

Cheadle Civic Society

Established 1964

Newsletter



Excavating the foundations of Cheadle Hall, September 2010

Cheadle Civic Society was formed in 1964 with the following aims:

- To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Cheadle, Cheshire.
- To stimulate public interest in and care for, the beauty and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.
- To pursue these ends by means of public meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and publicity and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

Committee 2010 - 2011

President:	Alan Bridge	498-9650
Chairman:	Andrew Taylor	428-1875
Hon. Secretary:	Helen Moorhouse	428-6378
Hon. Treasurer / Membership secretary:	Philip Gould-Bourn	428-0199
Membership co-ordinator:	Damien Lynch	428-5994
	Maureen Mather	428-2977
	Claire Laverty	491-4151
	Geoff Thompson	485-8069
	Alan Murphy	491-1789
	Rev. Rob Monro	428-3440
Editor:	Alan Jabez	01625-520322
Special correspondent:	Pat Seddon	428-6137

Views

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor or the contributors, not necessarily those of the committee members or members of the Society. Material in this newsletter is copyright to the Society and the contributors and may not be reproduced without permission. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, neither the editor nor the Society can be held responsible for the consequences of any inaccuracies in the newsletter.

Index

Page 1:	Selection of photographs from the archaeological dig on Cheadle Green in September
Page 2:	Society aims and committee members
Page 3-6:	Cheadle Matters. News and editorial
Page 7:	Cheadle past and present. Photographic comparisons of Cheadle today and in the past
Page 8-9:	Illustrated feature on the archaeological dig of Cheadle Hall
Page 10-11:	Bombing Cheadle. The 70th anniversary of fatal bombs falling on Cheadle
Page 12-13:	Bicycle Bill - Cheadle's eternal cycling salesman
Page 14-15:	Maintaining Brooklyn Crescent Park and helping similar local parks
Page 16:	Selection of Cheadle ephemera

Web site address: www.cheadlecivicsociety.org

Cheadle Matters

News and updates from around the village

Greetings everyone and a special welcome to all new members and anyone we may have met at any events the Society has attended over the past few months. This included the very popular Cheadle Festival at the Together Trust on School's Hill in June and on Cheadle Green, as part of the green's bicentenary celebrations in September. We are always keen to meet members and non-members and are especially interested in hearing from anyone who has any particular issue you would like us to investigate.

We are happy to say we have put together another informative newsletter which contains a rich mixture of contemporary news and stories, as well as historic photographs and features. We have also added more content to the web site and if you haven't taken a look yet, you will find it an excellent reference source if you ever want further information about Cheadle -past and present.

Finally, as this is the last newsletter of the year, the committee would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and hope you all have a healthy and prosperous year in 2011.

Change of committee members

The last AGM saw a change in the composition of the Society's committee. Former Ashfield Road Primary School teacher Heather Clarke, one of the Society's founding members, stood down as a committee member as she now wants to spend more time pursuing other interests. However, she will remain a member of the Society and is also willing to use her vast knowledge of Cheadle to provide assistance on an ad-hoc basis. The Society would like to place on record its appreciation for all Heather's contributions over the years and wishes her well in everything she now does.

Heather's replacement on the committee is Claire Laverty, a neurological physiotherapist who works at Oak House on Gatley Road and also looks after the Society's garden outside the White Hart pub. We thank Claire for agreeing to take on this new responsibility and look forward to her input and contributions.

Higher Mill housing development

The on-off redevelopment of the old Higher Mill behind The Alexandra Hospital, is now firmly back on track. Planning permission to transform these neglected former industrial buildings, which includes Cheadle's tallest chimney, into a modern private housing complex, formerly called the Bleachworks, was granted several years ago, but

development stopped as the recession intensified. However, 2010 has seen a large number of builders at the site and some homes have now been completed with the first new owners starting to move in. The new development is now named Cheadle Mill and a total of 42 separate apartments and houses will be completed over the next 18 months. All the new properties will use bricks from the original buildings as a link to the past and there are also plans to create a special viewing area for the old mill's water wheel.

Concerns have been raised about access to and from the development along Mill Lane. This narrow road already serves all the traffic using the hospital and once all the new properties are occupied, the road is likely to get very congested and will need to be upgraded as quickly as possible.

Dormer windows update

We reported in the last newsletter about the dormer windows which had been removed from the roof above the Carphones Warehouse shop on the corner of High Street and Massie Street about a year ago without any planning permission being



sought or granted. The Society then contacted Stockport Council's Conservation Department informing them of what had happened and also submitted photographic evidence, expecting action would be taken promptly. However, more than six months later, we are disappointed to have to report that no action has yet been taken. The latest information we have is that the Council say it has recently identified a number of breaches of the planning regulations in the centre of Cheadle and plan to tackle all of these as a batch with the owners of all the properties being notified by post at the same time. With regards to the dormer windows, the Council does have the power to force the property owner to redesign and reinstall windows similar in appearance to the previous ones and this is what the Society is pressing them to do. We will continue to monitor developments very closely to make sure the Council fulfils its legal obligations.

