

## Diseworth Heritage Trust

### Chairman's Annual Report 2006-07

**Trustees:** Martin Hening, Chair  
Janet Fletcher, Treasurer  
Malcolm Mitchell  
Tracy Morris  
Kevin Walker  
Pat Whitchurch

**Company Secretary:** Meg Galley-Taylor

#### TRUST WINS MAJOR GRANT & BUYS BAPTIST CHAPEL

**The Good News:** The exciting news in the summer was that Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded us a grant of £538,000 to buy and restore the Chapel, and to equip and furnish it as a Heritage Centre. We at once set about the purchase of the Chapel from the Baptist Union (already agreed) and in September we became the owners.

Our architects – formerly Gibson Hamilton Partners, now B3Burgess, a national firm, but still with Keith Hamilton as our architect based in Leicester – had already drawn up plans and got the necessary approvals; various amendments were approved, and by the end of our financial year we seemed very close to seeking the main contractors.

The grant was almost 90% of the estimated cost, and we obtained our share by the end of the financial year, including an allowance for volunteer time. Significant sums have come from the Airport, from WREN, and from various County and Rural Community Council Grants. Shepshed Building Society will furnish and equip the village office on the first floor, and we awaited news of the last major grant, from BIFFAWARD (who awarded us £30,000 in December 2007).

Here I must record our gratitude to my wife Nikki, who has played the major part in compiling the grant applications, with no rejections as yet, and in particular for the very positive and professional relationship she has developed with Amanda Turner, our Case Officer at the Heritage Lottery Fund, and with their appointed mentor, Peter Rogan.

She has also taken on the development of programmes which will provide the framework of what is on offer in the building, in partnership with the local history societies of Diseworth and Long Whatton, with the County Museums Service, and with the Museums, Libraries, Archives Service. More about this aspect next year, in particular to be reflected in a number of opening events with contributions from the two village schools, and a wide range of parish residents.

**The future:** while we the Trustees are heavily involved in ensuring that the restoration of the Chapel proceeds smoothly and keeps to both our time table

and our budget, we have to think ahead. This involves planning under three broad headings:

1. We need to plan to ensure that we have a regular and sufficient income to maintain the building, its contents, its staff (see below), and its programme.
2. We need to develop a distinctive programme which will attract the attention of parish residents and also a wider audience.
3. We need to establish our image in the Parish and beyond to ensure that we attract members and visitors to justify all the work and expense that is going in to the establishment of our Heritage Centre.

We have already set up a number of ongoing funding schemes: the membership scheme needs to be developed – we need more members, and we need to ensure that annual members renew their subscription. A major benefit of subscriptions and donations is that we can claim Gift Aid (currently 28%) and this has already gained us nearly £1000. We need to ensure that this remains a steady income stream. We are proposing 40 days a year commercial lettings which we hope will bring in over £6,000 a year. We have a special deal with Shepshed Building Society, which offers the Trust 0.5% of average balances in any of their savings accounts from those who name Diseworth Heritage Trust as their nominated Charity – at no cost to themselves. Please nominate us if you are Shepshed savers, and if you are not, consider using our local Building Society for your ISAs or other savings accounts: they offer very good rates, and we will benefit every year – at no cost to yourselves. If between us we save £500,000 at the Shepshed, the Trust will get £2,500 annually! Please think about it.

We will need to employ staff. The business plan proposes a Premises Manager whose main job will be to organise and facilitate the commercial lettings and other outside bookings; a cleaner who will work variable hours according to bookings; and maintenance work as required.

The programme is well under way. The first stage is a group of activities that together will offer a varied and exciting opening week. The two village schools are working on local and oral history projects that will culminate in displays and presentations. This work is largely funded by Museums, Libraries Archives (MLA), a regional programme led by Davey Ivens, a knowledgeable and enthusiastic ally. The plans for the museum section are well advanced with invaluable support from the County Museums Officer, Robin Clarke. The two Local History Societies are preparing multi-media exhibitions reflecting times past in Long Whatton and Diseworth. The Ken Chamberlain Trust are funding a fine oak seat which will be installed in the Sanctuary Garden during the summer, made by Nigel Atkinson from Long Whatton, whose mother used to live in Diseworth. This contribution is the gift of the Diseworth Retired Residents, whose coffee mornings will also be inaugurated during the opening week. For young people, our intrepid Area Youth Worker, Ro Riley, is planning a self-help group to run coffee bar evenings at the weekend. The Village Office, generously supported by Shepshed Building Society (see above) will open for business; more details of

that later, but a key feature will be its use as a Parish Council Office, allowing inspection of Planning Applications at designated times along with other services and information.

We also plan music and theatre events to ensure that there will be something for everyone during this opening week.

A bequest generously left by Miss Lizzie Adkin for maintenance of the Sanctuary Garden will in part be used to clear the bank of Diseworth Brook and replant it with shrubs and bulbs to make it an attractive feature in her memory. Tree pruning will take place in January and February, before the contractors start work. There will be a lot of building work going on in the coming months, and we apologise in advance to neighbours in Ladygate and Brookside especially for any inconvenience this causes.

There will be a lot of work for the Trustees and members in the coming months. Paul Taylor's excellent work on establishing and maintaining our website ([www.dhtrust.org](http://www.dhtrust.org)) gives us a great opportunity to publicise our work more widely – the first new member recruited through the website was the Mayor of Great Yarmouth, who knew Diseworth as a child – but the usual headings will make demands on the Trustees: fundraising, recruitment of members and programme planning; plus various forms of labour in the gardens and elsewhere.

I would like to thank all who have helped us in various ways during the year, particularly the Trustees, who are increasingly aware of the burden they have taken on. A special mention of Tracy Morris, who has moved his family abroad while setting up a new business in Spain. He retains his interests and a base here, and remains a Trustee, but will be much less active for a year or so. His fund-raising activities have been remarkable, whether organising dinners and concerts, or ensuring a handsome profit at Malcolm Mitchell's Cheese and Wine events. Also to Meg Galley-Taylor, who married Paul during the year, and as Company Secretary works effectively and efficiently for the Trust. Paul also has done a lot for us in his quiet way, and particular thanks are due for his work on the website. I would like to thank David Thomas for his work as auditor since we began. I suspect we may have to pay for an auditor in future due to that projected increase in turnover. In that case we will appreciate him all the more. We have had much help and support from a number of officers of the County Council and the Rural Community Council; we greatly appreciate the support from Amanda Turner at HLF, and their mentor, Peter Rogan; and we have developed what seems to be an effective partnership with our architect Keith Hamilton and his team. The proof of the effectiveness of that partnership will be seen – I hope – during 2008.

Martin Hening

January 2008