Mining in Derbyshire

Byron Machin

Primarily coal and lead mining

Meetings are held at the St Thomas' Centre, Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield S40 3AW
starting at 7:30pm Members free, Visitors £3

Heritage Open Days 8-17 September 2023

This year two centenaries are being celebrated in conjunction with the Heritage Open Days. St Peter and St Paul Church, Old Brampton is celebrating the centenary of its bells and the Picture House / Odeon / Winding Wheel is celebrating the anniversary of its opening. To discover what other buildings are open see the Heritage Open days web site and search for Chesterfield.

Chesterfield Cinemas

September 10th 2023 is the centenary of the opening of the Chesterfield Picture House now known as the Winding Wheel. In May 1921 the Chesterfield Picture House Company was registered to acquire land and



premises in Holywell Street to carry on the business of cinematographic hall, theatre, music and concert hall. The plans for the Chesterfield Picture House were submitted in October 1921 but they were turned down because the council was anxious to widen Holywell Street. New plans were submitted in February 1922, the elevation approved in April, and work could begin. The architect was H.J. Shepherd of Sheffield.

When it was opened in September 1923 it was in direct competition with Victoria Enterprises, the company formed in 1920 to

acquire the Victoria Picture House and the assets of Ernest Rudge & Company including the Victoria Billiard



Hall. Illustrated in the prospectus was the design for the new building. The plans were turned down and new plans were approved in March 1922. Work began on the reconstruction of cinema and billiard hall. The new elevation was approved in November 1923, resulting in the attractive half-

timbered building a big improvement on the original plans. The cinema and billiard hall opened in December 1924.

Once Eyres had vacated the building adjoining the Picture House it was demolished. The Art Deco extension to the Picture House was built consisting of three shops with a ballroom and bar above. H.J. Shepherd was once more the architect. The ballroom was opened in November 1930 shortly after the ballroom was opened at the Victoria.

Work started at the Victoria on the rest of the complex to house the ballroom, restaurant, shops and a bank. The ballroom opened on November 6th 1930. Unlike the Picture House the Victoria did not have a bar as Rudge didn't approve of drinking alcohol.

On 12th October 1936 Associated British Cinemas opened the Regal Cinema on Cavendish Street. It was the biggest of the cinemas with 2048 seats followed by the Picture House (1559) and the Victoria (1298). Shortly afterwards the Picture House was taken over by Oscar Deutsch and became part of his Odeon Theatres Ltd. chain. It was re-named Odeon in 1937.

The restaurant was closed in 1969 and the ballroom was converted into the 'Fusion Disco'. By 1975, this had closed and the area had been converted into a bar and exhibition space. The Odeon closed as a cinema on 19th June 1981.

The building lay unused until 1987 when it was purchased by Chesterfield Borough Council and refurbished as a concert, conference and exhibition hall and banquet facility called the Winding Wheel. It replaced the Goldwell Rooms on Ashgate Road which were demolished. It was designated a Grade II Listed building by English Heritage in October 2000.

The Victoria Cinema was taken over by the Circuits Management Association (soon to be re-named as Rank Organisation) on 28th May 1956 and re-named Gaumont. It closed on 30th January 1965.

The Regal Cinema finally closed in 1993. During the 1960s and early 70s it was the venue for shows by pop stars of the era.

Further information can be found at

Historic England 1385201 Picture House / Odeon / Winding Wheel

Derbyshire Times 29 November 1930

Picture House <https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/22413>

Exhibition during Heritage Open Days 2023

Regal <https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/18618>

Victoria <https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/47933>

It is perhaps less well known that the organist Reginal Dixon accepted a job as pianist and deputy organist between April 6th and December 5th 1925 at the Picture House where his wage was £5 per week. He was rather more famous when he performed at the Regal in 1937 aid of the Police Widows and Orphans Fund

Chesterfield Settlement

Once again in spite of disappointments, the Settlement carried on. Sirens and the blackout discouraged some but the Boys' Club was crowded for gymnastic work and boxing. A few classes were dropped but the rest were well attended. Afternoon meetings including lectures in First Aid were popular as were two very successful "Make and Mend" classes.

The Settlement, like other youth clubs in town, was finding it hard to keep going because of the shortage of trained youth leaders. The position became worse because more of those trained leaders were being called into the services, and those who remained had to do their club work after putting in a full day at their ordinary vocation.

With the severe raids upon London, Coventry and the East Coast many refugees came to Chesterfield and an Evacuees Club was formed initially with over 100 members but over time many returned to their own homes. A Kit Bag Club for servicemen was formed in the town and the Settlement ran a Sunday Kit Bag Club to which the servicemen could bring their friends and relatives who were sometimes travelling long distances to visiting them.

The Married Club changed its name to the Family Club so that the younger members need not be left at home.

Until the end of 1941 year the financial liability in connection with it had been the sole responsibility of Miss Markham. At her suggestion, a representative meeting had been held to discuss the future the Settlement, and to place it on a secure foundation. This meeting appointed a provisional committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Wm. C. Coxall, take over the assets of the Settlement and Settlement Guild, and to promote a Memorandum and Articles of Association under the Companies. By the time the 500 people gathered in the Market Hall to celebrate the Settlement's 40th birthday a management committee of 46 members of various local bodies and of subscribers, including councillors and the County Education Officer, had been established.



In November 1945 the Executive Committee agreed to lease the school buildings and vestry on the east side of the Holywell Cross Methodist Chapel. On the ground floor were the vestry and four smaller rooms two of which were to be classrooms and one a quiet room for those who were wanted a quiet place to study, whilst above there was a large hall with accommodation for about 300 people. This would allow the Settlement to extend its activities and play a more important part in the life of the town. Initially the premises were rented on a three year lease with the option to extend for another three years.

Unfortunately these hopes were not to be realised. When the Settlement had been formed there had been no such things as maternity and child welfare clinics. Now the Settlement's reason for existence, education and welfare provision, was being taken over by government measures particularly by the establishment of a welfare state. By 1950

the income from the Settlement's activities were falling and the use of the Holywell Cross much reduced. Eventually the decision was taken in 1957 that the Settlement should be wound up.

A farewell party was held attended by Miss Markham and eight former wardens of the Settlement including the first one Elsie Willis now Mrs Blackwood Wright. A closing service was held at the Parish Church on the following day when Violet Markham 'read' the lesson which she had memorised because of failing eyesight. The Settlement had always been a great joy to her but she acknowledged that it had grown up through the efforts of other people. She regarded the whole as a string of pearls with Violet herself being the string and the workers the pearls.

The buildings were taken over by the YMCA. I and three of my school friends joined the YMCA as Associate Members. We spent many happy hours playing badminton in the hall and attending the Saturday night hops in the hall in the years of rock and roll. The windows on the right were in the coffee bar and the windows above were in the hall. There was a Coca Cola vending machine in the foyer.

Secretary's Office of the General Post Office War Memorial



I was somewhat surprised when walking from Queen's Park to West Bars to see this war memorial in the Post Office building. However when I enquired I was told that it had only been there for a couple of months and that it had come from London. It is a memorial to the men of the Secretary's Office of the General Post Office. This is its third home having previously been at the Post Office HQ in London and then moved to Finsbury. More information can be found at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/47876>

I have submitted a photo and news of its new home to the War Memorials Register so hopefully the information will soon be updated.