Cheadle Matters (continued)

Hall Street Green proposals

The Society has recently given a donation of £500 to the Friends of Hall Street Green to help them in their efforts to transform the neglected space behind the White Hart pub into an area which can become another thriving park in the heart of the village. The group, whose members mainly live on Hall Street, Ernest Street, Brook Road and Greenvale Drive, are already working with Stockport Council to raise the necessary funds. Their aim is to get a new all-weather footpath installed, improve lighting in the area, prune many of the existing trees and plant new ones, add a noticeboard, install new benches, create a fruit and herb garden, as well as other smaller improvements. Dave Moore, one of the group's founding members, says as most of the people who live in the area live in small terraced houses with very small gardens, a safe, secure and well maintained green will be great local asset, especially in the summer.

It is envisaged the total cost of making the necessary changes will be in the region of £50,000 to £60,000 and an application has recently been submitted to the National Lottery to secure most of this money.



The Society is helping to fund efforts to radically improve Hall Street Green behind the White Hart pub

Local history initiative

We reported in the last newsletter that we were considering starting a special local history section where members could get help learning more about the history of Cheadle. Due to insufficient interest in the idea, we are not taking this any further at present. However, we are happy to remind members that St. Mary's church has its own archive section which includes a huge number of records and other information about people who used to live in Cheadle and may be of interest to anyone who does want further information about former family members. Please contact St. Mary's church for fur-

ther information. Cheadle Library can also provide help tracing old family members. They offer free one hour introduction sessions to ancestry.co.uk, the country's leading genealogy web site which contains extensive records from the past.

Refurbishment of St. Ann's Hospice shop

The St. Ann's Hospice charity shop on Cheadle High Street reopened recently following major refurbishment. The changes were masterminded by local retail guru Stephen Chetwood of the John Lewis Partnership who suggested a range of improvements to make the shop more professional and attractive in appearance.

Another development has been the opening of a special retro room, above the main shop. In here, you will find a fantastic selection of high-quality items from the post-war era, including clothes, shoes, crockery, ornaments, bags, furniture, pictures, toys and much more. There are so many wonderful and highly colourful items available, you can easily spend an hour or so being transported back to a time when fads and fashions were vastly different to what they are today -and pick yourself up a great bargain in the process.

The combination of these two changes has resulted in the shop seeing an increase in sales, which, importantly, has meant the charity's HQ can now provide further care and support to those most in need.



A selection of some of the many items from yesteryear in the new retro room in the refurbished St. Ann's Hospice charity shop on Cheadle High Street

Cheadle Matters (continued)

Wienholt's 60th birthday celebrations

As most people know, it was the Wienholt family who previously occupied the St. Ann's Hospice charity shop on Cheadle High Street and for much of the middle years of the 20th Century, it was here where they ran the extremely popular Premier Cafe and cake shop. While one part of the Wienholt family redeveloped the Cheadle shop after the war, another branch moved to Alderley Edge and this year, this shop has been celebrating its own 60th anniversary. They use the same family recipes as those which were originally used in Cheadle and they say the shop remains as popular as it has ever been with customers coming from far and wide. As part of their celebrations, the shop organized a number of "open evenings" over the past few months where customers had the opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the premises and enjoy a range of the shop's most popular cakes. The events proved highly popular and also raised much needed funds for the East Cheshire Hospice.

Abney Hall school proposals withdrawn

The proposal by West Didsbury based Moor Allerton school to relocate to Abney Hall has been called off. The school had submitted a formal planning application to Stockport Council in March, with the intention of becoming long-term tenants of the main Abney Hall buildings, but the application was withdrawn in the summer as too many parents were unhappy about the extra travelling involved to get their children to and from school each day. As such, Abney Hall remains available as a high specification modern office complex and it hoped suitable occupants will be found in the near future, rather than the building becoming neglected.

Meanwhile, Stockport Council and the Friends of Abney Hall have recently been awarded a £10,000 grant by the National Lottery to make a number of improvements around Abney Hall Park. These will see the installation of new picnic benches, a board walk, an interpretation board, new educational material, new ponds and a 'dipping platform', which overhangs the pond. Floating islands will also be added to the park's larger pond to improve vegetation and provide a safe habitat for birds, amphibians and other pond life.

Society helps force removal of obtrusive sign

Following serious complaints by the Cheadle Civic Society to Stockport Council regarding the large obtrusive advertising sign erected by Stockport Homes in Queens Gardens earlier this year,

the sign has now been removed. The Society complained because no planning permission was sought or granted and the sign was noticeably larger than was deemed necessary, which many people felt was an eyesore on the landscape.

Unfortunately, thousands of pounds of rate payers money was wasted constructing, installing and removing the sign which could have been spent on many other projects and it is hoped a valuable lesson has been learnt.

Award for local lacrosse hero Brian Costello

While the newsletter only covers sport in Cheadle in a very limited way, we are always happy to report on local individuals or teams whose achievements merit a special mention. For this reason, we are delighted to report that Brian Costello won this year's Sir Stanley Mathews Award for his services to lacrosse over the past 50 years. The award recognises Brian's outstanding achievement since he joined Cheadle Lacrosse Club in 1960. He then went on to become club captain, an England international and then finally coach of the England team at tournaments around the world -as well as continuing to coach at schools across the area. For anyone involved with lacrosse in Britain over the past 50 years, Brian has been a true inspiration and one of Cheadle's finest sporting ambassadors.

The Co-op returns to Cheadle

A key sign of a revival in the local economy is that a new Co-operative retail shop will shortly move into 30 High Street, which was formerly occupied by clothing specialists, Ethel Austin. The Co-op intend to have the new shop fully fitted and open within the next few weeks, at a cost of more than £600,000. They have also announced the shop will create up to new 20 new jobs and will offer a comprehensive range of products, with an emphasis on fresh foods, such as, in-store baked breads and pastries. They will also offer a wide range of chilled beers and wines.

With the Co-op having a very enlightened ethical trading policy, many people will see the opening of the shop as a very positive move for the village. However, there will be the wider concern that unless parking enforcement is improved, another convenience store could mean more people illegally parking their car on High Street, causing more congestion, while they make a quick purchase. This has already happened outside Tesco on Wilmslow Road with people parking their car briefly in the bus-stop and inconveniencing other road users while they do their shopping.

Cheadle Matters (continued)

Cheadle and Gatley Film Makers

2010 has been the Golden Jubilee of Cheadle and Gatley Film Makers. This is a group of local enthusiastic amateur film makers who have been making their own short films about events in the area and elsewhere since they began as the Cheadle and Gatley Cine Club in 1960. They currently have about 35 members whose ages range from 17 to 80 and nowadays work exclusively in video. In recent times, the group has produced documentaries about the building of Manchester's tramway network and a celebration of Stockport Town Hall and they are currently producing a video about the recent archaeological dig on Cheadle Green. (Further information about this documentary will be made available when its completed). For further information about the group, visit www.cheadleandgatleyvideo.org.uk or call club secretary Ken Ridley on 01625-583770.

The Wool Shop remembered

The Wool Shop on Cheadle High Street may have ceased trading a few years ago, but your editor is happy to report that former owner Harry Guiton, now in his mid nineties, remains in good health and now resides at Ashfield Road Nursing Home on Gatley Road. Harry's mother and sister had run the shop since the beginning of the 1920s, selling a vast range of high-quality wool and accessories. Harry then took over the shop himself once he retired from his own career in insurance. He recently recounted to me some of his memories of his time in Cheadle from throughout the 20th Century, as well as his time with the Royal Army Service Corps during World War 2. I found him a truly charming man and everyone at the Society wishes him well.

George and Dragon pub sale

After being empty for around a year, the iconic George and Dragon pub was sold to new owners at the end of September. As with many other pubs, the previous owners struggled during the worst of the recession and were forced to close because of falling sales. However, this famous local institution has now been purchased by another pub chain who initially plan to undertake a major refurbishment of this listed building before it reopens. The

pub was originally on the market for £500,000 but was finally sold for less than £400,000, a sign of the changing market conditions for all types of property. One of the major benefits of the sale are that the obtrusive advertising posters and grey metal shutters which have covered the front of the building for months and caused many complaints will shortly be removed.

Casino plans for East Didsbury

The giant Rank organization has recently put forward proposals to transform the old bingo hall in the East Didsbury leisure complex into a fully fledged casino, at a cost of £6 million. While this is primarily an issue for the people of Didsbury and South Manchester, members of the Cheadle Civic Society attended a recent consultation meeting as it's believed approval of the scheme could have an affect on the wider community. Having considered the proposals, the Society has now decided to support the Didsbury Heritage Society in objecting to the scheme, primarily on the grounds that it is not in the best public interest to have a casino so close to a school and many residential homes. There is also a fear it could have an impact on crime and transport in the area, especially late at night, which could affect the people of Cheadle. We shall continue to monitor developments.

Christmas decorations in Cheadle

With Christmas only a few weeks away, this is the time to be thinking of the new Christmas decorations. Last year a lot of residents expressed their disappointment at the decorations which were put up around the village and want to make sure improvements are made this year. The main criticisms were that the tree which was erected on Wilmslow Road should have been put on the grass verge outside the Post Office, rather than next to the bus shelter. It was also felt the lights and decorations were generally dull and unimpressive. Another tree was erected on Cheadle Green, but a number of the lights here failed to work and were not fixed or replaced. This meant this tree also had insufficient illumination at night making it barely fit for purpose. The Society has expressed its views to the relevant Council officers and hope to see a much better display this year.

HOW TO JOIN THE CHEADLE CIVIC SOCIETY

If you are not yet a member of the Cheadle Civic Society and would like to join, please send a cheque for £5 with your name and address to: Honourary Treasurer, Phillip Gould-Bourn, 19 Mornington Road, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1NJ

You will then get your own copy of the newsletter mailed to you directly twice a year and you will also get free admission to the Society's AGM and any other event. Your contribution will also help the Society maintain its efforts to make Cheadle a better and safer place.

Changing Cheadle – revealing photographs from the past and the present

A selection of old and new photographs which show how many of Cheadle's famous roads, buildings and landscapes have changed over the years



The Star pub, High Street, c1900s



The Star pub, High Street, 2010

The Star has been one of the main pubs on Cheadle High Street for more than 100 years and is one building which has changed very little, although all the main features have been modernised. The main change is that there used to be a shop with its own front door in what is now the pub's west wing. Other changes are more subtle, such as noticeboards on the front wall. Another difference is that the Dolland and Aitchison optician now adjoins the side wall, whereas at the beginning of last century, the pub had no direct neighbours. Coincidentally, both pictures have people standing outside, although its unlikely the family at the top are there because they are smoking!

Unearthing Cheadle history - Excavating the foundations of Cheadle Hall

In a unique local project, the Cheadle Civic Society helps bring Manchester's leading archaeologists to Cheadle to excavate the foundations of the old Cheadle Hall which stood on the back of Cheadle Green for more than 200 years until it was knocked down in 1958

Hundreds of local residents came to Cheadle Green over the weekend of the 11th/12th of September to watch Manchester's leading archaeologists excavate the foundations to the old Cheadle Hall, which had stood on the back of Cheadle Green for more than 200 years, until it was knocked down in 1958.

The hugely successful event was organized as part of the bicentenary celebrations for Cheadle Green and coincided with special heritage events also taking place at nearby Abney Hall and St Mary's church. The archaeological dig proved to be the real highlight of the weekend as many people were fascinated by just how much of the old hall the archaeologists managed to reveal, and for many older residents, it brought back many memories.

Cheadle Hall was an imposing three storey building which was constructed in 1756, and over the years was used as everything from a residential home, to local school, to convalescent home and in its later years as a furniture depository. But due to neglect and a lack of maintenance in the immediate post-war era, it was demolished by Cheadle and Gatley Council, with Cheadle Green being extended.

The idea for the dig came about following discussions which took place between Manchester County archaeologist Norman Redhead and the Cheadle Civic Society's chairman Andrew Taylor. Both believed such an event could prove to be very rewarding and as such the Society donated

significant funds to ensure the project would be as thorough, professional and as accessible as possible.

Once on-site, the archaeologists managed to dig up to two metres below ground in places which helped to reveal a variety of internal walls, cellars and even a bay window which overlooked Stockport Road.

A large number of historical artefacts were also discovered, including patterned tiles, ceramic pipes, glazed bricks and even the remnants of an old Victorian toilet. Many of these items will now go on display at Cheadle Library along with a selection of photographs and it is hoped they will attract considerable interest.

Cheadle MP Mark Hunter, along with a number of local councillors, took particular interest in the project, as well as other work the Society is involved with. A large number of young children also came along and were given special training on the basics of archaeology and many stayed for hours managing to dig their own artefacts from the past.

A detailed report about the project will follow shortly and a documentary video about the archaeological dig is also being produced. Further details will be provided in the next newsletter.

In the meantime, it is hoped the renovation of Cheadle Green will begin in the next few months. This should see a large number of improvements such as pruning many of the trees, installing a new pond, adding better lighting and generally making the area more attractive and accessible.



Manchester County Archaeologist Norman Redhead shows local people some of the foundations of the old Cheadle Hall



One of the many dedicated archaeologists reveals one of the hall's interior walls



Society chairman Andrew Taylor (left) discusses the dig and other local issues with Cheadle MP Mark Hunter



A number of the archaeologists gave revealing tours throughout the weekend explaining the excavation process



One of the most significant discoveries was the foundations of the bay window which overlooked Stockport Road



The archaeologists managed to dig up to two meters below ground in some places and this revealed considerable detail



Dozens of local youngsters visited the site and got their first experience of real-life archaeology



Many artefacts were discovered in the dig and these were then cleaned before being sent for analysis

Bombing Cheadle – 70th anniversary of a local tragedy

This December marks the 70th anniversary of the death and destruction caused by the worst bomb attack Cheadle has ever suffered. We take a look back at the tragic events from the period and how they subsequently shaped local history



Above is the scene of some of the damage caused by bombs dropping on the area during World War 2. These houses were on Gorsey Bank, on the way to Stockport, while there was similar scenes of destruction on Bulkeley Road and Stockport Road (near Boundary Bridge). Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Stockport Heritage Library

In September 1939, once Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared Britain to be at war with Germany, the people of Cheadle, as was the case elsewhere, had to start making significant changes to their everyday lives.

While most local men of working age began preparing to join the armed forces, a large number of children and young mothers started coming into the village to get away from the expected danger spots of Manchester and the other major cities. Indeed, 1940 saw a large number of bombs drop on the centre of Manchester, resulting in many casualties and considerable damage. Outlying areas like Cheadle were regarded as much safer places, although many air raid shelters were constructed, gas masks issued and there were still plenty of air raid warnings.

Everything was to change though on the night 23rd of December, 1940. Following heavy bombings over Manchester the night before, powerful Heinkel twin-engined bombers flew in from the east along the course of the River Mersey carrying a payload which was to cause severe damage to the village on a scale never seen before.

Nobody is exactly sure why on this night Cheadle was the target, but most local people at the time believed the Germans were intent on destroying or at least severely damaging the Stockport Manufacturing Company which had its main premises on Demmings Road and were making parts which were being used in the war effort.

Despite anti-aircraft fire being directed at the planes, a massive 1000 pound bomb was dropped and landed a few hundred yards short of the factory, falling on Paterson's confectionery shop, at 49 Bulkeley Road. The size of the bomb meant it went straight through the roof, through the bedrooms, through the ground floor and finally lodged itself in the cellar, where it then exploded. Not surprisingly, the shop was completely destroyed and there was also considerable damage to neighbouring buildings, as well as others in the area.

Sadly, the effect of the blast also meant a number of local people were either killed or seriously injured, with many others suffering minor cuts and bruises. The youngest fatality was 17 year old Ronnie Harrison, a popular grammar school boy.

He saw the bomb falling on its parachute a few streets away and heroically rushed over to try and reduce its impact. But the blast was so great that he was critically injured and was taken to Stockport Infirmary where he died the next day. He was subsequently buried in Cheadle Cemetery and a small plaque was placed next to his grave with the words: "Ronnie for Bravery".

Another of the those who died was Nora Jackson who lived at number 51 Bulkeley Road and whose house was also badly damaged. On the other side of the shop, number 49 Bulkeley Road was also demolished. But the Cox family, who rented the house, all survived. Eric Cox, who was only five at the time, and who now lives in Cheadle Hulme, believes the reason they survived was because they had made their way to the air raid shelter at the end of Bulkeley Road.

To this day, he can still recall the damage the bomb caused to his house. It wasn't just the structure of the building which was destroyed, but most of the family's furniture, clothes and other possessions. Fortunately, as his grand parents only lived a few streets away, they did have a place to go to, although it effectively meant they had to start their lives again.

As for Bulkeley Road, most of the houses which were badly damaged were left in the same derelict condition until after the war had ended. The realities of life at the time meant that with no spare public funds available and very few construction workers around, it wasn't possible to get the houses repaired.

But the damage to Bulkeley Road did serve one purpose. Cheadle's Home Guard began to use the street as a training venue. It was thought that real derelict houses would be the ideal place for the volunteer soldiers to learn how to clamber over rubble, hide from the enemy and rescue colleagues. Youngsters also played amongst the debris. Eric Cox remembers playing with his friends in the rubble of his old home as if it was the local playground. One day, he even found a large piece of shrapnel from the bomb blast and still has it amongst his possessions today.

Although it is now 70 years since the tragic event, he still has distinct memories of his old bombed out home, as well as the war itself, and now talks about them with his young grandchildren. He shows them the shrapnel and other artefacts he has kept from the war so that they have an idea of what previous generations went through to ensure everyone today lives in a country which is free and peaceful.

He also takes his family to Cheadle's War Memorial each Armistice Day where the names of

Cheadle's civilian dead are inscribed. Some of those who died were family friends and he knows his own name could so easily have been on the Memorial as well.

As well as the people who died in the Bulkeley Road bomb, the other names on the Memorial are of those people who died a few weeks later, in February, 1941. This was when another German plane flew overhead and dropped a 500 pound bomb onto houses on Stockport Road, close to the old Boundary Bridge (Roscoe's Roundabouts). This time, four people died, with more injured and more buildings damaged.



Eric Cox lived at number 47 Bulkeley Road in 1940 when the bomb fell on the house next door. He survived, but still has a piece of shrapnel to remind him of the event

There were also other serious incidents at other times, including another bomb which landed on houses on Gorsey Bank, on the way to Stockport. In total, the two fatal bombs killed eight local people in just six weeks. They also caused an unprecedented amount of damage to local property.

Finally, though, once the war was over, and with a steely determination, the residents of Cheadle began rebuilding the village with the aim of making it a better and safer place.

One of the first things they did was rebuild the bombed out houses on Bulkeley Road so families could return. These days, the street is thriving and many of the people who now live there are unaware there was any bomb attack at all.

Although Cheadle has progressed considerably from the damage caused by the bombs in World War 2, for everyone who was around on those two fateful nights at the beginning of the 1940s, it is unquestionably a time they will never forget, and hope is never repeated.

The editor would like to thank local military historian John Simmonds for his considerable help with this article.

Bicycle Bill - Cheadle's eternal cycling salesman

You need to be of a certain age and have a very long memory to recall how Cheadle High Street was just after the war.

Many of the popular shops and other establishments of the time -from the Premier Cafe and the Electra Cinema to the old saddle shop and Bailey's sweet shop- have long since gone. Marsh's printers, a mainstay of High Street for more than 100 years, finally closed down in recent memory, but one outlet which was around just after the war, and does still remain today is Meadows cycle shop. For most of the early years of the 20th Century, it was cited at 68 High Street, but can now be found the other side of the traffic lights, on Gatley Road, between the Weavers building and Bellini's restaurant.

The fact that the shop still remains in today's much changing world of mega stores, Internet sales and national shop chains is an achievement in itself, but what is truly remarkable is that the man who runs the shop is the same person who stood behind the Meadows cycle shop counter when it was still in High Street in the 1940s -seven decades ago.



The Meadows cycle shop has barely changed in decades

His name is Bill Hollingsworth and he can be found serving his customers with warm, friendly service most days of the week. The shop itself is a throwback to the olden days of retailing. Inside, there's no computers, no bright lights, no barcode readers and no loud music in your ears. Instead, there's an abundance of ramshackled shelves, a huge desk crammed with Bill's personal notes and all sorts of cycling accessories located everywhere there is a spare bit of space available. But Bill does stock a rich selection of modern bicycles for both children and adults and he keeps himself up to date with all the latest cycling technologies.

Bill's story is one of passion and longevity. Brought up in Levenshulme in the 1920s, he was then called up for military service in 1943, when he joined the Army. After training in Oxfordshire, he was sent to fight in Italy in the latter stages of the War and remained for nearly four years before also doing a brief stint in the Middle East. He claims those overseas excursions were truly eye-opening for a young man from Manchester at the time. For one, they introduced him to the delights of Italian food and wine, amongst other things, which he still enjoys today.



Bill Hollingsworth is now Cheadle's longest serving shopkeeper

Once back in Britain, he returned to his first love of cycling. He joined the Cheshire Roads Cycling Club and one Sunday morning in 1947, he rode down to Cheadle to the meeting place for that day's outing. While waiting for other club members to arrive, he went to see what was new in the Meadows cycle shop window. What he saw was to change his life forever. It was a notice saying the shop was looking for a young mechanic: Enquire within. Being Sunday, the shop was closed, but the next day, Bill got back on his bike, returned to Cheadle and within a few minutes of meeting owner Edward Meadows, he got the job.

He remained as the mechanic and shop assistant until the early 1960s, when Mr Meadows passed away. By this time, Bill had learned much about the cycle trade and was a familiar face in Cheadle, so Mr Meadow's widow asked him whether he would be interested in taking over the shop.

He was thrilled to be asked, but said he didn't have the funds available to purchase the shop himself.

However, he came to an arrangement with one of the local banks who would acquire a smaller shop for him at 5 Gatley Road, with Bill paying them back from his profits, week-by-week. With everything settled, Bill relocated all the stock to the new shop, kept the same name, Meadows, for continuity, and began a new phase of his life as a full-time shop owner -and has remained ever since. He now also owns the property outright, having paid off the final instalment to the bank years ago.



The inside of the shop is packed with bicycles and accessories

In the beginning, he would cycle to the shop everyday from Levenshulme. In those days, there was much less traffic on the roads and cycling to Cheadle was like a trip to the countryside. These days though, he mostly travels by car or bus, but he still has a bicycle or two of his own and when he feels like it, he puts on the appropriate clothing and cycles in at his own leisurely pace.

Back in the 1950s and 60s, cycling was virtually Bill's life, seven days a week. He not only closely followed the career of local cycling superstar Reg Harris who achieved international success in cycle racing, but was also out cycling himself at virtually every opportunity. His proudest achievement was racing a distance of 50 miles in a very competitive time of just two hours and 11 minutes.

This love of cycling was a prime reason why he has always enjoyed his day job so much and why he has always been so happy talking bicycles and cycling with anyone who visits. These days, many of his customers are the children, or even the grandchildren of some of the customers he served more than half a century ago. They tell him stories about how their parents purchased their first bicycle for them, from him, many years earlier and they have now come to buy a first bicycle for their young child. And while a lack of space means Bill's range of bicycles is less than those in larger stores, he tries to keep in stock everything that the local cyclist needs.

Most people call him Bill, although some refer to him as Mr Meadows, as that is the name above the shop, and out of politeness he doesn't correct

them. In return, he has managed to remember the names of many of his customers himself.

He also still undertakes a lot of repairs in the room behind the shop, squeezing himself and his broken bicycles passed all the accessories, storage boxes and everything else which lie on the floor.

Many of the people who come to the shop come as much to swap idle gossip about village life, as to buy a new bike or get their gears fixed. But many of Bill's customers are so appreciative of the service he provides they send him postcards when they go away on their cycling holidays. He has received them from all over the world, with the earliest ones dating from the 1960s. One postcard is simply addressed, Meadows Cycle Shop, Cheadle, Cheshire, but still arrived. Most of the postcards have flowing prose thanking Bill for the advice and accessories he provided, with the writer looking forward to coming in for a chat when they are back in Cheadle.



An old photograph of Bill serving customers in the 1980s

As for the future, Bill has no plans to retire. He believes work is an addiction which keeps his mind alert. He also has no plans to modernise the shop.

Yes, he is sad that so many of the old shops which were trading when he first came to the village are no longer around. He is also disappointed by what he regards as the lowering of standards in many shops today where nobody opens the doors and few people know anybody's name and everything is about sales, not service.

Although Bill may well now be one of Cheadle's elder statesman, he remains extremely active. He is still a member of the cycling club he joined before the war and also remains an active member of the Cheadle Civic Society, which he joined before some of today's members were even born.

As for the residents of Cheadle, he now has such a special place in so many people's hearts that these days many regard his shop as much a fixture of the landscape as the George and Dragon and the White Hart, and long may that continue.

Brooklyn Crescent Park – from strength to strength and an inspiration to others

It's a wonderful and well documented story how the local residents around Brooklyn Crescent raised more than £60,000 a few years ago to transform the old run-down Brooklyn Crescent Park into the beautiful, thriving, colourful urban park it has become today.

But once they raised their funds and made the necessary improvements, this resourceful group didn't stop there. Year by year, they are continuing to maintain and enhance the park (located next to Massie Street and to the south of High Street) and are now passing on their wealth of knowledge and experience to other local groups who are keen to turn their own run-down parks and neglected green spaces into similar thriving and friendly environments.

The greatly applauded turnaround can largely be put down to the dedication, devotion and hard work of The Friends of Brooklyn Crescent Park (TFoBCP). This was the band of local people, most of whom who lived around Brooklyn Crescent, who came together out of frustration that their local park had become so neglected by the Council that it was both an eyesore to passers-by and hardly ever used by local people.

As such, following initial funding from the Cheadle Civic Society, they eventually managed

to raise £62,000 from various sources to help fund a range of essential improvements. These included a smart new pathway around the park, the installation of a number of new long-lasting benches and litter bins, paying to bring-in a team of tree surgeons to raise the canopy of the trees and prune many of the trees, install a new, attractive, high-quality noticeboard at the park's entrance, plant a large number of new flowers, and generally clean-up the area so that it became much tidier and more accessible than it was before. In addition, Stockport Council replaced the old railings alongside Massie Street and also cut down shrubs and bushes by the railings which helped to make the park more visible -which, in turn, helped to remove any unsocial behaviour by youngsters who would previously hide in places where they could not be seen.

The net result of the changes is that the park is now used daily by many different people from local businessmen taking a midday break to young families taking a quiet stroll. Different species of birds, butterflies and other forms of wildlife have also returned.

But now that the park has been transformed, TFoBCP are intent in making sure it remains attractive and accessible well into the future - especially as funding from the Council for park maintenance is now at an all-time low.



The transformation of Brooklyn Crescent Park (off Massie Street) over the past few years has been roundly applauded and is now proving to be an inspiration to other local green spaces in the area



Sue Colman has been Brooklyn Crescent Park's driving force for the last few years and now offers support to similar groups

One of their initiatives is a twice yearly Task Day. The first one this year took place at the end of July and about 30 people showed up. Most people only lived a short distance away, but there were others who came from other parts of Cheadle, keen to lend a hand. The organizers were especially happy that local Councillors Pam King and Iain Roberts also came along to help out, as well as learn more about the group and the work they did.

Most volunteers brought their own gardening gloves, tools and wheelbarrows and got involved with everything from clearing weeds, shrubs and brambles, to cutting down dead tree branches to simply cleaning up the park where necessary.

Judith Wertheimer, chairman of TFoBCP, and one of the people who has put in many hours of her own time in helping with the park's redevelopment, says that while everyone is grateful to the people who give up their time to help out on the Task Days, she is very conscious that most of the volunteers are in their 60s and 70s. "Very few younger residents get involved, even those who use the park regularly," she said ruefully. "They don't seem to have the desire or motivation to help out at all."

Sue Colman, the group's secretary and the main driving force behind the initiative from the beginning, says it is generally the same people who

come to the Task Days each time and even if they only come for an hour or so, their individual efforts do make a very big difference.

But it is what Sue, Judith and the others have learnt from their experiences over the past few years that is now proving so useful to other groups. Sue is now the chairman of the Stockport Green Spaces Forum, which has grown significantly in recent years and acts as an umbrella body for many other small, local parks and green spaces throughout the area. They now have their own web site, growing list of resources and rapidly growing expertise in helping newer groups who want to see improvements on their own doorsteps.

She has developed a number of key tips she recommends to other fledgling groups who contact her. These include undertaking proper consultation with all local residents and interested parties from the beginning; putting together a thorough, detailed and realistic plan of action of what needs to be done; contacting the right officials at the council and getting the council onboard as early as possible and then following the guidance and advice they provide; finding out what grants may be available and applying for them in the right way; creating a dedicated team or committee with different people being given different jobs to do; liaising with the relevant local media to help publicise the proposed changes and developments; and learning from the experiences of more established groups to avoid any unnecessary pitfalls.



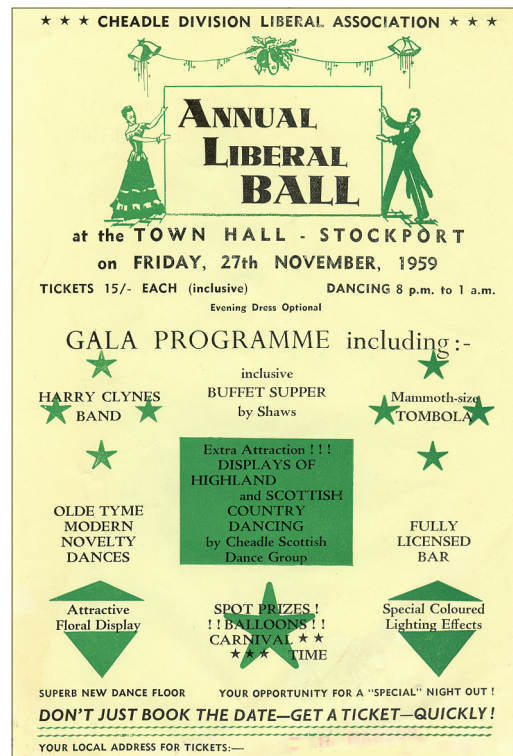
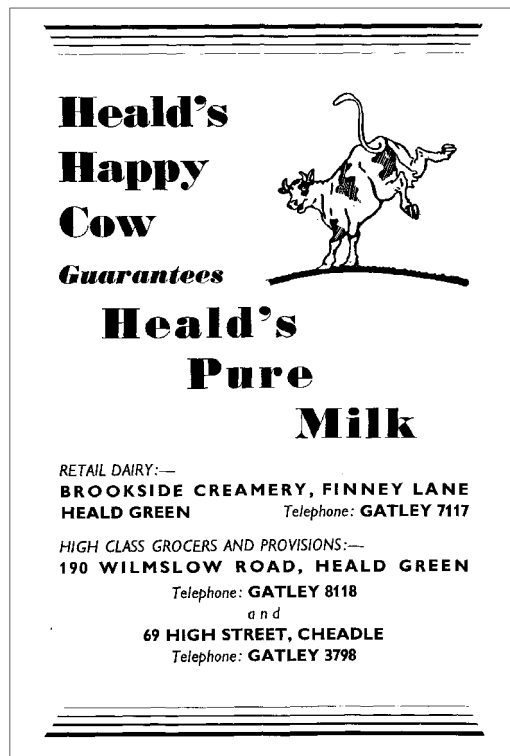
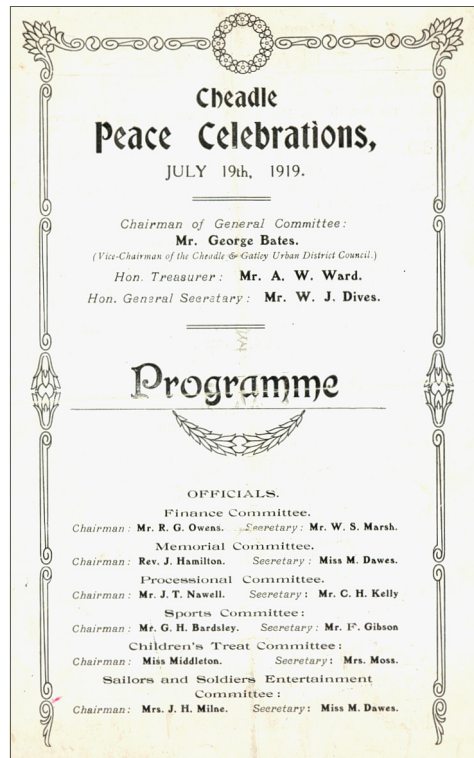
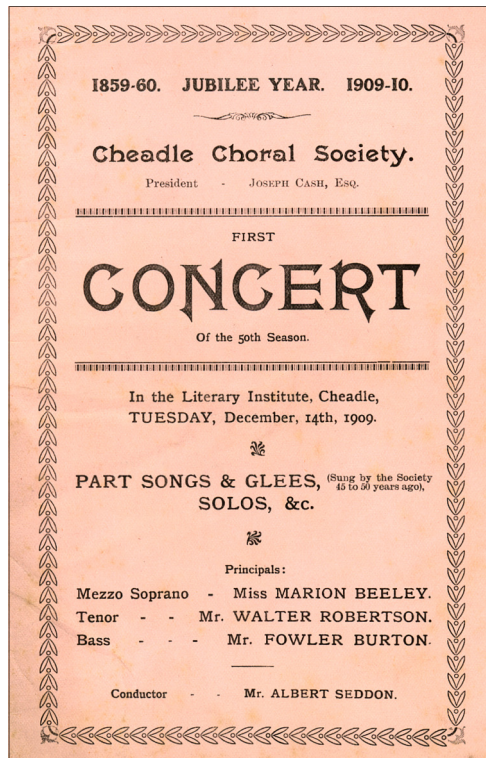
Some of the Friends of Brooklyn Crescent Park take a well deserved break during the last Task Day in July

As for the future, it is hoped Brooklyn Crescent Park will continue to attract more Cheadle residents and workers who will also enjoy it as a pleasant, peaceful hideaway in the heart of the village.

For anyone interested in getting involved, the next Task Day will take place at the end of November and involve clearing mounds of autumn leaves. Further details can be obtained by checking the park's noticeboard nearer the time or by contacting Sue Colman on 428-8856 or by e-mail on susan.colman7@ntlworld.com

Cheadle ephemera

Are you interested in Cheadle life from the past? If so, the revealing selection of ephemera below represents different aspects of Cheadle history from the past 100+ years. They feature a programme cover for a concert at the Institute in 1909, a programme cover for Cheadle's Peace Celebrations in 1919, a newspaper advertisement stating Heald's milk is available for sale on High Street in the 1960s and a programme cover for a ball for the Cheadle Liberal party in Stockport Town Hall in 1959.



The ephemera above comes from the Society's own collection of old Cheadle literature. If you have similar material yourself, please let us know either by e-mail: info@theadlecivicsociety.org or by sending it directly to 19 Morningside Road, Cheadle SK8 1NJ so we can preserve it and share it with others